RELIGION AND RADICALISM

Rape Culture, Gender Violence, & Religion

Biblical Perspectives

EDITED BY CAROLINE BLYTH,
EMILY COLGAN, KATIE B. EDWARDS

Religion and Radicalism

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Preface

Back in 2014, two of us (Emily and Caroline) met up to discuss the possibility of co-editing a single volume that explored the complex and multifaceted relationships between rape culture, gender violence, and religion. After putting out a general call for chapters, we were inundated with responses; these came from academics, practitioners, and graduate students, located throughout the globe, who were working in a disparate range of disciplinary areas, including religious studies, biblical studies, anthropology, philosophy, education, film production, gender studies, sociology, theology, linguistics, and counselling. It quickly became clear that there were simply too many essential voices and perspectives to be contained within a single volume; there was obviously a thirst for scholarly and praxis-led engagement within this area. Most of the potential contributors who contacted us expressed their appreciation that we sought to provide a platform upon which to participate in this conversation. Acutely aware that our scholarly research and practice is carried out in the context of a global rape culture, where gender violence has reached epidemic levels, the overwhelming feedback we received was that such a conversation was well overdue and therefore urgent.

As we began to collate the chapter abstracts we had been sent, we were struck by two realizations. First, these abstracts fell within three main categories, engaging with the subject of gender violence, rape culture, and religion from either biblical, Christian, or interdisciplinary perspectives. This offered us a natural structure for arranging the chapters into not one but three volumes, which we hoped would be published as a stand-alone series. Second, in light of the way this project had expanded beyond our

initial expectations, we decided it was prudent to bring in another co-editor whose expertise in this area would help us manage such an ambitious project. We therefore invited Katie to join the editorial team, and to our delight, she agreed. Working together, we have pooled our editorial skills and experience to produce three volumes that we believe are an immensely timely contribution to an ongoing international dialogue within this field of research.

The three volumes can be read either together or independently of each other; each one provides a rich overview of some of the unique scholarship being carried out in a range of disciplinary areas. Together or apart, the volumes are not exhaustive in their analysis of rape culture, gender violence, and religion; given the massive complexity of these subjects and the infinite ways in which they intersect, even three volumes can only be a drop in the scholarly ocean. Rather, our intention is to offer readers a way to begin or continue conversations about this vital issue. As you read through the chapters in this volume, we hope that you are inspired to create conversations within your own contexts and communities.

Auckland, New Zealand — Caroline Blyth

Auckland, New Zealand — Emily Colgan

Sheffield, UK — Katie B. Edwards

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Ngā mihi aroha.

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Emily Colgan is Lecturer in Theology at Trinity Methodist Theological College in Auckland. Her research focuses on the relationship between the Bible and contemporary social imaginaries, asking about the degree to which the ideologies contained within biblical texts continue to inform communities in the present. She is particularly interested in ecological representations in the Bible, as well as depictions of gender and violence. She has published a number of essays and articles in this area of scholarship.

Katie B. Edwards is Director of the Sheffield Institute for Interdisciplinary Biblical Studies (SIIBS) and Senior Lecturer in the School of English at the University of Sheffield. Her research focuses on the function, impact, and influence of the Bible in contemporary culture. She is especially concerned with intersections of gender, race, and class in popular cultural

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Jessica M. Keady is Lecturer in Theology and Religious Studies at the University of Wales, Trinity Saint David. Her current research uses social-scientific methodologies, including Masculinities Studies and Positioning Theory, to re-examine and re-interpret the Dead Sea Scrolls. In 2017, her first monograph was published, *Vulnerability and Valour: A Gendered Analysis of Everyday Life in the Dead Sea Scrolls Communities* (2017) and is co-editing a volume, alongside Dr Todd Klutz and Dr Casey Strine, entitled *Scripture as Social Discourse: Social-Scientific Perspectives on Early Jewish and Christian Writings* (Bloomsbury T&T Clarke, forthcoming).

Julie Kelso is Senior Lecturer in Philosophy and Literature at Bond University, Australia. She is the author of *O Mother Where Art Thou? An Irigarayan Reading of the Book of Chronicles* (2007); she has co-edited three further books, and is the author of numerous essays in feminist philosophy, biblical studies, and literary studies.

Yael Klangwisan is co-head of the School of Social Practice, Laidlaw College, Senior Lecturer in Laidlaw Graduate School, and a doctoral research supervisor at Auckland University of Technology, Auckland. Her research engages French literary and creative readings of the biblical text, incorporating in particular the writings of Hélène Cixous and Jacques Derrida. She is the author of *Jouissance: A Cixousian Encounter with the Song of Songs* (2015).

Emma Nagouse is a PhD student in the Sheffield Institute for Interdisciplinary Biblical Studies (SIIBS), researching the phenomenon of rape culture in the Bible and contemporary society. Her research focuses on how biblical and contemporary intersectional gender presentations facilitate rape and disbelief cultures. She previously studied archaeology

and was a Higher Education professional before commencing her doctorate in Biblical Studies. When she is not studying, she involves herself in intersectional feminist activism.

Susanne Scholz is Professor of Old Testament at Perkins School of Theology at Southern Methodist University in Dallas, Texas. Her research engages feminist biblical hermeneutics, epistemologies, and sociologies of biblical interpretation. She is the author of *Sacred Witness: Rape in the Hebrew Bible* (2010) and has written and co-edited a number of other works, most recently *La Violencia and the Hebrew Bible: Politics and Histories of Biblical Hermeneutics on the American Continent* (2016) and the three-volume series, *Feminist Interpretation of the Hebrew Bible in Retrospect* (2013–2016).

Lu Skerratt is an alumna of the University of Leeds and Kings College London with a BA in Theology and Religious Studies and an MA in Biblical Studies respectively. They are focusing on outreach work and queer activism and have since left academic study in the pursuit of working directly with vulnerable LGBTQ+ people, refugees, and women at risk of exploitation or abuse. They now run an LGBTQ+ group for asylum seekers and refugees in Sheffield and work in women's sexual health and HIV-care provision in the West Midlands.

Johanna Stiebert is Associate Professor of Hebrew Bible at the University of Leeds. Her research interests include Hebrew self-conscious emotion terminology, ideological and social-scientific criticism, family relations, gender and sexuality, as well as African-centred approaches. Her most recent books include *Fathers and Daughters in the Hebrew Bible* (2013) and *First-Degree Incest and the Hebrew Bible: Sex in the Family* (2016). She is co-lead (with Caroline Blyth and Katie Edwards) of the Shiloh Project, a research group that studies intersections between religion and rape culture (http://shiloh-project.group.shef.ac.uk/).

David Tombs is the Howard Paterson Chair of Theology and Public Issues at the University of Otago. He has a longstanding interest in contextual and liberation theologies and is the author of *Latin American Liberation Theologies* (2002). His current research focuses on religion and violence, and especially on Christian responses to gender-based violence, sexual abuse, and torture. He is originally from the United Kingdom and previously worked at the University of Roehampton in London (1992–2001) and then in Belfast, Northern Ireland, for the Irish School of Ecumenics, Trinity College Dublin (2001–2014).

Teguh Wijaya Mulya is a lecturer in the Faculty of Psychology, University of Surabaya, Indonesia. He specializes in research in the areas of sexuality, gender, and religion. His work is inspired by Foucauldian post-structuralist thoughts, feminist theories, and queer theology.

List of Abbreviations

Ab urbe cond.	*Livy, Ab urbe condita*
Ant.	Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*
Ant. rom.	Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Roman Antiquities*
Ars	Ovid, *Ars Amatoria*
BDB	Brown, Francis, S. R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs. *The Brown–Driver–Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon, with an Appendix Containing the Biblical Aramaic.* Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2003.
Descr.	Pausanias, *Description of Greece.*
Fast.	Ovid, *Fasti*
Geogr.	Strabo, *Geography*
Hist.	Herodotus, *Histories*
Jov.	Jerome, *Adversus Jovinianum*
JPSV	Jewish Publication Society Version
Lyc.	Plutarch, *Lycurgus*
Met.	Ovid, *Metamorphoses*
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
PL	Jerome, *Patrologia Latina*
Resp.	Cicero, *De republica*
Romulus	Plutarch, *Life of Romulus*

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Caroline Blyth, Emily Colgan, and Katie B. Edwards

The Bible is a violent book. Its pages are inscribed with an abundance of traditions that bear witness to the pervasiveness of gendered aggression and abuse within biblical Israel. Its narratives attest to the commonality of wartime rape, forced marriage, and sex slavery; we can read stories of stranger rape, acquaintance rape, and gang rape (both threatened and actualized). Turn to the prophetic literature and we are inundated with metaphorical renditions of spousal abuse and intimate partner violence, perpetrated (or at least sanctioned) by Israel's jealous deity. Its laws uphold the structural violence of patriarchal power, which grants divine mandate to the rigidly prescriptive and proscriptive control of women's (and sometimes vulnerable men's) bodies. In essence, both the poetry and prose of these ancient traditions testify to the subjective violence of multiple gendered abuses and grant a voice to the symbolic violence of misogynistic

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and heteronormative discourses, which marginalize and objectify women (and sometimes men), while normalizing their social, sexual, and religious subjugation.

Bound within the pages of this sacred text, these articulations of gender violence have accrued significant authority and power across space and time; this power remains undiminished today, not only through the religious teachings and traditions of Judaism and Christianity but also by way of contemporary social discourses that (implicitly or explicitly) draw upon the ideologies inherent within biblical texts to justify multiple forms of gender violence. These discourses lie rooted in the foundations of patriarchal culture, constituting part of the framework upon which rape-supportive ideologies and belief systems are built. Such ideologies and belief systems, in turn, create and sustain rape cultures—cultures in which rape and other forms of gender violence are trivialized and normalized, tolerated as acceptable expressions of sexuality (Burnett 2016). In other words, rape cultures create an environment in which gender violence can flourish; and the Bible—with its myriad traditions about gender violence and its endorsement of the patriarchal discourses that sanction such violence—plays an undeniable role in this process. While it would be inaccurate to claim that the origins of rape culture and gender violence lie *exclusively* (or even predominantly) within the biblical traditions, we must nevertheless acknowledge that these texts are by no means blameless. For no literature (particularly sacred literature) is ever value neutral, nor does it leave the reader untouched by the reading process. Rather, all texts invite their audience to embrace certain discourses, values, and belief systems, expressed through their authors' rhetorical strategies. Thus, according to Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, "Stories are never just descriptive but always also prescriptive" (2001, p. 136). In other words, biblical texts may reflect the ideologies of the ancient communities in which they are written, but they also have the potential to validate and sanction the same ideologies within communities in which they are read, even today. And when these ideologies are rape-supportive, or endorse the structural violence of gender inequality and patriarchal hegemony, then their power to impact contemporary readers' lives and worldviews cannot be underestimated. As Patrocinio Schweickart explains, "We cannot afford to ignore the activity of reading, for it is here that literature is realized in *praxis*. Literature acts on the world by acting on its readers" (1993, p. 615; original italics).

In recent decades, feminist biblical scholars have thus begun to recognize the urgent need to investigate the "texts of terror" which appear throughout the Bible, including those that evoke the violence of rape and sexual abuse.[1] Acknowledging the Bible's continued influence upon contemporary social discourses, they contend that by failing to engage with the issue of biblical gender violence—taking an aperspectival stance vis-à-vis the misogynistic and patriarchal ideologies expressed in sacred texts—interpreters simply reinscribe these ideologies, thereby maintaining their power within contemporary contexts and communities. Thus, according to Esther Fuchs:

> By ignoring the ideological problem posed by stories of rape and adultery, by ignoring the patriarchal implications of the way in which the woman in the text is silenced, the modern androcentric critic reinscribes biblical sexual politics. The poeticist reinscription of patriarchal ideology is made possible by combining on the one hand an aperspectival stance and on the other a submissive stance vis-à-vis the text … The choral harmony of the authoritative narrators and the "objective" critics reencodes the silence about women's oppression. (2000, p. 138)[2]

Given the endemic levels of gender violence in innumerable societies around the world today, and the pervasive global presence of rape cultures that sustain such violence, the task of biblical interpreters to challenge rape-supportive biblical discourses and disrupt their inherent symbolic violence is urgent. Indeed, embracing our role as critic and conscience within the academy, the classroom, and the societies in which we live is surely a moral imperative for biblical scholars, given that so many of our everyday experiences are pervaded by rape culture discourses and our communities tainted with scandalously high rates of gender violence. As Susanne Scholz insists, "In the context of a global rape culture, it is crucial to uplift ancient rape legislation and to identify past and present strategies that continue obfuscating the prevalence of rape even today" (2005, p. 2).

Nevertheless, some scholars and readers of the Bible may contend that it is anachronistic to use contemporary definitions of gender violence in order to evaluate the presence or absence of such violence within the biblical texts. To do so, they argue, is to impose conceptualizations of gender and sexuality upon the biblical traditions that bear little or no relevance to those held by their ancient authors. Yet we would contend that, while some of the gender discourses articulated in these traditions may differ to

those we encounter within our own cultural contexts, the gendered violence evoked therein is all too familiar. Our ability to recognize episodes of coercive sexual behaviour, sex slavery, or brutal gang rape in the biblical texts need not be hindered by our acknowledgement that Israelite women appeared to have no cognizable right of consent. The fact that the abduction and rape of female prisoners of war is mandated in the legal codes (Deut. 21:10–14) ought not to stop us from seeing the horrific violence inherent within this law. The gender violence is there, in the text—this is undeniable. By refusing to acknowledge this violence through appeals to epistemological rigour, readers simply become complicit in its erasure, allowing it to remain unchallenged, even accepted. Our task in this volume, then, is to contest this erasure, and to name (and shame) the multiple forms of gender violence present within the biblical traditions, in the hope that by so doing, we can undermine the influence and power that biblical texts of terror continue to have within contemporary rape cultures. For, as writer and poet Adrienne Rich avers, "We need to know the writing of the past, and know it differently than we have ever known it; not to pass on a tradition but to break its hold over us" (1980, p. 35).

Moreover, while we are pragmatic enough to acknowledge (a little ruefully, perhaps) that the chapters in the volume will not vanquish rape culture or gender violence overnight, each author nevertheless invites critical conversations and reflections on the continued complicity of biblical traditions and their reading communities in the perpetuation of rape-supportive discourses. They do so by engaging critically *and* creatively with the biblical texts, demonstrating the richness of methodological approaches (including historical criticism, literary criticism, and reception history) and hermeneutical lenses (such as feminist, queer, and other critical theories) that can be employed to tackle this subject fruitfully.

Starting us off in Chap. 2, Lucy Skerratt reads the book of Lamentations intertextually alongside Sapphire's 1996 novel *Push* and Lee Daniels's 2009 film adaptation, *Precious.* Particularly, she focuses on the literary metaphor of Daughter Zion, as well as the lamenting voices of the destroyed Jerusalem, to explore human experiences of loss, loneliness, stigma, and gendered violence in the midst of war. Drawing on the theory of intersectionality, Skerratt reads this biblical text in light of the continuing HIV pandemic in the United States, which, as articulated in *Push* and *Precious*, disproportionally affects black and minority ethnic (BME) women. Her intertextual reading brings together the shared experiences of Daughter Zion and Precious Jones, using this dialogical encounter to

explore how the biblical text can give a face and voice to the intersectional oppressions encountered by BME women living with HIV and AIDS. She also suggests, however, that Lamentations and *Push* are ultimately texts of survival, and that by voicing their own pain, Daughter Zion and Precious Jones transform their suffering into a moment of liberation from the inevitable finality and fragility of life.

Continuing this intertextual exploration of gender violence within biblical and popular culture texts, Chap. 3 raises the subject of brother-sister incest, which Johanna Stiebert suggests has become a topic of titillation, both in public discourses around sibling incest and on screen (where such relationships are portrayed with some regularity in film and popular television). Stiebert argues, however, that this trope of the "up-for-it sister" is a myth, a "figment of voyeuristic fantasy," which taps into patriarchal predilections for women's exploitation and objectification. She notes a disturbing tendency within this trope to undermine the sister's ability to consent within her sexual relationships, typically through her vulnerability or compromised mental health. Relating this back to a number of brother-sister relationships in the Hebrew Bible, Stiebert contends that these biblical traditions accentuate this same discourse of exploitation. Considering these biblical texts in depth, she thus suggests that, in both the Hebrew Bible and contemporary popular culture, the brother-sister relationship is eroticized and that this eroticization has overtones of rape and of legitimating rape. By drawing attention to the troubling implications of these portrayals of sexual violence and compromised consent, she therefore attempts to detoxify them.

In Chap. 4, Teguh Wijaya Mulya engages with another familiar trope within both the Bible and wider contemporary culture, which is likewise complicit in the perpetuation of rape culture—the "virgin/whore" binary. Drawing on his previous research among Indonesian Christian youth, he suggests that this binary continues to be used to justify and normalize certain acts of sexual violence. In order to begin his own act of "detoxifying" the binary, he juxtaposes two biblical characters who best represent the virgin and the whore categories—that is, the Virgin Mary (Luke 1) and the Whore of Babylon (Revelation 17). Analysing these biblical traditions alongside each other through a queer reading lens, Wijaya Mulya interrogates the typical placement of Mary and the Whore at opposite ends of the binary, arguing that these two figures may in fact have more commonalities than contradictions. He first considers the sexual violence inherent in both of their engagements with the divine, before asking how

their relationships with their adherents might be considered idolatrous. He then suggests that dichotomized roles of virgin and whore may prove to be far more fluid and unstable within different historical and social contexts. Based on this queer theological reflection, Wijaya Mulya argues that the virgin-whore binary ought to be deconstructed, given its complicity in gender violence discourses that render particular women vulnerable to sexualized aggression.

Both Wijaya Mulya's and Stiebert's desire to dismantle rape-supportive discourses is likewise shared in Chap. 5 by Jessica Keady, who invites us to consider the dangerous rhetoric of purity culture as contributing to gender violence and rape culture. Keady compares biblical conceptions of rape and impurity with more contemporary rape culture and purity culture ideologies, focusing particularly on the construction of literary rape in the biblical text of Genesis 34—the rape of Jacob's daughter Dinah. Through her close reading of the text, Keady argues that this rape narrative offers a means of critiquing ancient ideations of gender violence and purity; it also allows readers to trace the ways that these ideations continue to influence contemporary attitudes towards rape. She demonstrates this by weaving into her discussion of the Genesis text a number of contemporary accounts of gender violence, which evoke dominant discourses of female defilement and shame embedded within today's rape and purity cultures. Through this intertextual engagement, she encourages biblical readers and interpreters to perform acts of "political resistance" to biblical ideologies that sustain these toxic cultures and to evaluate the significance and influence that such ancient ideologies continue to have today.

In Chap. 6, Julie Kelso shifts our focus away from explicit evocations of rape in the Bible to interrogate the very act that lies at the heart of sexual violence: intercourse. Taking an in-depth look at the late Andrea Dworkin's "notorious" book, *Intercourse* (1987), Kelso considers Dworkin's controversial claim that women's secondary status can be attributed to the socially constructed designation of the female body as lacking physical integrity during (hetero)sexual intercourse. Within patriarchal culture, women are recognized as having a body that can be penetrated, occupied, and denied privacy during the act of intercourse; this, asserts Dworkin, "appears to be the key to women's lower human status" (1987, p. 151). Kelso takes readers through Dworkin's materialist analysis of intercourse as an institutional practice, considering the various discourses (literary, philosophical, religious, legal) that she claims have given intercourse its political meaning. She then frames Dworkin's discussions of the role of

biblical texts (particularly the sodomy laws in Leviticus and the story of Adam and Eve in Gen. 2:4b–4:1) within the framework of *Intercourse* as a whole, considering her evaluation of their foundational role in legitimizing the potentially devastating violence of intercourse for women in male supremacist societies.

Continuing this focus on the dangerous political and religious meanings attributed to intercourse by patriarchal authorities, in Chap. 7, Yael Klangwisan offers a thoughtful response to the murder of Midianite woman Cozbi, recounted in Numbers 23. Cozbi's death is, as Klangwisan argues, a clear case of gendered and sexualized violence carried out by Phinehas the priest, whose zealous religious and political intolerance of the "other" led him to murder both Cozbi and her Hebrew lover Zimri. Taking inspiration from Roland Barthes's *Camera Lucida* and Helene Cixous' *Angst*, Klangwisan gazes unflinchingly upon the blood-spattered scene evoked in Numbers 23. Employing Barthes's photographic categories of *studium* (the wider scene or spectacle) and *punctum* (an element that punctures the scene), she invites readers to join her on a journey through this text, refusing to let them maintain a distance from the horrifically xenophobic and sexualized violence evoked therein. Comparing the biblical tradition with other classical love tragedies, Klangwisan then considers this literary trope in depth, moving towards her own, alternative ending for Cozbi's story, where, in contrast to the biblical text, "love and life are victorious."

There are, alas, no happy endings in Chap. 8, as David Tombs dwells on the tragic events in the popular Netflix series, *13 Reasons Why*. This series, based on the novel of the same name by Jay Asher, traces the events leading up to the rape and subsequent suicide of high school student Hannah Baker. Tombs reads Hannah's rape intertextually alongside the rape of the royal concubines in 2 Samuel 15–20, suggesting that each of these narratives invites readers to contemplate its intertext in fresh lights, despite the obvious historical and geographical distance that lies between both traditions. He argues that both stories can be read as a literary triptych, focusing first on the victims' initial abandonment by those who could perhaps have prevented their rape, then on the rape itself, and finally, their second abandonment in the aftermath of their assault. Tombs argues that this shared sequencing of events creates connections between these two very different texts. Acknowledging the impact of the second abandonment on Hannah Baker allows the reader to see new meaning in the silence surrounding the victims of Absalom's rapes in 2 Samuel; this in

turn may also contribute towards wider conversations about the significant trauma caused by rape survivors' secondary victimization and the harmful impact that this can have on their healing and recovery. Tombs also raises questions regarding David's initial abandonment of his concubines, asking whether this might have been more "intentional" than traditionally assumed. He then suggests that such an interpretation opens new possibilities for considering the complicity of Hannah's friends in her rape through *their* acts of abandoning her in a vulnerable situation. This intertextual exercise thus invites readers to shift back and forth between biblical text and contemporary cultural text, allowing both to inform the other through their shared discourses of rape culture and gender violence.

In Chap. 9, we continue with this intertextual approach, as Emma Nagouse reads Lamentations 3 (the "Man of Sorrows" poem) alongside Diana Gabaldon's *Outlander* novel series and its television adaptation. Within this series, one of the main characters, Scottish soldier Jamie Fraser, is brutally raped and tortured by an enemy officer. Nagouse uses this fictional event as a lens through which to read and interpret the trauma and violence evoked by the Man in Lamentations 3, arguing that his words of suffering may be understood as the testimony of a male rape survivor. By exploring the impact of rape on Jamie's emotional, physical, and sexual well-being, Nagouse considers the trauma of male sexual assault, including the rape myths that sustain the silence surrounding this crime. Focusing on issues of intimacy, retraumatization, victim blame, and cultural constructions of masculinity, she connects Jamie's experiences of violence to those expressed by the lamenting Man, drawing on the texts' shared themes, language, and imagery. She thus reminds readers of the need to critique and challenge rape culture discourses in both contemporary and ancient contexts, and to break the silence that shrouds male rape in contemporary culture and biblical scholarship. Given that this sacred text is read and interpreted within societies where sexual violence against people of *all* genders is so often trivialized or ignored, a failure to consider that the Man may, like Jamie, be a victim of sexual violence is simply to be complicit in this silence.

Moving onto Chap. 10, we stay with the theme of male rape, as James Harding turns to the threatened gang rape of the Levite in Judges 19 and the consequent explosion of gendered violence committed against multiple women within this and subsequent chapters. Harding notes that this narrative is often discussed in connection with biblical attitudes to the homoerotic; as such, it plays a key role in shaping and sustaining the symbolic violence of Jewish and Christian homophobia. Yet to focus on this

threatened act of male rape (and its role in constructing certain forms of religious homophobia) obscures the value of the text for interrogating the complex intersections that exist between religion and violence. Taking a close look at this biblical tradition, Harding argues that the threatened rape of the Levite, and the actual rape of his concubine, must be read in light of the subsequent abduction of the virgins of Jabesh-Gilead (Judges 21:8–12) and Shiloh (Judges 21:19–24). These narrative events all reflect the pervasive influence of what Pierre Bourdieu has called "masculine domination," which both drives the acts of subjective violence in the text itself and also directs the symbolic violence of the narrative's homophobic and patriarchal language.

The chapters in the volume thus far have drawn on a range of biblical texts, many of which have been discussed previously within biblical scholarship. As we indicated above, many feminist biblical scholars have engaged with biblical texts of terror that depict the subjective violence of rape and the symbolic violence of rape-supportive discourses. In our penultimate chapter, Susanne Scholz offers an overview of some definitive works by feminist biblical scholars working within this area of research; specifically, she uses the Title IX federal law (which prohibits discrimination on the basis of sex in any federally funded education programme or activity) as the focus of this discussion. Scholz explores whether the Title IX debates around US campus rape ought to have an impact on how feminist biblical scholars interpret biblical rape texts. After reviewing the impact that Title IX has had on the way many US colleges and universities respond to campus rape, Scholz surveys feminist theories of sexual violence since the 1970s. She then evaluates the contributions of feminist exegesis on biblical rape texts since the 1980s. Within this body of work, she identifies certain scholars who have relied on decontextualized, empiricist-scientific, and historical-linguistic approaches to biblical exegesis, which, she suggests, has produced "rape-prone" interpretations. This leads her to ask the question: would an alternative, more contextualized hermeneutical approach, which critiqued rape-supportive language and advocated for rape victim-survivors, be of value within contemporary Title IX debates on campus rape? Scholz is conscious of the fact that federal laws alone cannot eliminate the epidemic of sexual violence on campus and in wider society. At the same time, she identifies serious limitations to current feminist exegesis of biblical rape texts due to their reliance on "cop-out" hermeneutics. This, she suggests, must be challenged if feminist biblical interpretation is to have a meaningful impact on the contemporary crisis of campus rape.

In Chap. 12, Emily Colgan and Caroline Blyth bring the volume to a close by offering a short reflection about some of the "tough conversations" that academics may have with students when teaching biblical texts of terror. While they both acknowledge the emotional costs felt by many biblical scholars who engage with these texts within their own research, they suggest that one of the more challenging spaces to carry out this engagement is within the classrooms and lecture theatres of tertiary (higher) education establishments. Within such spaces, academics must navigate a minefield peppered with resistant student voices and challenges, where there are ever-present possibilities to engage with students in ways that are either damaging *or* therapeutic. Reflecting on their own attempts to journey through this hazardous space, they share some of their thoughts, learning opportunities, and experiences (the highs and the lows) of teaching biblical texts of terror; particularly, they contemplate how to teach these texts responsibly, given their own cultural location within Aotearoa New Zealand—a country that has one of the highest rates of gender violence in the developed world.[3] As the final chapter of this volume, Colgan and Blyth's reflection serves as an invitation for readers to think about their own engagements with biblical texts of terror in light of the chapters that have come before; it also throws down the gauntlet to all those of us engaged in biblical studies education to persist in these "tough conversations" and thereby commit to challenging rape culture and gender violence within both the pages of the Bible *and* our own communities and cultural contexts.

Notes

1. For an overview of some of the key researchers in this field, see the chapter by Susanne Scholz in this volume.
2. Eryl Davies echoes Fuchs in his discussion of the necessity of ethical criticism of biblical texts of terror: "To accept the value statements of the text in utter passivity, without allowing oneself the freedom to reflect critically upon its claims and to question its assumptions is merely to foster a sense of complacency" (2003, p. 46).
3. Aotearoa is the most widely used Māori name for New Zealand and often precedes its English counterpart when the country is written or spoken about. The precise origins and meaning of Aotearoa are uncertain, but it is often translated as "land of the long white cloud."

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CHAPTER 2

For Precious Girls Everywhere: Lamentations, HIV, and Precious

Lu Skerratt

Of all the biblical texts that I have engaged with, Lamentations stands out. It is permanently etched in my memory and follows me wherever I go. I can only put it down for short periods before I am drawn to revisit it again. Although my initial shock at its relentless violence has somewhat subsided, I am still desperately troubled by what I read. How do we deal with this haunting text? Can we understand it as a resonant grief text which is so visceral and traumatic that it is almost impossible to leave behind? Or do we keep it at a distance by safely putting it away in an ancient and alien context?

The poetry of Lamentations emerges from a period of utter hopelessness following the violent sacking of Jerusalem and its temple by the Babylonians in the sixth century BCE. The responses of exilic and post-exilic prophets and other writings from this period, including Lamentations, "raise and in turn subvert a range of possible theodic assertions in response to the existential crisis which emerged in the wake of the fall of Jerusalem" (Boase 2008, p. 449). For this was not just a physical destruction, however horrific that would have been, but a spiritual and theological one too,

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where the devastating "spiritual significance" (Hillers 1972, p. xv) of these events likewise served as punishment for Israel's covenant betrayal. Moreover, Jerusalem's demise is also configured in Lamentations as a horrific event of sexual violence; as Hugh Pyper notes, "Whatever historical events underlie the trauma of destruction … it is the poet of Lamentations who has chosen to centre the book on his strange abhorrent metaphor of Zion as the raped woman … or … the raped mother" (2001, p. 55). This is not simply a story of destruction, but one where the whole world, identity, and boundaries of the Israelite people are suddenly put at stake. The cacophony of voices that make up the text of Lamentations explicitly reference the universality of the pain experienced. When read and engaged with in contemporary settings, this poetic work thus becomes an invaluable text for helping to tell the stories of those who relate to the personified Jerusalem: the marginalized, oppressed, violated, and othered. I have often wondered whether this is why I am so drawn to Lamentations, being conscious of its power as an "effective vehicle for a wide range of emotions" (Joyce and Lipton 2013, p. 7). In five short chapters, this poetic work addresses the intricacies of human life, female sexuality, violence, relationships, loss, stigma, abuse, war, and the unconstrained reality of what it feels like to be completely alone.

Yet, alongside such heartbreaking reflections on human nature in a time of horror and crisis, what makes Lamentations so potent is its profound ability to carry a message of survival, hope, and unrelenting strength in adversity. In other words, the message of Lamentations is deeply human, and it functions as a system story (Blankenship 2011)—a powerfully simple way of explaining a complex narrative, which embeds a reassuring message that, regardless of how grim and hopeless current realities might appear, there will always be a light, an escape, a time for reconciliation, change, hope, or forgiveness.

It is these themes, so central to Lamentations, that I will explore in relation to the story of Precious Jones, the HIV-positive, obese, black teenager from Harlem, New York, who is the heroine and central protagonist of Sapphire's 1996 novel *Push* (and the film adaptation, *Precious*, dir. Lee Daniels 2009). By reading the story of Precious intertextually alongside Lamentations' gynomorphic personification of Jerusalem—Daughter Zion—these biblical laments are recreated and retold for a contemporary audience. I refuse to shy away from the terrifying content of this biblical poetry (see Weems 1995, pp. 106–9), but insist that its words need to be given a voice—a struggle that Precious herself understands

and, throughout her own story, desperately tries to enact. For I firmly believe that the text of Lamentations continues to shape attitudes towards and experiences of gendered violence in the contemporary world. How we read and respond to biblical texts is inevitably influenced by our own ideologies, assumptions, and cultural contexts (Stone 1996; Chapman 2016). Yet, more than this, biblical texts have significant power themselves to shape, challenge, or validate these ideologies and assumptions, engaging dialectically with our world in front of the text (Fiorenza 2001, p. 136; Fuchs 2000, pp. 12–13). Biblical traditions that depict gender violence as an appropriate divine response to perceived sinfulness thus have the potential to affirm (or even grant divine mandate to) rape-supportive discourses within our own reading communities, thereby perpetuating the marginalization and violation of real women and girls within these communities (Blyth 2010, p. 11). Consequently, challenging these traditions using feminist and queer hermeneutics of interpretation is essential, allowing us to deconstruct their validations of violence. As Carole Fontaine insists, "In order to deconstruct the abuses of the present, we must dismantle the oppressive texts, interpretations, and practices of the past" (2008, p. 218).

This intertextual reading of *Push*, *Precious*, and Lamentations builds on the work of scholars, such as J. Cheryl Exum (1996), Yvonne Sherwood (2000), and Robert Myles (2011), who engage with the dialogical relationships at play between biblical texts and their cultural afterlives. While *Push* and *Precious* are not explicit retellings of the Lamentations tradition, I nevertheless recognize within these texts a number of shared themes, characters, and discourses, which allow me to tune into their rich intertextual content. Additionally, I draw upon the shifting and adapting discourses surrounding HIV/AIDS, particularly in the United States; combining these discourses with my interrogation of Lamentations as a grief text applicable to contemporary life, I remain grounded in the historical nature of the text while being oriented towards the world in front of it. *Push* is set in Harlem, New York, in 1987, a time when the AIDS epidemic (and public awareness about it) was at its peak. Yet, thirty years on, the messages portrayed in both *Push* and *Precious*, especially regarding HIV/AIDS, remain as pertinent as ever and highlight the outworking of stigma that people who are HIV positive experience in the United States today. When conducting the research for this chapter, I somewhat naively expected that the prevalence of HIV cases in the United States would have fallen considerably since the 1980s, that infection rates would be low, and

that the rhetoric of fear and shame would no longer be present in common parlance. But, despite better knowledge, hugely effective pre-exposure prophylactic (PrEP) drugs, and early intervention medical care, HIV still affects approximately 1.2 million Americans (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2016a). These people may not die in the desperate numbers we saw in the latter part of the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries; indeed, with early diagnosis and treatment, an individual with HIV can lead a long, active, and healthy life. Nevertheless, the lived experiences of many people living with HIV/AIDS still resound with the echoes of stigma, shame, and discrimination.

While the intentionally shocking AIDS awareness adverts of the 1980s and 1990s targeted (predominantly white) gay men, today HIV/AIDS disproportionally affects those already living in poverty and who face intersecting axes of oppression, particularly based around gender, ethnicity, class, and race. This concept of intersectionality is laid out by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989), who argues that the various facets of human identity are not distinct in themselves but intersect on multiple levels. This process can, in turn, help to explain how interlocking oppressions and systematic injustices are part of the same process, reflecting the multifaceted nature of discrimination. Precious Jones is a young black American woman who is abused by her parents and lives in abject poverty; according to the Centre of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), African Americans are disproportionally affected by HIV compared with other races and ethnicities (CDC 2016b). In 2014, this group represented 12 per cent of the US population but accounted for approximately 45 per cent of those living with HIV (ibid.). These statistics are mirrored in New York, where 45 per cent of the 112,000 people with HIV are black, and black women are 13.5 times more likely than white women to be infected (*AIDSVu* n.d.). Black, minority, and ethnic (BME) women thus feel the burden of this disease more than any other group. As Michelle Jarman notes about the character Precious, "by shining a light on this extreme story of incest, abuse, and social neglect, [Sapphire's] novel and Daniel's film do important cultural work of exposing personal and systematic dehumanization experienced by real people whose struggles often go unnoticed" (2012, p. 164).

By recognizing the centrality of these intersectional mechanisms at play within people's experiences of HIV/AIDS, I have kept the theory of intersectionality at the heart of my intertextual reading of Lamentations and *Push*; this has allowed me to consider HIV/AIDS and the traumas evoked in Lamentations *together* through the lens of Precious's story. In

this chapter, I carry out my reading in three steps: first, I explore the female metaphor in Lamentations itself. Second, I use the personified figure of Jerusalem/Daughter Zion to understand and read the character of Precious within her own social and historical context. Finally, I reread and reinterpret these texts as catalysts for our continued engagement in social justice and activism around the ongoing crisis of HIV/AIDS.

"Them Words Everything": Depicting Daughter Zion

The book of Lamentations focuses upon the reformulation of a community identity that is lost and exiled. Composed of five poetic chapters, it relates through metaphor, imagery, and word play the aftermath of Jerusalem's destruction by the Babylonian Empire around 587 BCE. Those left in the city are the voiceless, the subjugated, and the marginalized Other, and their laments are the foundation of the text; they testify to the people's attempts to find meaning in their grief and their desperate need to seek solace from their physical, emotional, psychological, and spiritual pain. Throughout the poetry of Lamentations, the suffering, brutality, and violence depicted are inescapable and consistent. There are moments when these acts and descriptions are almost played down and the reader is lulled into a false sense of security, but before long, they are violently pulled back to face the true terror of the text. Out of this text, two distinct individuals emerge: the city of Jerusalem, personified as Daughter Zion, YHWH's abused spouse (who will be the focus of my intertextual reading), and the sad, desperate tale of the Suffering Man in Lamentations 3.

According to Cheryl Kirk-Duggan, Daughter Zion is a metaphorical device that is a "catalyst for sexual and domestic violence" (2012, p. 243). Yet, at times, this metaphor slips; there are moments when Daughter Zion's abuse is depicted "so vividly and distressingly" (Stiebert 2003, p. 197) that her suffering seems all too real and too visceral simply to remain an allegory constructed by the poet's imagination. To identify Daughter Zion as simply the city personified (a metaphor whose meaning and relevance are restricted to the biblical text) ignores the brutality acted out against this female figure and the actual brutality perpetrated against real women within ancient *and* contemporary contexts. By acknowledging and exposing such problematic language within this text, and refusing to accept its rhetoric, the reader can thus subvert the text's power and authority.

In this exploration of Lamentations, where I read the text alongside the story of Precious Jones, I suggest that although the metaphor of Daughter Zion as YHWH's abused spouse remains meaningful within its linguistic setting, it also blurs the boundaries between gender violence located in the biblical text and the social realities of such violence in contemporary contexts. The use of this "abusive marriage" metaphor within the text is particularly painful to read, experience, and witness. And, while it might be an understandable response to the trauma and chaos Judah was experiencing during this time (Mandolfo 2007, p. 21), Daughter Zion's punishment at the hands of her husband seems thoroughly disproportionate to the "crimes" and "evil transgressions" of which she has been accused (Lam. 1:21–2). From the moment she is introduced in the narrative, she is isolated, in pain, "dealt treacherously with" (1:2), and made to pay for the wrongdoings of others. Her tale is told to those who will not listen, who physically and emotionally turn themselves away (1:3–5). She is thus subject to condemnation, suffering, and relentless violence (1:7–9). Like the stories of so many rape and abuse victims inside and outside the Bible (as related in the other chapters of this volume), the first ten verses of Lamentations 1 suggest that Daughter Zion is the target, not only of a vicious cycle of abuse, but also of victim blaming, which spouts forth from both her abuser *and* her audiences, ancient and contemporary. Her violent marriage is therefore far more than just a metaphor; rather, this text echoes the experiences of millions of women worldwide who live through some of the same horrors that she so vividly and publicly has to endure. Using feminist and queer reading lenses as modes of activism, we can challenge and subvert these horrors, highlighting and deconstructing their enduring potential to perpetuate both textual and actual gendered violence.

The trauma suffered by Daughter Zion is characterized by sexual assault (Lam. 1:4, 8, 10; 2:7–9; 5:11), psychological trauma and abuse (1:7, 17, 19, 21; 2:11, 15–16; 4:6; 14–16; 5:2–3, 8, 15), and physical violence (1:13–15; 2:4–6, 16; 4:1–11; 5:4–6, 9–10, 12–13). Twice, she is pushed to a moment of unconsciousness (1:13–14; 2:12) by her wrathful abuser, YHWH, and then violently pulled back to face her punishment again. This is akin to the way Precious Jones' character is constructed—abused so horrifically, yet dependent on her abusers to keep on living, reliant on their power. These shared characteristics of Daughter Zion and Precious thus enable an intertextual dialogue between the two female figures that

mutually accentuates their suffering, as well as the consequences of their shame, stigma, and discrimination.

Moreover, a complex poetic framework is constructed in Lamentations, where the blame for the destruction of Jerusalem is consistently passed between Daughter Zion, her "child" (the people left behind in the city), and her husband YHWH (Lam. 2:15–17; 4:11–15). Hugh Pyper emphasizes the horror of this metaphorical family relationship, stating that "the text cries out with the voice of an abandoned and resentful child, clinging to the constancy of the wrathful father, in its despair and repudiation of the powerless and wandering mother" (2001, p. 60). This cyclical pattern of abuse, explicitly gendered and designed to punish and subjugate the errant spouse, only continues to further an ideology of (divinely) justified sexual violence, which remains engrained in contemporary life. Daughter Zion *depends* on her wrathful husband, YHWH, for her survival; the abused female figure thus becomes akin to so many women who stay with an abusive spouse for economic, socio-cultural, or emotional reasons. She cannot help but lament her current situation, justify why she is still alive, and try to explain why she cannot help but come back for more:

> The Lord is in the right, for I have rebelled against his word.
> But hear, all you peoples, and behold my suffering.
> My young women and young men have gone into captivity;
> I called to my lovers, but they deceived me;
> my priests and elders perished in the city,
> while seeking food to revive their strength.
> See, O Lord, how distressed I am; my stomach churns,
> my heart is wrung within me, because I have been very rebellious.
> In the street the sword bereaves, in the house it is like death.
> (Lam. 1:18–19)[1]

The personification of a city amidst crisis, although consistent throughout this text, has particular moments of thematic profundity, not least in relation to the exilic and post-exilic need to reconstruct boundary markers, collective memory, and the distinct priestly focus on identity informed by purity. There seems to be an urgent requirement to police what is pure and what is defiled. Consequently, culpability for Israel's traumatic losses during the exile is shifted onto the impure and vulnerable Other. In Lam.

1:8–9, this ideological construction of purity and impurity carries considerable impact in its explicit depiction (and justification) of the gendered violence perpetrated against the menstruating Daughter Zion:

> Jerusalem has sinned greatly, and thus has become unclean.
> All those who honoured her now despise her, for they have seen her naked.
> She groans and turns her face away. Her uncleanliness was in her skirts,
> she took no thought of her fortune; her downfall was appalling.
> "Look, O YHWH, on my affliction, For the enemy has triumphed." (Lam 1:8–9)

In such exilic and post-exilic metaphorical constructions, the woman and her defiled body as representative of the city become the focus of biblical writers' punitive attentions (Galambush 1992, pp. 78–81). Within the book of Ezekiel, this is particularly explicit and painful (see especially Chaps. 16, 22, 23, and 24). In Lamentations, however, such a focus is far subtler, yet the trauma is no less concentrated. Sandra Jacobs has noted that "the body appears as an inscriptive surface in the Hebrew Bible" (2014, p. 1); in this sense, the author of Lamentations inscribes Daughter Zion's body with patterns that evoke her status as victim of violent sexual assaults, drawing particular attention to her breached and violated genitals as the fetishized embodiment of Jerusalem's beleaguered temple (Lam. 1:10; 2:7–9).

Moreover, at times, the focus of these laments moves from Zion's sexual abuse to her shame and stigma, thereby reinforcing the "false construction" of her body through the poet's misogynistic ideology (Mandolfo 2007, p. 100). The physicality of this shame and stigma is emphasized throughout the text, from the laments of the city women wandering and alone (Lam. 4:5, 8; 5:15), to their desperate starvation and resultant infanticide and cannibalism (2:20–1; 4:10). All these images contribute to a wider portrayal of the defiled and morally impure Daughter Zion, forever unclean and deserving of YHWH's punitive attentions.

One of the more profound verses that evoke the constructions of Daughter Zion's shame, stigma, and discrimination is found in Lam. 2:11:

> My eyes are spent with weeping, my stomach churns,
> my bile is poured out on the ground because of the destruction of my people.

In this scenario, Daughter Zion attempts to cope with the catalogue of abuses perpetrated against her; she feels such extreme anguish and guilt about her role in the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple that she is violently sick. This somatic outpouring of Zion's agony exposes her humanity in a way that is both recognizable and deeply affecting. Her failure to comply with societal ideals around marriage and motherhood evokes in her a visceral anxiety and shame that she cannot help but spew upon the ground.[2]

This grim imagery is developed further, however, not least because shame is a public reaction or emotion, and can only be experienced when there is an audience present. In this context, Daughter Zion is in the city; she has no "resting place" (Lam. 1:1), her altar is "scorned" (2:7), her gates are "sunk" (2:9), and her protective wall lies "in ruins" (2:8). What is more, her "sanctuary," both physical and theological, has been invaded and violated beyond repair (1:10). Both YHWH and Zion's "enemies" (1:5, 21; 2:5–9; 3:1–18; 4:11) commit a series of violent acts to gain power and control over the othered Zion. Her enemies encroach upon the "precious" areas of her body with their unwanted touch (1:10), while YHWH consumes her "foundations" with fire (4:11), enchains her, imprisons her (3:7–9), starves her and breaks her bones (3:4; 16), shoots arrows into her vital organs (3:12–13), and tears at her flesh like a wild animal (3:11). The psychological and physical effects of such abuses leave the victim, Daughter Zion, deeply traumatized—violated and mutilated by the relentless controlling powers of YHWH and his misogynistic response. The potent link between shame and mutilation within these texts is deliberate. For, in her mutilated state, Daughter Zion suffers *further* shame and impurity; this relentless repetition of punishment, mutilation, impurity, and shame thus becomes a cyclical pattern of abuse through which Lamentations' poetic framework so perfectly evokes the relentless horror of Zion's experiences.

Moreover, within this cycle of shame, mutilation, and bodily pollution, the reader watches, aghast, as Daughter Zion is "set up" for further humiliation. During various lulls in the poetic violence, where she finds space to voice hope for a better future, it is as though YHWH is drawing her into a false sense of security, allowing her to believe that her punishment has finally ended (Lam. 1:18–22; 3:21–33). Yet, there is no end in sight—the violence continues and she has no chance to break free, as her transgressions are "bound into a yoke" (1:14). The crimes that are committed against Daughter Zion are far from abstract within this text; nor are they

safely hidden behind the shroud of metaphor. Instead, they are visceral and corporeal, squeezing the blood, bile, and vomit from an ever-violated and ever-polluted woman's body, which has been inscribed, unwillingly, with the crisis of a broken Jerusalem.

As a text that talks about pain and trauma, sharing these experiences with its audience, Lamentations is a political and resistive act, subversive to its very core. The audience too can join in this act of resistance, recognizing the shocking treatment of Daughter Zion and defying the power of her divinely ordained misogynistic abuse(s). In this sense, Lamentations becomes a text to rebel *against* and rebel *with*; it is a text with which to move forward, in hope *and* in rage. As metaphorical devices, Daughter Zion's repeated violations nevertheless transcend the pages of the text to become honest expressions of lived trauma, grief, and pain that will resonate all too clearly for vulnerable women striving to survive in contemporary contexts of violence and abuse. Through its overarching theme of suffering, the text's constructions of mutilation, shame, guilt, power, and abjectness come to the foreground. Lamentations therefore asks wider theological questions about the human construction of a god who finds pleasure in killing, abusing, raping, torturing, and maiming. It highlights the true scandal of human and divine brutality, making it an essential text for those who turn to the Bible in their quest to understand how humans can justify the abuse of the Other. In the following section, where I begin to read Lamentations alongside the story of Precious Jones, I demonstrate the connections between these two texts, and between the othering of Daughter Zion and Precious herself. I contend that, in order to stand with BME women in the United States who are disproportionally affected and stigmatized for having an HIV-positive status, we must use texts such as these (both biblical and contemporary) as conduits of social justice, which allow us to move forward and fight for change.

"I Changed My Past by Walking into It": Precious's Lament

The connections between Daughter Zion and Precious Jones are startling, not least because of their shared experiences of failing to receive care from those closest to them, whilst simultaneously being blamed for their perceived wrongdoings. Of course, Precious is not an ancient metaphorical figure, but a fictional character who embodies many personal accounts of young black women and girls in 1980s New York. When encountering

Precious, we cannot sanitize the words she speaks, occluding them with a veil of antiquity or sacredness; rather, in Sapphire's novel *Push* and the subsequent film adaptation *Precious*, her words are laid uncomfortably bare for us to see, read, and hear. And, by confronting the horrors Precious has to go through, we as readers and biblical scholars are able to confront those horrors that are present in Lamentations too.

Precious Jones is sixteen when she is first introduced in *Push*. She is an obese black girl living in poverty, pregnant with her second child by her father, who, although absent from much of the narrative, has physically and sexually abused Precious since she was three years old. Her mother eventually admits this fact to a social worker: "I would lay my baby on that pillow, Carl would be laying on the other side, we would start doing it, and he reached over and touched my baby" (*Precious* 2009).[3] Precious's daughter Mongo, who has Down syndrome (trisomy 21), is consistently called an "animal" by Precious's mother and lives with Precious's grandmother. Precious is illiterate and, when we first meet her, has just been suspended from junior high school. *Push* and *Precious* paint a bleak picture of a girl with no future, systematically failed again and again by the state; as she says of herself, "they paint a picture of me with no brain, ugly black grease to be wiped away" (*Precious* 2009). The only glimmer of hope is when she starts to attend a school for girls who are in similar positions to her; the school, called Each One Teach One, is run by Ms Blu Rain, a gay black woman who gives Precious and her classmates the impetus to keep living and learning.

What is particularly pertinent when reading Lamentations in light of Precious's story is that, just like Daughter Zion, Precious's body is "infused with meaning," both by herself and others (Jarman 2012, p. 165). Her weight, her illiteracy, her clothes, her pregnancy, the marks of her abusers, whether emotional or physical, and later, her HIV status, all become part of what society deems and constructs as a "problem body," a term used by Michelle Jarman in her analysis of *Precious* (pp. 171–2). The social and moral judgements associated with Precious's problem body focus on those binaries of race, gender, and class that, in the United States, continue to objectify black women, providing justification for their oppression (Collins 2000, p. 77). Like the female Jerusalem in Lamentations, Precious is envisaged by those who abuse her, including the individuals and state institutions who are meant to look after her, as some*thing*, and not some*one*, which needs to be constrained and controlled. Throughout this story, they try to silence her, hurt her, torture

her spirit, and scoff at her aspirations. Precious's obese black body is open for multiple abuses because it is regarded as simply having no value. Like Daughter Zion, her body is rendered abject—polluted, unclean, and stigmatized by the socio-cultural discourses dominant within her own cultural location. These similarities with Daughter Zion remind us that the violence Precious experiences is not new, or unique; rather, it is an inevitable outcome of those multiple inequalities inscribed on women's bodies across space and time.

Thus, in one scene, Precious's mother forces her to eat a large meal she does not want, before sexually assaulting her (Sapphire 1996, pp. 20–1). At this moment, Precious is deprived of all self-control and autonomy over her identity and her bodily boundaries. In another scene, Precious recollects her time in elementary school when she consistently soiled herself, too scared to get up in case anyone noticed. Those who did notice shamed her and branded her as the problem body within their midst: "Other kids run all around. Me, Claireece P. Jones, come in at 8.55 am., sit down, don't move till the bell ring to go home. I wet myself. Don't know why I don't get up, but I don't, I jus' sit there and pee. Teacher ack all care at first, then scream, then get principal" (p. 37).

These two scenes highlight again the tight intertextual connections between Precious and Daughter Zion, as both literary female figures are pinned down in the text, utterly at the mercy of their abusers. Both texts affirm the need of abusers to control the most basic needs of their victims, putting them in situations where they have no agency, thereby demeaning, fetishizing, and infantilizing them. And, like Daughter Zion, Precious is emotionally and physically isolated from those around her, with no one willing to offer her support or rescue; this makes her feel so trapped that trying to break free from those binds becomes the biggest risk of all.

When discussing Precious's perceived "problem" body, it is essential to discuss the climax of her story, when, after meeting her mother at the halfway house where Precious is staying, she is told she has HIV, contracted from her now-deceased father. This is a particularly pertinent moment, as in the scene before this, Precious talks of the halfway house as being halfway between her old life and where she wants to be. It is a place of change, where her life can shift, where she is somewhat steady, safe, and grounded, where Each One Teach One has given her a voice, hope, and freedom, and where her new baby, Abdul, is loved and cared for: "I'm on threshold of stepping out into my new life, an apartment for me, Abdul, and maybe little Mongo" (Sapphire 1996, p. 84). Yet, despite all Precious's

reasons to keep on living and succeeding, and despite "all her imagination and spark," Precious is going to die (Blankenship 2011). There is no way of hiding this in the narrative; for black women living in poverty in 1980s Harlem, HIV was a death sentence. The most heartbreaking scene in the film comes during Precious's declaration of her HIV status to Blu Rain, her beloved teacher, who is a constant positive presence within the narrative, helping Precious find a sense of self-worth in a world of intersectional oppressions. This scene in particular highlights the multifaceted nature of an HIV diagnosis, including the fact that for many HIV-positive women, the disease is a result of abuse and sexual violence. Precious cries out to Ms Rain, "Love ain't done nothing for me, love beat me, rape me, call me an animal, make me feel worthless, make me sick" (*Precious* 2009). In a single moment, and in a place where she feels safe, the pain she has experienced throughout her short life has been viscerally expressed. She is crying out, reinforcing the heavy burden that she has been forced to bear.

Using this moment as a turning point in the narrative, Precious's story articulates various discourses that have been constructed around an HIV diagnosis; this scene therefore "provides an excellent background to explore multiple competing cultural narratives surrounding the disease" (Hammonds 1999, p. 181). Surprisingly, perhaps, Precious finds herself part of a wider community who *do* care, and who do *not* differentiate between those who are deserving or underserving of the disease. As her classmate Rita says to her, "All people with HIV or AIDS is innocent victims; it's a disease, not a 'good', a 'bad'" (Sapphire 1996, p. 108). This revelation for Precious is at first difficult to understand, not least because she has learned to associate being HIV positive as "the same as a white faggit or crack addict" (ibid.). The fact that this sense of acceptance continues throughout the rest of the narrative reinforces the notion that Precious's HIV diagnosis brings to the foreground wider issues of social justice, sexual violence, institutional inadequacies, and the responsibilities of a community which fails Precious so continuously that by the time she is able to express aspects of her identity, it is almost too late.

When Precious is first informed of her HIV-positive diagnosis, Blu Rain tells her to write. Precious refuses. The people who should have taken responsibility for her, who should have cared for her, have, in the bluntest terms, cut her life short. Her father has victimized, blamed, and punished her in ways akin to YHWH's treatment of Daughter Zion. After Precious's initial refusal, however, she does begin writing, and in doing so, she also keeps living. The final scene in the film sees her lifting up her two children,

leaving her mother at the Citizens Advice Bureau, and walking independently through the streets of New York. For the first time, the viewer is able to see Precious as completely free from the shackles that have held her back; she has been able to break the vicious cycle of violence, abuse, defilement, and stigma. We have to acknowledge that it is too late to help or "save" Precious entirely, as certain parts of her life (including her HIV status) are beyond change. Her actions may nevertheless free her son and daughter, giving them opportunities, love, and care. Moreover, and perhaps even more importantly, Precious may also be in the process of learning to love herself.

Similarly, in Lam. 5:21–2, Daughter Zion, the personification of Jerusalem calls out at the end of this poetic book:

> Restore us to yourself, O Lord, that we may be restored! Renew
> our days as of old,
> unless you have utterly rejected us, and you remain exceedingly
> angry with us.

Daughter Zion is still calling out to her abuser, desperate for her suffering to end. In doing so, she is trying to make sense of what has happened to her, acknowledging her own abuse. Despite her utter abjection, Lamentations nevertheless ends with *her* voice, not YHWH's. She is a survivor, and, for the first time, she is in control. She is thus like Precious who, even with an HIV diagnosis, focuses on the time she has left, caring for her son and "opening up the world to him" (Sapphire 1996, p. 139).[4] Within *his* beauty, she starts to see her own, a revelation of self-worth, and, most importantly of all, the transformative power of hope in survival.

For Precious Girls Everywhere

The complex embodiment of Precious Jones provides us with a unique insight into understanding the structural issues and oppressions that many women in similar positions face today. Precious and her friends at Each One Teach One are aware that their identities allow the state to dehumanize them using their multifaceted experiences of disability as a "means of enforcing and perpetuating economic, racial and gender inequalities" (Jarman 2012, p. 176). This only strengthens the discourses that propagate the blame, stigma, and prejudices faced by victims of a disease that does not discriminate, but often affects the most vulnerable members of society who are already contending with interlocking oppressions.

How an HIV-positive diagnosis is understood, treated, and located within a specific set of lifestyles and behaviours has, on the whole, shifted dramatically. The tireless work of generations of AIDS activists, healthcare professionals, and those in governments across the world has, in the last forty years, helped to highlight vital facts about HIV/AIDS—who it affects, which groups are most at risk, and the easily implementable preventative resources to curb its continued spread. HIV/AIDS, however, is still an ongoing global crisis; in the United States, particularly within poor urban communities, the experiences Precious faced are by no means consigned to history, but remain an ever-lived reality. The long-lasting effects of the stigma, fear, discrimination, illness, and scaremongering that have surrounded HIV/AIDS in the past are difficult to recover from. Attitudes can change all too slowly, especially when they are rooted in structural inequalities and a lack of access to appropriate support and healthcare for those who need it most. The intersecting oppressions and aggressions that are felt by many BME women, especially those living in poverty, continue to be bound tightly around them, and these women's individual or community strength is often bypassed or ignored by those who *could* help, but choose not to.

In a social system with little access to jobs or training, Precious gives us unique insight into the structural powers that continue to trap and contain the most vulnerable. What Precious highlights through her trauma, however, is the urgent need for liberation through education based on human value and equal opportunity, properly funded support services, a welfare system that is fair and non-judgemental, and a healthcare system that is free or heavily subsidized. Precious is not just a fictional character, but also a representative of those who are unable to be heard. Women and girls like Precious are too often silenced by those who not only problematize their identities and their bodies, but also treat them, like Daughter Zion, as the Other, blaming them for the situations in which they have found themselves, obliterating their self-worth, and attempting to destroy their visions for the future.

The final words in Daniel's film adaption of *Push* appear on the screen as a dedication to "Precious girls everywhere," an extraordinarily moving statement reaffirming the living embodiments of Precious who continue to be failed by the system. Both Precious's narrative and the poetic laments of Lamentations have a deep connection to the nuances of human life in times of great despair and crisis; and, when interacting with these two traditions (one ancient, one contemporary), I feel a responsibility to

respond to them together in a meaningful way. I have debated how to categorize *Push* and *Precious*; they are not simply works of fiction, for their story interweaves through lived *and* mythologized experiences. The story of Precious is a lament for the present; like the characterization of Daughter Zion, she triggers a need to react. There are many ways in which this has been done, and can be done, although I firmly stand by my own need to use texts such as *Push*, *Precious*, and Lamentations to raise awareness of gendered violence, to protest the injustices that control us, and, most importantly, to stand up against a state that fails those precious girls for whom they have duty of care. To give these girls the opportunity to progress, to grow in resourcefulness, and to establish relationships rooted in love rather than in subjective, symbolic, and structural violence, they must be free to be themselves. Only when this happens will we be able to contain and control the spread of HIV as well as eradicating the oppressions that continue to allow for such failings in health and social justice systems around the world. Daughter Zion and Precious must not have to suffer so brutally in order to survive, because their survival is not a prize for being able to live through such atrocities; it is simply a human right. These two laments, performed by two women who have been victimized by those in positions of power, expose to us in raw detail the injustices they have faced, speaking to us, asking us not to turn away, but rather to listen to their laments, react to them, and stand up, fighting, for essential and much needed change.

Notes

1. All biblical citations are from the NRSV.
2. See Bechtel (1991) for a discussion of shame as a source of anxiety and sanction of social control in biblical Israel.
3. Throughout my discussion, I cite dialogue from both the novel *Push* and its movie adaptation *Precious* to illustrate my points.
4. There is no mention of what happens to Precious's daughter in *Push*. In Daniel's adaptation, the final scene of the movie sees Precious carrying both Abdul and Mongo across New York—there is no indication of the life that these two children will lead. Mongo is seen as a problem body; not only is she black, a victim of abuse with an HIV-positive mother, but she is also profoundly disabled. The silence surrounding what happens to her is notable and is a further reflection on the systematic oppression of black bodies and the multifaceted intersections that continue to constrain them.

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CHAPTER 3

Brother, Sister, Rape: The Hebrew Bible and Popular Culture

Johanna Stiebert

My aim in this chapter is to demonstrate that in both the Hebrew Bible and contemporary popular culture,[1] the brother-sister relationship is eroticized, and, disturbingly, this eroticization has overtones of rape and of legitimating rape. While I am not suggesting direct influence between biblical texts and present-day cultural manifestations (notwithstanding the Bible's considerable and abiding influence and impact), the parallels are disquieting. Whatever the precise provenance and reason for eroticized sibling relations in, on the one hand, the Hebrew Bible and, on the other, contemporary film and television, drawing attention to the troubling implications of these depictions (in particular with regard to compromised consent) is the first step in detoxifying them.

Rape Culture

Rape cultures are diverse. The term can refer to settings where rape (predominantly of women) is a routine weapon of war, as well as to places where rape in marriage is not classified as a crime.[2] While neither applies to the present-day United Kingdom, rape culture, nevertheless, is our

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culture.[3] According to the Ministry of Justice Home Office for National Statistics, an estimated 85,000 women and 12,000 men are raped annually in the United Kingdom—an estimate that is (shockingly) likely to be conservative. The overwhelming majority of rapes are not reported.[4] Operation Yewtree[5] has brought into the media spotlight numerous cases of sexual exploitation by celebrities and figures in authority. In Oxford, Rochdale, and Rotherham, hundreds upon hundreds of cases of on-street grooming of (often very young) girls, ignored and even suppressed over many years, have come to light. We live *in* a rape culture, and, disturbingly, the mainstreaming of rape is evident not only in the staggering statistics but in the sexualization of children in the fashion industry,[6] in the prevalence of rape motifs in advertising (Dostis 2015), as well as in music videos (Clifton 2014), to cite but a few examples. The sheer ubiquity, constant battery, and insidiousness of rape, rape imagery, language, and motifs are sense-numbing.[7]

Rape is normalized as well as commercialized in the Hebrew Bible, too, by trivializing the violence of rape and depicting females as property and female virginity as a commodity. While in modern definitions of "rape" absence of consent is one determining factor,[8] any mention of women's consent to sex is not prominent in the Hebrew Bible. A few examples suffice to illustrate this. The Deut. 22:23–4 text relates that if a virgin who is already betrothed is "met" by a man who "lies with" her, if this occurs in a town, both shall be executed—the woman because she did not cry out for help and the man because he violated another man's woman. By implication, the virgin belongs to a man and is damaged goods if a different man has sex with her. If sex occurs in the open country, only the man shall be executed, because no one could have heard the woman's cries (vv. 25–7). Before we think that this indicates rapists were dealt with harshly and victims of rape with compassion, the "solution" proposed if a raped woman is *not* betrothed is for the rapist to pay the woman's father a fee and marry her, without the possibility of divorce (vv. 28–9). This is virtually an invitation to rape marriage. Rape or abduction marriage is also advised in Judg. 21:20–4[9] and might be in the background of Genesis 34[10] and, if Wil Gafney's (2009) reading is correct, also of Ruth.[11]

Until relatively recently, few accounts in the Hebrew Bible were explicitly identified as rape stories by interpreters. Genesis 34 is sometimes entitled "The Rape of Dinah," although nothing is said of Dinah's perspective, let alone her consent.[12] Amnon's rape of his half-sister Tamar in 2 Samuel 13 is clearly a rape—the (rare) counter-argument, such as Pamela Tamarkin

Reis's (1998), is unpersuasive and acutely disturbing in its blaming of the rape victim (Scholz 2010, p. 41). The brutal story of the gang rape of the Levite's concubine (Judges 19) is another rape text (see Trible 1984, pp. 65–92). Elsewhere, however, the cavalier taking of women for sex is rarely depicted with outrage in either the biblical texts or their interpretations, nor is it called what it is: rape. Only in the wake of second-wave feminism (thank you!) is the taking of the beautiful captive woman (Deut. 21:10–14), or of Sarah by Pharaoh (Gen. 12:10–20), or Hagar by Abraham (Genesis 16), or Zilpah and Bilhah by Jacob (Genesis 30), or (again) Bilhah by Reuben (Gen. 35:22), or Bathsheba by David (2 Samuel 11), or David's concubines by Absalom (2 Sam. 16:22), among very many other such accounts, explicitly called rape (see Scholz 2010).

I have argued that the designation "rape culture" applies to both biblical and contemporary settings. Next, let me examine an intriguing prevalence in contemporary media and popular culture concerning the eroticization of brother-sister relations. Following this, I will demonstrate a comparable tendency to eroticize sisters in the Hebrew Bible. In both contexts, moreover, there are overshadowings of rape.

Brother-Sister Sex in the Contemporary West and Popular Culture

Sexual relations between a biological brother and sister constitute first-degree[13] sex. In many societies and legal codes, such relations are designated incestuous, because "incest" refers to sex between persons deemed too closely related for marriage and/or sex to be permissible. Incest is a widespread but culturally variable phenomenon; hence, what is deemed incestuous and illegal in one setting may be a legal close-kin marriage in another. First-degree unions, however, are most widely deemed incestuous.

Of all the possible first-degree dyads, brother-sister sex is the most prominently eroticized and romanticized in popular culture, as well as the least vilified in actual occurrence. To illustrate the former, the extensive Internet/Movie Database archive of first-degree incestuous relations portrayed in mainstream and arts films or television shows (begy 2012) demonstrates that depictions of sex between different-sex siblings far outnumber depictions between either same-sex first-degree relative pairings (sister-sister, brother-brother), or between inter-generational first-degree relations (father-daughter, mother-son), or a combination of both

(father-son, mother-daughter). One reason for this is likely to be that while sex between a brother and sister toys with taboo sex and the titillation such generates, adding non-normative same-sex or age-discrepant dimensions ventures a taboo too far.

Let me mention also the case of German siblings Patrick Stübing and Susan Karolewski. These siblings were raised apart and met when Stübing was an adult and Karolewski a teenager. They are now a couple and have four children together. Their case came before the European Court of Human Rights following Stübing's two-year prison sentence for incest. Stübing argued that the law infringed on his right to "respect for private and family life." Although the Court ruled against him in April 2012, his case received widespread media attention and, particularly after Stübing had a voluntary vasectomy (because much of public condemnation at consensual incest focuses on deleterious consequences for children of such unions), public support for the couple was quite considerable. Any comparable measure of support has not been forthcoming for the isolated cases of consensual adult father-daughter or mother-son couples that have hit the headlines, such as father and daughter John and Jenny Deaves, subjects of "Forbidden Love," a *60 Minutes* television programme aired in their native Australia (2008), and the case of mother and son Kim West and Ben Ford (Bucktin 2016).

All three cases of first-degree sex are examples of Genetic Sexual Attraction Syndrome (GSA), which pertains to erotic attraction between close biological relatives who meet first in adulthood. In situations of reunion in later life, GSA and incest are said to occur quite commonly.[14] But where persons *do* spend their formative (particularly early childhood) years in close proximity, as applies to many biological siblings, sexual attraction is highly *unlikely* to occur due to another psychosocial mechanism called the Westermarck effect. This mechanism brings about reverse sexual imprinting and ensures that children who grow up together become desensitized to sexual attraction. Crucially, the Westermarck effect is triggered not by awareness of biological relationship but by proximity in early life. Given this emphasis on proximity, the Westermarck effect is discernible not only among siblings reared together but also among persons raised together *like siblings*, such as on kibbutzim (Spiro 1956).[15]

Interestingly, in some countries (e.g. Turkey, Israel), there is no penalty for consensual incest between adults—and again, there is a tendency to a higher degree of accommodation when sex is between siblings, or cousins, as opposed to inter-generational. Hence, the criminal code of Ohio targets

only parental figures, while in Sweden, half-sibling marriage is now legal. There is also some move towards keeping the topic of consensual consanguineous sex firmly separate from incestuous child abuse and rape. As James Twitchell puts it, "justice may be more appropriately served by prosecuting acts of rape, fornication, seduction, or sexual battery than by making a legal case of incest" (1985, p. 309 n. 12).

In popular culture, meanwhile, there are abundant examples in filmic media of eroticized brother-sister relations. In the Internet/Movie database (begy 2012), these depictions far outnumber any other first-degree pairing. There are dozens of depictions of implied, resisted, and consummated sibling incest; of forced, unknowingly entered into, and idealized brother-sister sex; and of step-, half-, and full-sibling sex—not infrequently of "twincest." The topos, familiar and persistent since antiquity, that incest is an indicator of acute depravity, is present. To give one example, in TV fantasy drama *Game of Thrones* (HBO 2011–present), the hideousness of the dastardly Lannisters is quickly established and signified by the coupling of siblings Jaime and Cersei.

Another popular sibling incest motif—resonant with all sorts of claims made about the close-kin unions of ancient Egyptian and Persian royal families—is that of maintaining family purity (Stiebert 2016, pp. 26, 80, 175). It has been proposed that elite families (rather like the gods of ancient Near Eastern mythology), exceptionally, could enter into sibling marriages. Again, in *Game of Thrones*, the purity of the Targaryen bloodline is maintained through close-kin unions.

Represented too, and in line with GSA, are star-crossed sibling romances between a brother and sister who first meet in adulthood. In films and especially soap operas, there are a number of examples of siblings meeting later in life, or after a lengthy hiatus, only to experience overwhelming attraction. Yet what is most surprising—because it goes against both the aforementioned Westermarck effect *and* resists the notion of incest being depraved and perverse—are the *many* filmic examples depicting brother-sister sex as entered into knowingly and consentingly, as erotic, romantic, even sometimes as a romantic ideal. There is no strong suggestion that brother-sister incest is *actually* very common—instead, it is something more probably *unusual*. But there is, nevertheless, an evident demand for its depiction. Hence, brother-sister sex seems to compel, titillate, push boundaries, and inspire fantasies.

There are some particular, striking, and often disturbing elements and tendencies in these filmic depictions of sibling incest. First, not only is the

brother-sister dynamic the most widely depicted of first-degree sexual unions, it is the only one somewhat regularly depicted in romantic and even humorous terms. If the sister is "up for it," sibling sex is the stuff of quirky comedy—such as in *The Hotel New Hampshire* (1984) and *The House of Yes* (1997)—as well as of intense passion, such as Nick Cassavetes' *Yellow* (2012). In all of these films—be the genre comedy or subversive romance—the sister is very beautiful and her insubordinate daringness is something that adds to her erotic appeal. Hence, in *Yellow*, Heather Wahlquist plays Mary, a drug-taking, bipolar woman whose incestuous relationship with her half-brother lies in her troubled past. Mary constantly pushes the boundaries of subversion. She is fired from her elementary school job for having sex with a pupil's father on parent-teacher evening and later, in a tender scene, visits her lover-brother in prison. The film revels voyeuristically in Mary's disastrousness and crazy choices. Director Cassavetes comments, "She's a walking dead … She's a wipeout of a mess. But I hope people root for this character, damaged or not." He continues, "Who gives a shit if people judge you? … Love who you want … If it's your brother or sister it's super-weird, but if you look at it, you're not hurting anybody" (Waxman 2012). But is Mary really able to give consent or make responsible choices?[16] In *The House of Yes*, the beautiful and highly imbalanced Jacqueline who seduces her twin brother Marty has borderline personality disorder. In *The Hotel New Hampshire*, incest occurs between the narrator John and his sister Franny. John has always desired his sister, and the one-off consummation is essentially a way to get his sexual longing out of his system. Franny has, prior to this event, been raped and is emotionally fragile. The emerging pattern here is that if the sister is attractive and consenting, then sibling incest is fair game for fantasy, quirky humour, and intense drama. But it is also the case that sibling incest occurs when the sister is first rendered in some way acutely vulnerable (whether due to some form of mental illness, or following rape), which is profoundly disturbing—and also throws into serious ambivalence the notion of consent.

Brother-Sister Sex and the Hebrew Bible

There is little mention of sisters alongside brothers in the Hebrew Bible. Strikingly, however, when there is, sisters are almost invariably sexualized. Leviticus proscribes sex with a (half) sister (18:9; 20:17), whether raised in one's home or elsewhere (18:9). Alongside this, there are sustained stories

about the following brothers and sisters: Abraham and Sarah[17] are married (Gen. 11:29; 12:10–20; 13:1; 16:1–6; 17:9–21; 18:1–15; 20:1–18; 21:1–13; 23:1–19); Laban negotiates his sister Rebekah's marriage (Gen. 24:29–61); Dinah's brothers Simeon and Levi lead the attack to avenge Dinah's "defilement" by a prospective husband (Genesis 34); Aaron and Miriam act together in rebellion against their brother Moses on account of his Cushite wife (Numbers 12); Absalom avenges his sister Tamar by arranging the murder of their rapist half-brother, Amnon (2 Samuel 13). All of these stories negotiate sexual relations, in most cases something to do with marriage. The interactions between Laban and Rebekah, Simeon, Levi, and Dinah, and Absalom and Tamar all suggest bonds of duty or family honour. Relations between Aaron and Miriam suggest sibling collusion, and a case can be made for an affectionate bond between Absalom and Tamar[18] and a protective bond between Laban and Rebekah.[19]

Let me focus next on the two cases where the relations between brother and sister involve sex: Abraham and Sarah are (apparently) married siblings; Amnon sexually desires and rapes his sister Tamar. It is notable that both pairs are paternal half-siblings; this is made explicit in the case of the former (Gen. 20:12) and, as Amy Kalmanofsky puts it, "[Tamar too] is marked more directly as Absalom's sister" (2014, p. 104; cf. 2 Sam. 13:1, 4), most probably because they share a mother as well as a father, whereas Tamar and Amnon share a father only.[20]

The story of Abraham and Sarah features two of the Hebrew Bible's three sister-wife stories.[21] In the first (Gen. 12:10–20), Abraham asks Sarah to tell the Egyptians that she is his sister so that, when they desire her for her beauty, they do not kill him. Sarah is taken (*lqḥ*, Gen. 12:15, 19) by Pharaoh, which at least strongly implies sex—or better, rape (Keshet 2013, p. 34)—and is only returned to Abraham following a series of plagues inflicted by YHWH on Pharaoh's house. In the second version (Gen. 20:1–18), Abraham says of Sarah that she is his sister. She is taken to Abimelech, but God visits the king in a dream and prevents him from raping Sarah. Next, Abraham discloses that Sarah is his half-sibling, the daughter of his father but not his mother (v. 12). His careful qualification of their relatedness may indicate that paternal sibling marriage was (at least in this case) permissible, whereas relations between maternal (and, therefore, also between full siblings) was not. Of course, much more could be (and has been) said about Abraham's less than exemplary conduct, not least of all his willingness to hand over and pimp out his wife.[22]

The legality of Abraham and Sarah's union—in terms of how the narrative relates events—is not in dispute. Theirs is a close-kin union, not an incestuous one. A number of reasons have been suggested for this odd state of affairs, whereby Abraham announces his sibling marriage, while the people of Egypt and Gerar (for all the lambasting of deviant foreigners) appear not to have expected such. Ilona Rashkow asserts that Abraham is lying. As she points out, he is acting deceitfully in both Genesis 12 and 20, leading her to pronounce, "Abraham's words [in Gen. 20:12] are suspect. He claims that Sarah is actually his half-sister, but this is not confirmed by the narrator nor by any other dialogue or genealogical source either before or after this scene" (1992, p. 67). This may be so, but it is unclear *why* Abraham would make this assertion. Granted, biblical narratives do not always "make good sense," but he has just been caught out for passing his wife over to another man, eliciting horror from Abimelech. Moreover, he has confessed that he considered Gerar a place where there is no fear of God and where people are murderers (Gen. 20:11). At such a juncture, is he really worried about being considered a liar? If Abraham is lying, it is a peculiar lie that affords him no obvious advantage.

Seth Kunin (1995) takes Abraham's statement at face value. He argues that in the chosen lineage, Sarah as sister-wife fulfils a fantasy and ideal. In the later lineage, too, a wife has to be a close relative (e.g. a cousin) and, effectively, become a sister symbolically in order to be mythically acceptable. For Kunin, it is significant that only once the wife (Sarah, Rebekah) is identified as sister, does she become pregnant with the child of promise. In the case of Rachel, the pattern changes: here Jacob marries first Leah and then her sister, Rachel. According to Lev. 18:18, this constitutes an incestuous union, and, in Kunin's argument, incest is precisely the point: thus, when Jacob marries Rachel, Rachel becomes not only his wife but, through Leah, *also his sister*. In this way, Jacob's union with Rachel fulfils the fantasy of sibling marriage, and again, Rachel becomes mother to the chosen son, Joseph.

In J. Cheryl Exum's compelling reading of these sister-wife traditions, fantasy operates differently. Exum, like Kunin, takes a psychoanalytic-literary approach and argues that the threefold repetition (with changes) of the sister-wife story "encodes unthinkable and unacknowledged sexual fantasies" alongside efforts to resolve them (1993, p. 154). The crux of the fantasy is a man's unconscious and taboo desire that his wife have sex with another man. For Exum, it is irrelevant whether Abraham and Sarah

are *really* brother and sister but instead, "the important issue is … that in all three versions the brother-sister relationship is imagined" (p. 167). Abraham's and Isaac's imagining that the wife is sister could be "a narcissistic striving toward completeness or wholeness, whose realization can only be imagined in his mirror-image from the opposite sex (she is what he would be if he were a woman)."[23] For me, another possibility is that alongside these stories exploring the fantasy and fear-mixed-with-enjoyment of imagining one's wife with another man, they probe also the fantasy of sex with one's sister. Exum, focusing on the former, describes how each story moves forward in terms of dismantling the taboo desire and imposing conventional order. In the first story (Genesis 12), Sarah *is* taken by Pharaoh (in psychoanalytic terms, the id wins) and only then is she returned to Abraham, her husband. In the second, Sarah is also taken, but Abimelech is prevented by a dream and plagues from violating her (in psychoanalytic terms, the super-ego wins)—but still, Exum notes, "morality based on external authority is not the best solution for the patriarchal neurosis" (p. 168). Only in the third story is the fear resolved; only here does the patriarch keep his wife to himself. Moreover, it is the other man who watches Isaac having sexual dealings—possibly violent ones—with Rebekah.[24] In the earlier two versions, the sexual knowledge and prowess of the other (powerful foreign) man is feared; in the third, it is defused, as Abimelech recoils upon witnessing Isaac's sexual forcefulness. Instead of imagining another man having sex with one's wife, the other man now watches the patriarch's performance of conjugal sex.

Kalmanofsky resists the notion of incest fantasy. She states not only that the sister-wife stories "offer the Bible's most positive narrative representation of incest"[25] but also that they ultimately reveal "incest to be a destructive force" (2014, p. 87). In her argument, Abraham is incriminated on account of his incestuous union. This is indicated by two distinct verbal echoes between the narrative in Genesis 20 and the prohibition against sex with a half-sister in Lev. 20:17: first, Abraham's words to Abimelech ("she is my sister, the daughter of my father") are reminiscent of the wording of the Leviticus verse ("a man who marries his sister, daughter of his father"), and second, both feature the word *ḥesed*. This common Hebrew Bible noun by far most often means "goodness, kindness," or similar, but in Lev. 20:17 (possibly uniquely, or only here and at Prov. 14:34; see BDB), it means "disgrace" (NRSV) or "shame, reproach" (BDB). In Gen. 20:13, the noun refers to the "kindness" (NRSV) Sarah must perform at every

place: namely claiming she is Abraham's sister—which in turn makes her vulnerable to rape. For Kalmanofsky, however, *ḥesed* here, too, has overtones of the pejorative meaning in Leviticus 20. In other words:

> *chesed* links Genesis 20 to the incest prohibition. It alludes to a shared meaning and implies that Abraham violates the incest prohibition whether in deed, by actually marrying his half-sister, or in kind, by presenting his wife as his half-sister. In this reading of *chesed*, Sarah's act of grace is, in truth, an act of disgrace that reflects poorly upon Abraham and works to his detriment and not to his benefit. Abraham should not have married his sister or even presented Sarah as his sister. (2014, p. 96)

According to Kalmanofsky (2014), the only way that Abraham can reclaim his standing is by affirming Sarah as his wife and wife only; and only then can she conceive and bear Isaac. Kalmanofsky, therefore, does not regard this as a story that legitimates, let alone idealizes, sibling union. She is non-committal, however, as to whether Abraham violates the prohibition of Lev. 20:17 "in thought or in action" (p. 98).

For me, there is some confusion with Kalmanofsky's argument. If Abraham's statement that Sarah is his sister as well as his wife is some kind of "blip,"[26] rather than a reference to an actual sibling marriage, it is, once more, a rather odd statement to make. Unless they *are* paternal siblings, it seems peculiar that Abraham would make the claim. And if they *are* siblings, then the union appears to be (at least in this instance) acceptable; otherwise, it would jeopardize Abraham's role and status as—in Kalmanofsky's words—"designated patriarch." Kalmanofsky is correct that Sarah's status as Abraham's wife is emphasized more than her status as his sister, which receives mention only in Gen. 20:12. It is also true that at the conclusion of the story (just before Isaac's birth), Sarah is called Abraham's wife (20:18). However, it is also the case that Abimelech, addressing Sarah, refers to Abraham as "your brother" (v. 16)—once more stressing the *sibling* relationship. Moreover, in the entire account of Isaac's birth and early life (Gen. 21:1–14), Sarah, while mentioned frequently (Gen. 21:1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 9, 12), is *not once* called Abraham's wife—which is surprising if the point of the preceding chapter is to clarify her status as wife and wife only. Hence, the reference to a wife who is also a paternal sister remains. And this sister-wife, a beautiful alluring woman, is handed over for sex with other men—she is, and she is imagined as, sexualized sister. Sex with Pharaoh, moreover, is apparently consummated

(Gen. 12:15) and very probably constitutes rape, though this is trivialized in terms of a "kindness" she *must do* (Gen. 20:13). Sarah's perspective, let alone consent, is (like Dinah's) absent.

The second reference to sex between paternal siblings occurs in 2 Samuel 13. In this story, David's firstborn Amnon desires Tamar. Feigning sickness, Amnon contrives that David sends Tamar to him to prepare food. Together in Amnon's chamber, Amnon propositions Tamar and she rejects him, proposing that he speak to the king, "for he will not withhold me from you" (v. 13). Thereupon Amnon rapes Tamar and then casts her out. After two years, Absalom arranges for the murder of Amnon.

Rape and rape fantasy are peripheral and downplayed elements in the story of Abraham and Sarah (Exum 1993, pp. 148–69; Scholz 2010, pp. 88–93), with Sarah's perspective receiving no mention. In this story, rape is central, and Tamar's resistance and distress are acknowledged. There is widespread agreement that Amnon is cast as the villain of the piece (e.g. Fuchs 2003, p. 202; Trible 1984, pp. 45–6), Tamar as tragic victim (e.g. Trible 1984, p. 48), and Absalom as righteous avenger. Unlike Dinah (apparently) (Gen. 34:1),[27] Tamar does not leave her home of her own accord "but rather was ordered by her father and manipulated by her half-brother" (Fuchs 2003, p. 208). This is unusual in that Tamar (unlike Lot's daughters in Sodom, or Dinah in Hivite territory) is at risk not from an outsider but from someone who might be expected to be her custodian and protector (p. 209). Tamar, in other words, has reason to feel safe and does not invite her fate, as is sometimes implied of Dinah. Absalom is widely regarded as the hero or "the advocate of Tamar" (Trible 1984, p. 51), but numerous commentators also acknowledge the presence of fraternal competition (Trible 1984, p. 38; Schwartz 1997, pp. 101–2; Rashkow 2000, pp. 148–9; Fuchs 2003, pp. 201–5). Some express surprise or outrage at David's peripheral and ineffective role. For Kalmanofsky, he plays the role of "compromised father" who "is unable to protect [his daughter]" (2014, p. 105). Several commentators use the word "unwitting[ly]" to describe David's procurement of Amnon's sexual access to Tamar (Trible 1984, p. 42; Reis 1998, p. 47 n. 22; Fuchs 2003, p. 210). Kalmanofsky, on the other hand, argues that David suspects Amnon's motive and "knowingly relinquishes [Tamar] to Amnon" (2014, p. 106). She speculates that his is "a misguided attempt … to assert control over and to protect his household" by acquiescing to his son's desire (p. 106).

This rape story, again, is suggestive of legal close-kin marriage between paternal siblings, rather than of (illegal) incest. Striking for sure is the sheer emphasis on family relationships in this chapter. Almost every verse contains a term pertaining to first-degree relationships.[28] This is clearly, therefore, a story of *family* strife, exploring boundaries and loyalties within the first family. Moreover, this is a story about men and men's concerns, with Tamar functioning as conduit, or catalyst—much in the way Bathsheba functions in a story about men: David, Uriah, and Nathan (2 Samuel 11). After this, Tamar—except for the memorial in the form of her namesake niece (2 Sam. 14:27)—fades completely from the narrative.

For all its many relational terms, this story does not spell out quite why Absalom, the younger brother, has fraternal precedence to Tamar over his older brother Amnon, the royal firstborn. The usual explanation is that Absalom and Tamar are full siblings, whereas Amnon and Tamar (and, therefore, Amnon and Absalom) are paternal siblings. This might confer closer intimacy on Absalom and Tamar—and also exclude the possibility of *their* marriage. As noted, the only other reference to sibling marriage is between paternal siblings, Abraham and Sarah. It might also explain Absalom's act of blood vengeance on Amnon (i.e. because his loyalty to and association or honour-tie with Tamar is stronger than with Amnon).

The notion that Tamar's appeal to paternal sibling marriage (2 Sam. 13:13) is less of a stalling tactic and more of a genuine alternative is widely advocated. Adrien Bledstein argues that Tamar appeals to Amnon's fantasy and "either knew the law [of sibling marriage] or set the precedent" (2000, p. 82; cf. Trible 1984, pp. 45–6 n. 35; Schwartz 1997, p. 98; Kalmanofsky 2014, p. 108). J.P. Fokkelman finds support in Gen. 20:12 and considers any impasse to derive from Tamar's virginity, not consanguinity (1981, p. 103). For Helena Zlotnick, "Even the tale of Amnon and Tamar could have ended happily but for Amnon's change of heart from love to hatred (2 Sam. 13:15)" while "David's … presumed assent to a mediated marriage between his two children" is notable (2002, p. 41).[29]

For Reis, Amnon and Tamar's sex act constitutes incest and, as such, a shockingly taboo crime. Yet if paternal sibling sex were (in terms of the narrative world) really a despicable crime, then both David's mere anger without blotting out the offender and Absalom's biding time for two years are surprising. Instead, it appears as though the rape of an unbetrothed woman, even a virgin sister, while socially unacceptable, is not in the same league as adultery. Foregrounded here is not incest but rape, dishonour,

and a profound lack of social decorum. Otherwise, why would Absalom, in addressing a distressed Tamar, refer to Amnon *twice* as her brother (2 Sam. 13:20)? If *incestuous* rape were the primary offence, this would be acutely insensitive. My interpretation is also discomforting: what I discern is that Absalom is appalled at Amnon's action and (as Tamar's full brother) interprets it as dishonouring him (hence his vengeance). But Amnon's rape is not depicted as illegal. This is why Absalom consoles Tamar with "he is your brother": it is a reminder that as paternal half-brother, perhaps also, as royal firstborn, Amnon within this rape culture has powers and privileges akin to diplomatic immunity.

Amnon is depicted as a nasty character, and what he does to Tamar is dishonourable and goes against social mores—he rapes a virgin and then refuses to marry her. Absalom's vengeance is depicted as defensible, even predictable (vv. 32–3). Somewhat analogously, the man in Deuteronomy who refuses to marry his brother's widow is depicted as behaving dishonourably and as deserving of (proportionate) humiliation, in this case, being spat at publicly (Deut. 25:7–10). But neither Amnon nor the refusing brother is acting illegally. This might also account for David's inaction: within the parameters of social acceptability reflected in this story, Amnon has exploited his power and behaved badly (hence, David is angered), but he has not committed a crime (hence, David does not punish him). If sex between half-siblings were incestuous and, moreover, a serious criminal offence (like adultery appears to have been), then the expectation might be that Amnon would be punished with commensurate severity. After all, King David himself is accountable for adultery and the murder of Uriah (2 Samuel 11–12).

It appears, then, that Amnon's deed is a breach of honour but *not* a serious crime. Absalom urges Tamar to calm herself, precisely because there is no legal recourse here: Amnon is not guilty of incest (because paternal sibling marriage is—at least in exceptional cases—legal), and, as a royal prince he can take a woman, as long as she is not betrothed or married to another. Presumably, the social expectation is that a man would not rape his half-sister. When speaking to David (2 Sam. 13:6), Amnon probably uses the designation "my sister" (rather than "your daughter" or "the maiden") strategically to impart that the request he is making is innocent. Amnon, therefore, disregards decorum and does so not with impassioned spontaneity but with stealth. He is ignominious, but his rape is neither incestuous nor illegal—an indication of rape culture. Amnon works through David to procure a situation where he can rape Tamar;

similarly, Absalom works through David to engineer an opportunity for fratricide. Where Amnon asks "let my sister Tamar come" (v. 6), contriving a sense of intimacy and of proximity without threat, so Absalom asks David, "let my brother Amnon go with us" (v. 26), probably with similar intentionality.

My interpretation is that Amnon rapes Tamar. The rape is, in Tamar's own words, "a thing that should not be done in Israel" (v. 12); it defies social convention and decency. Paternal sibling marriage, however, appears to be—while probably not common—a possibility (v. 13). Tamar herself proposes such a marriage (terrible as it is to contemplate this prospect): it offers a way forward that could postpone rape, could provide her with a husband (including after rape, which is depicted as rendering a woman defiled and as a less desirable prospect for marriage, v. 16), and could have prevented the blood vengeance Absalom comes to exact.

In terms of all the various first-degree permutations, brother-–sister unions are presented in the Hebrew Bible as the most sexually desirable and most probable. There are not many accounts of brothers and sisters, but those there are suggest some tendency to sexualize the sister: hence, sisters are most often discussed in the context of either marriage or a sexually charged threat (of rape and/or seduction). While there is little evidence for regular sibling marriage, the sister fantasy is nevertheless entertained. Indications are, moreover, that paternal sibling marriage was not always considered illegal. Abraham mentions his marriage to his paternal half-sister Sarah rather casually; Tamar suggests marriage to Amnon as a viable option. In both stories, either rape or the threat of rape looms large.

Conclusions

Both the Hebrew Bible and some expressions of popular culture present us with sexualized sisters, sisters imagined as enticing sexual partners. In the case of the two most explicit biblical accounts—of Sarah and Tamar—the sister is beautiful, desirable to and wanted by men. The suggestion is that rules can be adapted so the brother can have her. Distressingly too, rape overshadows these stories even where marriage is in place or contemplated: Abraham gives Sarah over to other men; Tamar is raped by her brother as she pleads for legitimate union. In the case of Abraham and Sarah, the offering up of Sarah for rape is shockingly casual. In the case of Tamar and Amnon, rape is committed—and poses no obstacle to marriage.

In popular culture too, rape overshadows brother-sister sex—even in depictions that aim to be titillating, humorous, or romantic. The "up-for-it sister" is a figment of voyeuristic fantasy. What is especially disturbing about the filmic examples explored here is that the "consent" of the sister is so often undermined, rendered dubious by her vulnerability. Rape is normalized; the depictions reflect and underscore rape cultures.

If we accept that popular culture to some extent reflects popular fantasies and social mores, confronts social tensions, and seeks to cater to what audiences want, what are we to make of the brother-sister incest depictions in modern film and fiction? And do these relate to the sexualized sister of the Hebrew Bible? Given the various, including pernicious and subliminal, influences of the Bible, the lines of influence may indeed be there.

Notes

1. I am cognizant of the profound distinctions between "biblical worlds" and "contemporary worlds" in terms of cultural contexts and expressions. My intention here is to identify points for comparison and interfacing. While each set of worlds is immensely internally complex and nuanced, and though it is beyond the scope of this investigation to analyze this fully, the two can be juxtaposed and explored together effectively.
2. Both are represented in the Hebrew Bible. Moses orders his army to slaughter everyone except (literally) "children among the women" (presumably "female children") who have not known a man carnally (the expression used is *miškab zākār*, "lying of a male"); they shall be kept alive "for you" (Num. 31:18; cf. Judg. 21:11–12). As Michel points out, "The lack of … a limitation [of age in the direction of small children], the clear sexual connotation ('who have not known a man') together with the 'for you', and additionally the fact that this is a positive instruction or permission given by Moses characterize the verse in the context of sexual violence against children as markedly harsh" (2004, p. 57). With regard to marital rape, there is the scene where Isaac is acting sexually with Rebekah, his wife (Gen. 26:8). As Scholz points out, the verb used here (from *ṣḥq*) is sometimes translated "fondling" (e.g. NRSV), but may well have "less playful" and even overt "rape-prone" connotations (2010, p. 91). The same verb appears in Potiphar's wife's accusation that Joseph attempted to rape her (Gen. 39:14, 17). Rape can also be a strategy to get a wife (see below).
3. Most of my examples are drawn from Anglophone Western contexts most familiar to me.
4. See Rape Crisis England and Wales.

5. Operation Yewtree is a police investigation launched in 2012 by England's Metropolitan Police Service into sexual abuse allegations (particularly the abuse of children) made against various prominent members of the British media.
6. On the sexualization of preadolescent girls in fashion, see Merskin (2004). On the vulnerability (including vulnerability to sexual exploitation) of underage girls deriving from such sexualization, see Holland and Haslam (2016). When apparent consent to sex is given by someone too young to give it legally, resulting sex acts are classified as statutory rape. Arguably, the sexualization of children below the age of consent (16) incites or mitigates statutory rape.
7. For examples from US contexts with particular emphasis on the perpetuation of rape myths, see Edwards et al. (2011).
8. In modern definitions, "rape" constitutes the sexual (usually penetrative) assault of a person against that person's will. In archaic parlance, rape (from Latin *raptio,* "abduction") pertains to seizing a person (most often a woman) for the purpose of sexual intercourse. Consent or otherwise is not determinative of *raptio* but rather a person's removal (usually from the sphere of protection of either the natal family or spouse).
9. Abducting the women of Shiloh is depicted as preferable to the demise of Benjamin or to breaking an oath. Rape, in effect, is collateral damage. Fathers and brothers of the victims of rape marriage are implored to be "generous" (NRSV). The final verse (v. 25) strikes a note of disapproval, but violence against the women, or acknowledgement of their suffering, receives no mention.
10. For Zlotnick, Genesis 34 depicts tensions between two different marriage strategies: first, marriages negotiated and arranged by families, and second, marriages by abduction or elopement (2002, pp. 39–46).
11. Gafney (2009) argues that Ruth and Orpah are victims of abduction marriage, as indicated by the verb from the root *nś'* ("to lift up") for acquiring a wife (Ruth 1:4; cf. Judg. 21:21).
12. Whether Shechem rapes Dinah has been widely discussed but not resolved. The majority of feminist commentators argue that he does: e.g. Rashkow (2000, pp. 44–6); Graetz (2005, p. 28); Blyth (2010); Scholz, who specifies acquaintance rape (2010, pp. 32–8). But modern understandings of rape highlight consent—and Dinah's consent or otherwise is not mentioned. Sex between Dinah and Shechem is depicted as defiling (from *tm'*, Gen. 34:5, 13, 27) and an affront to her brothers' honour. Frymer-Kensky is probably correct that it would most likely be so irrespective of whether Dinah was raped, or a willing participant in sex (1998, p. 89). The verbs describing Shechem's actions (v. 2) are *lqḥ* ("he took," possibly describing the movement of Dinah from one location to another—e.g. to Shechem's

home), *škb* + object ("he had sex with [her]"), and *ʿnh* + pronominal suffix ("he debased/humiliated/shamed [her]"). The last verb can sometimes denote rape and/or connote a lowering of Dinah's status. Both Bechtel (1994) and van Wolde (2002) argue that the conclusion that Shechem rapes Dinah cannot be established. Zlotnick points to an accumulation of ambiguities and places the word "rape" in inverted commas (2002, pp. 35–42).

13. Relatives in the first-degree are the members of one's nuclear family: one's parents (*ascending* lineal kin), one's children (*descending* lineal kin), and one's full siblings (parallel kin).
14. Greenberg and Littlewood's study estimates prevalence of GSA among reunited relatives to exceed 50 per cent (1995).
15. The Westermarck effect is implied in the Hebrew Bible. First, in Abimelech's reaction to observing Isaac acting sexually with Rebekah (Gen. 26:8–9): Abimelech does not conclude that the two are in a close-kin marriage but that they are husband and wife and *ipso facto* not brother and sister. A second indication is the expressed desire of the woman in Song of Songs that her lover was her brother (8:1), so that she could be affectionate with him without incurring public disapproval, presumably because sibling affection is considered non-erotic and therefore (unlike lovers' affection) acceptable when expressed publicly.
16. There are parallels also with Bergman's atmospheric film *Through a Glass Darkly* (1961), which hints at brother-sister incest between Karin and Minus. Again, the sister is ill—in this case, schizophrenic.
17. Prior to Genesis 17, Abraham is called "Abram" and Sarah "Sarai." To avoid confusion, I will use the later and better-known names throughout.
18. Absalom's words to Tamar (2 Sam. 13:20) may not sound kind or comforting, but Trible makes the case that in Absalom's articulation "tenderness dictates the counsel" (1984, p. 52).
19. Laban submits to the will of YHWH (Gen. 24:50), asks for Rebekah's consent, and sends her away with her nurse and a blessing (Gen. 24:57–60). While Laban's and his mother's request for Rebekah's consent may be little more than a formality (Stiebert 2013, p. 38 n. 66), the depiction is of a careful, honourable, and properly conducted marriage negotiation.
20. In Greek sources, indications are that paternal sibling marriage (while probably rare) is not unheard of and that *homomatrioi* (those sharing a mother but not a father) are more closely related and bonded than *homopatrioi* (those sharing a father but not a mother) (Stiebert 2016, p. 168). Marriage to a maternal (or full) sibling, therefore, is incestuous; marriage to a paternal sibling is possible.
21. In the third (Genesis 26), Isaac passes off Rebekah (his cousin-wife) as his sister.

22. Keshet is dismissive of any "feeble attempts of commentators to interpret [Gen. 12:13] … as if Abram did not really intend to get anything but only to save his own life," arguing instead that the story presents him "as a sort of procurer" (2013, p. 35).
23. Notably, both women are very beautiful (Gen. 12:11; 26:7), which could either confirm the narcissism or suggest that "the patriarch wants to know that his wife is attractive to foreigners" (Kalmanofsky 2014, p. 88).
24. Scholz emphasizes that this is a fantasy centred on marital rape. In her interpretation, the three stories are about "a husband [worrying] about losing sexual control over his wife" (2010, p. 93).
25. Given that these stories are shot through with discrimination against foreigners, handing women over to be raped and suggestions of marital rape, this "most positive" label is especially depressing.
26. Kalmanofsky proposes that Abraham, like a sister, feels vulnerable and that his statement is possibly indicative of anxiety rather than incest or incest fantasy.
27. Genesis 34 and 2 Samuel 13 are widely compared, as both foreground a sexualized and violated sister alongside "honor-driven fraternal vigilance" (Stone 2005, p. 104; cf. Reis 1998, p. 57; Rashkow 2000, pp. 142–6; Zlotnick 2002, pp. 38–42; Fuchs 2003, pp. 200–24).
28. Following the rape, Amnon calls Tamar "this [female]" (*zō'ṯ*, 2 Sam. 13:17). After the abundance of close-kin terminology, this comes across as dissonant and distancing, "as if absolving a familial relationship with her" (Kalmanofsky 2014, p. 109).
29. The suggestion that marriage to one's rapist constitutes a "happy ending" rankles.

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CHAPTER 4

Queering the Virgin/Whore Binary: The Virgin Mary, the Whore of Babylon, and Sexual Violence

Teguh Wijaya Mulya

In this chapter, I seek to problematize the virgin/whore binary which, I argue, has enabled, normalized, and sustained violence against women.[1] This binary positions women into two opposing categories: virgins or "good" women are those who express their sexuality only within culturally sanctioned and patriarchally defined boundaries such as marriage; all other women who fail to conform to this ideal are considered whores—morally corrupt and dangerously concupiscent "bad" women (Gottschall et al. 2006). Previous studies have shown how this binary has been deployed to justify and perpetuate sexual violence against those who are labelled as whores or "sluts" (Asencio 1999; García 2006). The logic is that sexual violence against these women is deemed "acceptable" or "makes sense" because they have transgressed cultural norms around women's purity and chastity. By being "promiscuous," they are "asking for trouble"; it is therefore their own fault if they are sexually assaulted.

While carrying out research for my doctoral thesis (Wijaya Mulya 2016), I discovered that this virgin/whore binary was frequently drawn

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upon by young Indonesian Christians whom I interviewed regarding their understandings of sexual violence. Below is an example of one response I received from Ayub, an 18-year-old male participant[2]:

> When I was in Year 7 [13 years old], I was very naughty. In my class at that time there was a girl, like, a cheap girl. One day me and other boys played a prank on her. When there was no teacher in the class, we turned the light off, then we stormed her and grabbed her things [the sexual areas of her body].

Besides trivializing this incident as a "prank" (thereby implying it was not serious), Ayub's narrative normalized an act of sexual violence by constituting the target as a "cheap girl"—that is, a young woman who has (or is believed to have) engaged in consensual sex with many boys. Since a "cheap girl" is presumed to no longer be a virgin and is thus deemed "morally corrupt," Ayub and his friends believed that they could treat her any way they like, especially sexually. It is her own fault, they reason, because she has failed to comply with "acceptable" social practice and stands in contrast to "good girls" who preserve their virginity. Drawing on the virgin/whore binary therefore enabled these Indonesian youths to justify sexual violence against certain women and girls.

As a hugely influential cultural text, the Bible has played a significant role in perpetuating the virgin/whore binary, justifying violence against women who fail to conform to dominant social discourses of "acceptable" female sexuality (Ipsen 2009; Kim 1999; van der Stichele 2000). One text that has been identified by queer and feminist interpreters as particularly toxic in its depiction of gendered violence is the narrative of the Whore of Babylon in Revelation 17 (e.g. Pippin and Clark 2006; Warren 2017). I want to contribute to this discussion, focusing in particular on the virgin/whore binary, which remains such a prevalent and ubiquitous part of contemporary rape culture, both in Indonesia and elsewhere. In order to queer or denaturalize this binary, I will juxtapose the Whore of Babylon with another biblical character, the Virgin Mary. Compared to the Whore of Babylon, Mary is portrayed in the gospels as the sinless virgin mother who gave birth to Jesus (Matt. 1:18–25; Luke 1:26–56). Within these gospels and other early Christian traditions, her figure is continuously disassociated from sex, thereby maintaining her uninterrupted state of "perfect purity." At first glance, then, it would appear that Mary can be situated at the opposite end of the virgin/whore binary to Revelation's Whore of

Babylon. In this chapter, however, I will explore the possibility that these two characters share more similarities than they do differences. My aim is to queer—to interrogate, to denaturalize, to rework—the virgin/whore binary by demonstrating that it is fundamentally unstable and unnecessarily categorical. I hope that this queer juxtaposition of Mary and the Whore of Babylon might provide alternative discursive resources to give new meanings to the young woman in Ayub's narrative and subsequently disrupt the normalization of sexual violence against women.

Sex, Violence, and the Contestation of Male-Dominated Sexuality

In Ayub's narrative, the young woman he and his friends targeted is defined and characterized by her sexuality, and is allocated by these young men to the "whore" category in the virgin/whore binary. Similarly, the Whore of Babylon is also named and known by her sexuality. Babylon the great one, the great city (Rev. 17:5, 18), is referred to as the "great whore" (v. 1) and the "mother of whores" (v. 5). She is defined by her opulent clothing and adornments (v. 4) and her acts of fornication with kings and "inhabitants of the earth" (v. 2), who have become drunk on the impurities of her fornication (vv. 2, 4). Her compelling sexuality and depravity takes the Apostle John's breath away—he is greatly amazed (*ἐthaumasa*, v. 6) when he looks upon her (Huber 2011, p. 307).[3]

While the whore of Babylon is characterized by an excess of sexuality, in contrast, the figure of the Virgin Mary is distinguished by an *absence* of sex, being renowned in both gospel and early Christian traditions for her chastity and purity (Taylder 2004). As Joseph Goh notes, "the worth of Mary as a product of theological assemblage rests upon her *desexualized* body by virtue of her virginity-maternity" (2012, p. 226; original italics). Previous feminist and queer biblical interpreters have suggested that this desexualization of Mary is problematic. Denying Mary's sexuality, or "condemning her to eternal chastity by making her name synonymous with virginity," as Sian Taylder argues, means preserving Mary as "an agent of patriarchy," who embodies the "impossible role models [for women] of Virgin and mother" (2004, p. 351). Such a desexualization of Mary reproduces patriarchal discourses of female purity, obedience, and submission as symbolized by the subject positions of a virgin and a mother. Thus, she has become an icon of subjugation to "male imagination and, indeed sexual fantasy" (p. 350), where women are imagined, fantasized,

and idealized as sexually pure and submissive. In a similar vein, Marcella Althaus-Reid refers to this desexualization of Mary as a "theological clitoridectomy," which denies and nullifies women's sense of sexual agency and entitlement (2000, p. 49). Women's sexual desires, pleasures, and fulfilment are thus discursively detached or cut off from their bodies, so that they are left without any sense of their sexual autonomy or self-identity.

Despite this, however, it is possible to reinvent Mary as a sexual theological figure and to reveal the centrality of sexuality in her gospel narrative. For this narrative revolves around a sexually related event, namely, her surrogate pregnancy. She was chosen among women on earth to be the mother of God's son (Luke 1:35, 42). So how does her "virginity" relate to this sexual event? On the one hand, virginity is often associated with abstinence, asceticism, and sacrificial self-denial. On the other hand, though, it can also symbolize sexual potential, fertility, fecundity, and, to a degree at least, autonomy and self-sufficiency ("belonging-to-no-man"; see Taylder 2004, p. 350). The word typically translated "virgin" in Hebrew (*'almâ*) refers to a maiden or young woman who is not married or betrothed; it need not explicitly, exclusively, or inevitably convey a sense of sexual chastity (Sjöö and Mor 1987). The Latin word *virgo* essentially refers to a woman who does not belong to a man, while the Greek word *parthenos* similarly describes an unbetrothed or married woman (Apostolos-Cappadona 2005; Spurr 2007). These terms therefore carry nuances of sexual independence, rather than just sexual abstinence. As *parthenos*, Mary may therefore be identified as an unattached woman, rather than simply as a sexually inexperienced (or sexually "pure") woman.

The centrality of sexuality to Mary's character may also be indicated in her exercise of sexual agency regarding her body as a site of spiritual struggle. As Goh has argued:

> I see Mary's body as queer … because it is a body in which sexuality is prioritized and exercised in accordance with the authority of personal agency and body knowledge. It is possible to theologically construct a Mary who manifests a sacred choice of bodiliness due to a keen awareness of her own sexual epistemologies. As such, I advocate a revisioning of theological bodiliness on Mary who discovers her inner holiness in the strength of choice that is informed by the promptings of the God that she finds in her sexual personhood … This Mary places authority in the depths of her bodily self-knowledge and locates the "power of the Most High" to her embodied, sexual self. (2012, p. 227)

Goh identifies Mary's decision to surrender her body as an act of faith—an agentic exercise of power which radically challenged the dominant patriarchal control of the female body that prevailed in the first-century Greco-Roman world. In contrast to her relative Elizabeth, whose imminent pregnancy was announced by the angel Gabriel to her husband Zechariah (Luke 1:11–20), Gabriel speaks to Mary directly and Mary then appears to make an informed and independent decision regarding her (sexual) body (Luke 1:26–7, 38). It is through this particular act of faith—in which body, sexuality, and spirituality are entangled in a sacred life-changing moment—that Mary becomes a (sexual) theological figure. Further, through Mary's decision to comply with a virginal conception, the usual participation of men in important historical events and decisions is replaced with the (genderless) divine spirit (*pneuma*). That is, the conception of Jesus is a sexual act from which men are entirely absent (Johnson 1992). As Sojourner Truth (1851) argues, "Where did your Christ come from? From God and a woman! Man had nothing to do with Him!" Consequently, having challenged the normative (patriarchal) way of being both woman and sexual subject, Mary is then accused of being "not-a-good-woman," including by Joseph who planned to quietly divorce her (Matt. 1:19).[4]

A similar challenge to male-dominated sexuality and patriarchal domination of women's bodies can also be found in the Whore of Babylon narrative. The image of this powerful, wealthy, and sexually seductive Whore who has the power to conquer kings has posed a serious threat to her male audiences over the centuries (as well as female readers who identify with male-dominated culture) (Sawyer 2008, pp. 308–14). In a patriarchal context where only men were considered powerful, agentic, and authoritative (both socially and sexually), the combination of the Whore of Babylon with the scarlet beast upon which she sits (Rev. 17:3) represents "the collapse of masculinity back into the morass of femininity and animality" (Moore 2009, p. 92). Because of her own power, agency, and authority, the Whore of Babylon incites fear *and* desire, hatred *and* attraction, amazement *and* trembling within both John and the audience of Revelation (Runions 2014, p. 236). By occupying this powerful position, the Whore of Babylon contests the stability of the patriarchal culture within which her story was written and read. Similarly, the young Indonesian woman in Ayub's narrative also posed a challenge to the patriarchal discourses of sexuality dominant within her context. Ayub and his friends regarded her as having contested the male privilege of sexual exploration by engaging in (what they presumed to be consensual) sex

with multiple partners—hence their identification of her as a "cheap girl." Just like Mary, she was accused of being "not-a-good-woman" by the men around her, based on their own assumptions about her sexual experience. Just like the Whore of Babylon, she was then attacked violently, punished for challenging male privilege to sexual agency and invading the male-controlled arena of sexuality. At the end of her narrative in Revelation 17, the Whore of Babylon is violently destroyed. The beast and the ten horns, who represent ten kings of the earth, will eventually kill her in a gruesome scene, making her desolate and naked, devouring her flesh, and burning her up with fire (v. 16).

I would suggest that, like the Whore of Babylon, the Virgin Mary is no stranger to sexualized violence, thereby likewise relating her to the experiences of the Indonesian woman in Ayub's narrative. While, as I have already discussed, the moment of annunciation can be seen as an exercise of Mary's sexual agency, it is also possible to interpret this moment as a non-consensual sexual encounter. As Daly writes, Mary's virginal conception can be seen as a retelling of the ancient patriarchal myth of the rape of the goddess, related in Greek mythical traditions about the goddess Antiope's rape by Zeus (1984, pp. 127–9). Or, as Althaus-Reid puts it, Mary has submissively endured the sexual aggressiveness of the "Highest Phallus" (2000, p. 49). I will therefore examine Luke 1:26–38 to explore this possibility further.

I suggested above that Mary's response to the angel Gabriel (Luke 1:38) may indicate her voluntary consent to a surrogate pregnancy; after Gabriel tells her she is to bear a son, she responds, "Here I am, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." However, Gabriel never explicitly *asks* for her consent, but simply pronounces, "And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus" (v. 31). Since Mary is not in a sexual relationship at this time, she initially asks Gabriel, "How can this be, since I am a *parthenos*?" (v. 34), to which he responds "The Holy Spirit will come upon (*ἐpeleusetai*) you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow (*ἐpiskiasei*) you" (v. 35). The word *ἐpeleusetai* is the third-person singular indicative future form of the verb *ἐperchomai*, which can mean "to arrive" (of time), "to overtake," or "to come upon" (of disease or calamity) (see Abbott-Smith 2001, p. 166). This word has been used in New Testament texts in the context of a disaster or misery (Luke 21:26, Acts 8:24; 13:40; James 5:1), the overpowering attack of a stronger person (Luke 11:22), an angry mob (Acts 14:19), and a strong spiritual power (Acts 1:8; Eph. 2:7). These usages all convey

a sense of an unexpected and non-consensual encounter. Meanwhile, the verb *ἐpiskiasei* (third-person singular indicative future form of *ἐposkiazō*) means "to throw a shadow upon," or "to envelop in shadow" (Abbott-Smith 2001, p. 173; cf. Matt. 17:5; Luke 9:34). The angel Gabriel's answer to Mary's question about the source of her pregnancy thus conveys nuances of attacking, overtaking, overshadowing, and enveloping; she is essentially told that *something* will do *some thing* to her, with the result that she will get pregnant. Most importantly, the angel does not ask for her consent; therefore, Mary can only respond, "Here I am, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word" (Luke 1:38).

This situation is reminiscent of Lois Pineau's depiction of sexual consent as "a proper conversation" versus "an offer from the Mafia" (1989, p. 235):

> So let us, for a moment, conceive of sexual interaction on a communicative rather than a contractual model. Let us look at it … as if it were a proper conversation rather than an offer from the Mafia.

For Pineau, a "contractual model" of cooperation offers a means to achieve further ends set by the contract. It is not important that the nuance of such cooperation is reluctant or hostile, as long as the agreed objectives are met. There are also situations where a contract is agreed in conditions where one of the parties involved has no other choice, because the other party has more power than they do, or may pose an (explicit or unspoken) threat should the contract be refused (as in the case of an offer from the Mafia). In contrast, a communicative model or "proper conversation" involves a willingness to seek what the other party wants and a desire to help them to achieve these ends. Pineau describes a proper conversationalist as charitable, intuitive, and sensitive to the responses of their partners.

Using this illustration, Mary's short conversation with the angel about her pregnancy may be considered less a "proper conversation" than an offer from the Mafia, in which Gabriel does not care about Mary's consent, but simply pronounces what his "boss" intends to do to Mary's body. Thus, Mary's "voluntary" consent, "let it be with me according to your word," might convey an unspoken sense of "Please don't kill me, I'll do whatever you want." Just like the young Indonesian woman in Ayub's narrative, Mary may have survived a sexual assault (Daly 1978, pp. 84–5).

Thus far, I have identified the centrality of sexuality, violence, and disruptions towards male-dominated sexuality and patriarchal culture in the

narrative of the Whore of Babylon, the Virgin Mary, and the young Indonesian woman in Ayub's story. All three women have been defined and named after their sexuality within male-constructed narratives. They have travelled unusual paths of sexual relationship. They have been accused of being "not-a-good-woman." They have subverted some patriarchal assumptions about women and sexuality. They have experienced forms of violence. Considering these similar characteristics, I argue that the virgin and the whore might not be as oppositely different as the traditional virgin/whore binary suggests. In the next section, I will further queer this binary by showing how the virgin and whore categories might be constantly shifting and unstable within different historical and social contexts.

"Promiscuous Virgin"? Fluid and Unstable Social Meanings of the Virgin and the Whore

The "virgin" category of the virgin/whore binary is not always desired or ideal; the whore category, meanwhile, is not always considered as the despised or immoral side of this binary. Rather, there is evidence of a fluid and hybrid fusion between these categories traditionally used to define women.

One contemporary example of a hybrid combination of the virgin and the whore is the symbiosis and syncretization of Mary and Ezili, a Vodou goddess in Haiti. In contemporary Haitian society, Ezili was identified with the Virgin Mary (Rey 1999). This Ezili (or Marian) figure is constituted via a number of conflicting images, including Ezili Freda, who is portrayed as a rich, promiscuous, and flamboyant woman, and Ezili Dantó, presented as the Black Madonna, a militant mother who fights fiercely to defend her children from oppression. Both images are considered contradictory embodiments of the same Ezili, or Virgin Mary, figure. Through this symbiosis of Ezili and Mary, the virgin and the whore categories are dissolved into one persona, that is—as Terry Rey put it—the "promiscuous virgin" (1999, p. 199).

I also came across other contemporary contestations of the virgin/whore binary among the Christian youth participants in my own research (Wijaya Mulya 2016). While previous studies in Indonesia have shown the importance of preserving virginity before marriage, especially for women (Bennett 2005; Smith-Hefner 2005; Utomo and McDonald 2009), a

number of participants in my study challenged this dominant norm by giving alternative meanings to sex, women, and virginity. For example, according to Anggi, a 22-year-old female participant:

> I think having sex is okay, as long as you are being responsible. I mean come on, who doesn't need sex? We are grownups … Losing your virginity isn't like losing both your hands.

Similarly, Lusi, a 22-year-old female student, made the following point:

> Coming from a not-so-good family relationship, I want more love and intimacy. So I have sex with my boyfriend. Sex is basically a normal human need. I think nowadays such a thing is quite common in Indonesia, depending on which community you are in.

These participants disrupted the dominant meanings around virginity in Indonesia—where maintaining virginity prior to marriage is regarded as the primary moral choice for young people (particularly women). For these participants, losing your virginity does not, however, imply your immorality, and engaging in sex outside of marriage does not make a woman a "whore" or a "cheap girl." Instead, sex is constituted as "a normal human need." In other words, they do not regard virginity as the ideal or desired condition for unmarried women. Quite the opposite: engaging in sex is considered a positive way to enjoy "love and intimacy." As Jackson and Scott have noted:

> Sex is now seen as positive, playful and life-enhancing. Where once it was thought to bring out the beast in us, it is now more often seen as having the potential to bring out the best in us … Good sex has become a key life goal and a source of personal fulfilment: *sex as secular salvation*. (1997, p. 559; italics added)

In a discursive landscape where sex is no longer constituted as "the beast," there is therefore the potential for the "whore" to become the ideal, the heroine, the role model; her sexuality ceases to be a marker of her immorality and transforms instead into a source of personal meaning and fulfilment, or even salvation.

As ambivalent as the categories of virgin and whore might be in these contemporary situations, there is also incongruity in biblical contexts

around the social role of the "whore" figure. In ancient Hebrew culture, the social existence of prostitutes or harlots appears to have always been contradictive. Prostitution was discouraged in certain circumstances in the laws of Leviticus (Lev. 21:7, 9, 14), but it was not a crime (Emmerson 1989, pp. 387–8). As Bird (1999) has noted, a prostitute was a shameful profession for a woman in this biblical context, but it was also one of the rare situations in which a woman was recognized as an individual, independent from any male guardian. A prostitute may have been an outcast, but she was not an outlaw. Women who took on the role of professional prostitute were thus rejected *and* accepted, tolerated *and* stigmatized. The whore subject position was both enabling *and* limiting for a woman in this context.

The instability of the virgin/whore binary is also evident when we examine other female biblical characters, including characters explicitly identified as prostitutes. Many of these women use their sexual appeal to fulfil God's will, while others play protagonist roles in the biblical narratives. It is not always easy to discern whether the narrator wishes us to evaluate them as honourable heroines or immoral harlots. Ruth, for instance, is often portrayed as a faithful God-obeying woman; yet she used certain strategies to seduce Boaz as instructed by her mother-in-law Naomi (Ruth 3:1–13). She washes and anoints herself, putting on her best clothes (v. 3), waits until Boaz falls into a drunken sleep, and then sneaks under his blanket to lie beside him (v. 7).[5] The characters of Jael and Judith are both hailed as heroines of Israel because they kill the enemy's top military leader. Nevertheless, they also use methods which involve sexual appeal and deception in order to carry out their murderous actions. Jael invites the fleeing Sisera into her tent, just as a street prostitute might approach a stranger: "Turn aside, my lord, turn aside to me, have no fear" (Judg. 4:18; cf. Proverbs 7). Inside the tent, Sisera only asks for water, but Jael comforts him with a milky drink and covers him with a blanket, before driving a tent peg into his head. In Judges 5—Deborah's hymn of praise to Jael—Sisera is described as falling down and lying "between [Jael's] feet" (v. 27). Considering the word "feet" (*raglayim*) in Hebrew is sometimes used as a euphemism for genitals (Haupt 1921; Smith 1990; Schipper 2009),[6] Jael's murder of Sisera may have involved some form of sexual engagement, even sexual aggression (e.g. see Yee 1993).

Judith, meanwhile, also destabilizes the virgin/whore binary. She is depicted as an honourable and chaste widow and a devout Jew. Yet, she

seduces the Assyrian general Holofernes with her beautiful appearance, extravagant jewellery (Jdt. 10:3–4), and well-prepared speech (11:5–19), before taking up his sword and decapitating him (13:1–10). By so doing, she delivers the Jewish people of Bethulia from imminent conquest by the Assyrian enemy.

Moreover, in the book of Genesis, we encounter Judah's daughter-in-law Tamar, who disguises herself as a professional prostitute to have sex with Judah, her father-in-law (Gen. 38:12–19). Although initially condemned to death by Judah for "playing the whore" (v. 24), he ultimately vindicates her as being "more righteous" than himself (v. 26). Tamar's actions are considered legitimate, since Judah had violated her rights according to Levirate marriage traditions to marry his son Shelah (Gen. 38:11, 14; cf. Deut. 25:5–10). By masquerading in the role of prostitute, she ensured the Judahite family line would continue, a line that would eventually give rise to the Davidic dynasty—the dynasty of Israel's messianic leadership. This vindication of the prostitute figure is also evoked in the story of Rahab (Joshua 2), a Canaanite prostitute who becomes an honourable hero by bravely refusing an order from the Jericho king to hand over the Hebrew spies (vv. 2–7). Rahab is later included in the genealogy of Jesus (Matt. 1:5), along with Tamar (v. 3), Ruth (v. 5), and Bathsheba (v. 6; see 2 Samuel 11–12 for Bathsheba's story)—all women whose sexual reputations are by no means without controversy. Corresponding with the focus of this chapter, the fifth and the last woman mentioned in this genealogy is Mary (Matt. 1:16), thereby connecting her symbolically with these sexualized women.

These contemporary and biblical examples demonstrate that the line between the virgin and whore is not always clear cut or easily demarcated; instead, these categories are fluid, unstable, and, at times, interchangeable. Thus, drawing on the virgin/whore binary to categorize women is inadequate, oversimplified, and unnecessary. Indeed, as the unknown author of *The Thunder, Perfect Mind* has articulated, the honoured and the scorned one, the whore and the holy one, may not be located on opposing sides of a gendered and sexualized binary. They may simply be one and the same person:

> For I am the first and the last.
> I am the honoured one and the scorned one.
> I am the whore and the holy one.[7]

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have explored some possibilities to denaturalize the virgin/whore binary, which was drawn on to justify an act of gendered violence perpetrated against a young woman by a group of Indonesian youth. I have juxtaposed the Virgin Mary and the Whore of Babylon as biblical characters best representing the virgin and the whore categories in order to reveal the instability and insufficiency of this binary for categorizing women. As I have argued, these biblical figures may not be poles apart; rather, they share similar characteristics, such as the centrality of sexuality in their lives, their experiences of violence, and the challenges they pose to dominant patriarchal cultures. I also suggest that the virgin and whore categories are fluid and interchangeable in various contemporary and biblical contexts. These analyses call for a more nuanced recognition of the oversimplified ways in which women are often categorized in the virgin/whore binary. Throughout these discussions, I have highlighted some discursive possibilities to re-position or give new meanings to the "cheap girl" figure in Ayub's narrative. These possibilities can help us resist the normalization of sexual violence in this context and elsewhere. By denaturalizing this binary—making it discursively irrational—I hope that the notion of violence as a "logical consequence" for women located by others in the "whore" category becomes both unintelligible and unacceptable.

Notes

1. An earlier version of this chapter was published in Wijaya Mulya (2015). Used here with kind permission of the journal editor.
2. Narratives presented in this chapter were translated from Indonesian to English by the author. All the participants' names are pseudonyms. Ethics approval for the project was given by the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee (reference number 9046).
3. Huber (2011) notes that this word is also used in the book of Judith to describe how Holofernes' troops were amazed at Judith's beauty, suggesting that it can connote amazement (or appreciation) when beholding a person's physical or sexual appearance.
4. This tradition is omitted from the Lukan version of the annunciation story.
5. Quite what happens between Ruth and Boaz under Boaz's cloak is left frustratingly vague by the narrator. Ruth does stay the night (v. 14), but it is not clear what she and Boaz got up to during her nocturnal visit. Although as I indicate below, Ruth's acts of "uncovering" and "lying beside" Boaz's "feet" takes on a sexualized nuance when we remember the Hebrew word for "feet" (*raglayim*) can be used euphemistically to refer to genitalia.

6. See, for example, Gen. 25:26; Exod. 4:25; Isa. 7:20; also possibly Ruth 3:4, 7, 8, 14.
7. Taken from *The Thunder, Perfect Mind*, a Gnostic text discovered at Nag Hammadi. Composed in Greek, it is usually dated to the early centuries of the Common Era. Available on the Gnostic Society Library website, http://gnosis.org/naghamm/thunder.html, accessed on 13 May 2017.

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CHAPTER 5

Rape Culture Discourse and Female Impurity: Genesis 34 as a Case Study

Jessica M. Keady

The essays in this volume testify to the multiple ways in which religious texts, traditions, practices, and beliefs intersect with contemporary cultural ideologies and discourses that support rape culture and gender violence. These intersections are particularly important, given the authority and impact that religious texts and their use in teaching, preaching, and private devotions can have on determining readers' attitudes towards sex and gender. In this chapter, I contribute to the discussion by exploring the relationships between *biblical* conceptions of gender violence and impurity and *contemporary* rape culture and purity culture discourses, using Genesis 34 (the rape of Dinah) as a case study.[1]

Biblical rape texts such as Genesis 34 can serve as a lens through which we can examine and critique ancient ideations of gender violence and purity; they also allow us to trace the ways in which these ideations continue to shape and inform contemporary understandings of rape. I begin by defining rape culture and purity culture, before outlining some recent events that give voice to their dominant discourses. I then uncover the constructions of literary rape in Genesis 34 (focusing on

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several key verses) and address various interpretations of Dinah's sexual violation in scholarly literature. Finally, I consider the relationship between defilement, rape, and violence in Genesis 34, drawing on contemporary discourses embedded in rape and purity cultures. By so doing, I seek to encourage readers and interpreters to perform an act of "political resistance" to biblical ideologies that sustain contemporary rape and purity cultures (particularly those pertaining to female sexuality and purity), and to assess the possible significance that such ideologies have for biblical readers today (Gravett 2004, p. 298). As Sandie Gravett explains, recognizing rape in biblical texts "opens up the text beyond the bounds set thousands of years ago and invites translators to be more than passive recipients of ancient words and to do more than simply reinscribe the cultural norms of these past societies onto the modern stage" (pp. 298–9).

Defining Rape Culture and Purity Culture

> I stood there examining my body beneath the stream of water and decided: I don't want my body anymore. I was terrified of it, I didn't know what had been in it, if it had been contaminated, who had touched it. I wanted to take off my body like a jacket and leave it at the hospital with everything else. (Cited in Buncombe 2016)

This powerful quote, outlining a woman's sense of bodily defilement and contamination after being raped, is taken from a twelve-page letter written to Brock Turner by the twenty-three-year-old woman he sexually assaulted in 2015. The woman read out the letter directly to Turner during his sentencing hearing, describing to him with painful honesty the multiple ways her rape continues to affect her everyday life. Turner was convicted on three counts of sexual assault[2] and was subsequently sentenced by Judge Aaron Persky to a six-month prison sentence and ordered to register as a sex offender (Grecian 2016). The prosecutors of the case had originally requested a six-year sentence, and the Judge's leniency sparked public fury. Reactions included an online campaign to have Judge Persky recalled (this petition received over 500,000 signatures), blog posts and newspaper articles that discussed the significance of the case for rape survivors,[3] celebrity supporters and campaigners reading out the woman's letter on public forums, and vibrant debates and discussions on social media (especially Facebook and Twitter) (Li 2016).

Many of the discussions surrounding this sexual assault, the subsequent trial, and Turner's sentencing have been located by participants within a wider rape culture framework, in an attempt to highlight and challenge the injustices experienced by the rape survivor and put the perpetrator at the centre of his crime. As Debra Ferreday has argued, the term "rape culture" indicates the need to understand rape as an intrinsic *part* of culture—a complex social phenomenon that is the product of gendered, raced, and classed social relations, which are central to patriarchal and heterosexist cultures (2015, p. 22). Rape culture is a term used to describe the sociocultural normalization of sexual violence and its links to broader patterns of misogyny and sexism. Such normalization is woven through our global, civil, social, and cultural discourses: rape-supportive hashtags trend on Twitter; rape jokes are regularly used on TV shows and radio programmes as a source of humour and entertainment; judges hand out lenient sentences to convicted rapists due to the perpetrators' age or sporting or academic ability; and rape complainants are commonly critiqued and blamed for their own assaults because of their dress, alcohol intake, and sexual history. It is within this rape culture framework that religious texts such as Genesis 34 are being read, preached, and interpreted.

Moreover, rape cultures also give expression to various discourses around issues of purity, which again may shape the contexts in which religious traditions are read. Purity culture can be understood as an intrinsic part of rape culture, which blames rape survivors, particularly female survivors, for their own violation (Matthieu 2015). The dominant discourse of purity culture demands that women should remain sexually (and thus spiritually) "pure" and that sexual activity outside of marriage renders a woman sexually and morally "defiled"—"used goods" with little or no social value. Additionally, purity culture discourses insist that it is the woman's responsibility to "preserve" and "guard" her purity, by protecting her bodily boundaries from unwanted encroachments. To take a contemporary example, it is not uncommon for an applicant seeking political asylum to omit mention of their experiences of sexual violence, especially if their religious tradition considers extramarital sex a sin even in the context of rape. For, to acknowledge their rape is to acknowledge their own sense of sinfulness and impurity, bringing shame upon both themselves and their family (Einhorn and Berthold 2011, p. 41).

A recent event in Wales likewise demonstrates the devastating power of purity culture discourses to shape public and judicial understandings of rape. In June 2015, a Cardiff man was jailed for sixteen years after

repeatedly raping a young Muslim woman and forcing her to marry him (Wright 2015).[4] This man had systematically raped the woman for months, before threatening to release hidden camera footage of her naked in the shower unless she became his wife. This footage was taken after her first rape, when, according to journalist Benjamin Wright, the perpetrator had "cruelly stolen" her virginity. Judge Williams, who was presiding over the case, told the defendant during sentencing, "When you first raped her, she was still a virgin—something which you would use to ensure her silence … You made her feel that she was no longer marriage material (for anyone else) in the hope that she would turn to you … Over the months of which you raped her … it was your intention to cause her irreparable harm so that no one would want her" (cited in Wright 2015). Williams's summing up of the case here (and Wright's description of the events) reflects purity culture ideology; the perpetrator's violent actions against this woman's body (he bound and gagged her before raping her, and subsequently used threats and coercion to prevent her from reporting her assault) are evaluated as wrong, not in terms of their aggressive disregard for her bodily and sexual integrity, but rather because they are a source of her sexual defilement. No longer a virgin, she is reduced to something less valuable, an impure, damaged body that "no one would want."

Another way that rape culture and purity culture may impact people's experiences of sexual violence is in relation to survivors' willingness and ability to seek justice through the judicial system. In the United Kingdom, nine out of ten rapes go unreported, and only 6 per cent of reported rapes end in a conviction (Lees-Massey et al. 2016). A survey conducted by research group YouthSight at the beginning of 2015 suggested that half of female undergraduates and a third of male undergraduates know someone who has suffered sexual assault or unwanted advances ranging from groping to rape (Goldhill and Bingham 2015). The survey also found that 34 per cent of female students polled indicated that they had experienced some form of assault or abuse. Meanwhile, one in eight male students had also been subjected to groping or unwanted advances. Significantly, almost half (43 per cent) of the female students who had experienced sexual assault or abuse at university did not report their ordeal to anyone—including family and friends. The survey also revealed that 60 per cent of male students who were survivors of sexual assault had likewise not disclosed their assault.

These statistics are disturbing, both in terms of the ubiquity of sexual assault and the prevalence of occasions when these are not reported. This raises the question of whether purity and rape cultures, particularly the issues of victim blaming and shaming, are at work here. Focusing particularly on female rape survivors, E.J. Graff (2013) argues that understanding rape as primarily a *sexual* violation places the burden on women to protect their bodies' purity; subsequently, public perceptions of sexual assault typically focus on the woman and her actions (was she drunk? What was she wearing? Did she flirt with her "attacker"? Was she "asking for it"?). For example, in his statement to Judge Aaron Persky, Brock Turner placed the blame for his act of sexual assault on a student "party culture" of excessive drinking. This allowed Turner's defence lawyers to argue that the complainant was so intoxicated by alcohol that she could not know whether Turner had assaulted her without her consent (Grecian 2016). Her failure to guard adequately her own sexual boundaries (and thus preserve her "purity") rendered her culpable for her own violation. Gender violence and the rape culture discourses that sustain it are thus built upon unequal gendered power relationships, which are themselves supported by patriarchy (Kilmartin 2007, p. 5). These relationships create and sustain the rhetoric of rape cultures so engrained within our world—a world where gender violence is normalized and survivors are blamed for their own assaults, deterring them, ultimately, from seeking support and justice.

Reading Biblical Rape Narratives

Given the global prevalence of rape cultures, how can contemporary issues surrounding consent, sexuality, purity, and forced marriage inform our reading of biblical rape narratives, allowing us to read these against the grain of rape and purity culture discourses? To answer this question, I am guided by the recent work of Rhiannon Graybill (2015), who discusses the challenges of teaching sexually violent biblical texts within American universities (many of which are themselves confronting crises of sexual violence on campus). Given that the UK statistics of campus sexual assault outlined above are equally shocking, I want to follow Graybill's lead and review the importance of teaching biblical rape narratives in ways that directly assess and confront rape and purity cultures.

A reading of biblical rape narratives in light of contemporary rape culture intentionally juxtaposes ancient and contemporary understandings of sexual violence in order to better understand and respond to such violence (Graybill 2015). Although there are no biblical Hebrew words for "rape" or "rape culture"—as we understand these terms today—this does not mean that sexual violence is absent from the text. On the contrary, many of the features contemporary commentators identify as central to rape culture—including discourses around female sexuality, male dominance, defilement, and purity—do appear in the Hebrew Bible. There are several descriptions of rape or threatened rape, including the (threat of) rape faced by Sarah (Gen. 12:10–20; 20), the rape of Dinah by the Canaanite prince Shechem (Genesis 34), the fatal gang rape of the Levite's concubine (Judges 19), and the rape of Tamar by her half-brother Amnon (2 Samuel 13). These biblical texts, and others similarly relating accounts of sexual violence (e.g. Gen. 19:1–11; 39:6–18; Num. 31:15–18; Deut. 21:10–14; 22:23–9; Lam. 5:11; Ezekiel 16; 23; Rev. 2:22–3; 17:16), are read and used in various social and religious settings, including teaching, research, preaching, and various other church educational settings. Without critical and meaningful interpretation, the sexual violence contained within these biblical texts is often either ignored or reinscribed in contemporary reading communities. As Esther Fuchs insists, readers' propensity to ignore the problematic and misogynistic discourses articulated within biblical rape texts and their interpretive traditions only "reencodes the silence about women's oppression" (2000, p. 138). Consequently, these texts need to be read in ways that are sensitive to the rape cultures present within both the biblical text and contemporary societies where they are read, studied, and interpreted as sacred scripture. This allows readers and interpreters to perform an act of political resistance against those patriarchal ideologies pertaining to gender roles, female sexuality, and purity, which are articulated in the biblical traditions, and to assess the possible significance that such ideologies have for biblical readers situated in contemporary rape and purity cultures. In the following discussion of Genesis 34, I therefore read Dinah's narrative from within my own space of political resistance, highlighting the texts' various articulations of gendered violence, and the ways that these may echo and affirm contemporary rape and purity culture discourses.

The Construction of Literary Rape in Genesis 34

In Genesis 34, Dinah the daughter of Leah and Jacob is raped by Shechem. After this violent sexual encounter (v. 2), Shechem is so overcome with love for Dinah (v. 3) that he asks his father, Hamor the Hivite, to assist him with his plan to marry her (v. 4). When Jacob hears of his daughter's defilement (*tm'*), he remains passive (v. 5), while his sons react strongly (they are "indignant and very angry"; v. 7). When Shechem and Hamor negotiate the marriage with Jacob (vv. 8–12), Dinah's brothers demand that, before there can be any intermarriage between the Jacobite and Shechemite people, all Shechemite males must be circumcised (vv. 14–17). But, while the male Shechemites lie in pain after their mass circumcision, Dinah's brothers attack the city and kill them all, including Shechem and Hamor; they take back Dinah (who has been kept captive by Shechem following her rape) and abduct the Shechemite women and children (vv. 25–9). When Jacob hears about these actions, he condemns his sons (v. 30). In response, they ask if their sister should be treated "like a whore" (v. 31), and it is with this question that the narrative ends. Dinah, meanwhile, remains silent throughout the entire narrative. I turn now to look at key verses to discuss the construction of her literary rape.

Dinah is introduced in Gen. 34:1 as the "daughter of Leah, whom she had borne to Jacob."[5] Dinah's identity is immediately set in relation to her mother, rather than her father, and it is only after the sexual violation by Shechem that Dinah is identified explicitly as Jacob's daughter (v. 5). This may be because Dinah's defilement following her rape has repercussions for Jacob (Stiebert 2013, p. 50).

In Gen. 34:2, we are introduced to Shechem the "son of Hamor the Hivite." The verse goes on to describe what Shechem did when first encountering Dinah; he "saw her, he seized her, and lay with her by force" (Gen. 34:2). The three main Hebrew verbs used to describe the actions Shechem enacted upon Dinah are *lqḥ*, *škb*, and *'nh* (in the piel form). As Caroline Blyth (2010, p. 44) has demonstrated, the reader is granted no access to the underlying motives for Shechem's actions here and the narrator spends no time revealing the response of Dinah's character to these actions. The narrative as we have it is not interested in Dinah as an individual; rather, she represents the Israelites, just as Shechem represents the Canaanite nation (Shemesh 2007, p. 2). As such, Dinah's *personal* experience of rape as a violent assault against her body is eclipsed and ignored.

There has been, and continues to be, disagreement as to whether Dinah is raped in this biblical narrative. Scholars have suggested a range of possibilities with regard to the relationship between Dinah and Shechem, from rape (e.g. Blyth 2010; Klopper 2010; Scholz 2000; Shemesh 2007), statutory rape (Frymer-Kensky 1998), and abduction marriage (e.g. Hankore 2013) to seduction (e.g. Bechtel 1994; Douglas 1993, p. 177), and even romantic love (e.g. Fox 1983, p. 139). I am inclined to agree with those scholars who argue that Dinah *was* raped by Shechem. The strongest evidence in favour of this reading is, in my mind, the biblical Hebrew usage and ordering of the three verbs (*lqḥ*, *škb*, and *ʿnh*) used to describe Shechem's actions towards Dinah in v. 2; some or all of these verbs are likewise found in other biblical narratives that unequivocally denote gendered violence, most significantly the rape of Tamar (cf. 2 Sam. 13:14) and the gang rape of the Levite's concubine (cf. Judg. 19:25; 20:5).

In its basic form, *lqḥ* is used in biblical Hebrew to convey the meaning "to take," or "to seize" and, as such, does not carry any inherent sense of violence or force (e.g. Gen. 21:14; Lev. 8:15; Num. 19:2). Another common use of the verb within biblical texts is the act of "taking" a wife in marriage (e.g. Gen. 4:19, 6:2; Exod. 21:10; Num. 12:1). This meaning is also recorded in the *Damascus Document* (CD), where *lqḥ* is used in relation to the observance of correct marriage laws (CD 4:20; 5:7; 7:6). There are, however, also a significant number of passages in the Hebrew Bible where the verb is used to signify the taking of a person in an aggressive manner in order to exert control (e.g. Gen. 14:12; Josh. 8:12; 2 Sam. 10:4). The verb *lqḥ* is used six more times in Genesis 34 (vv. 4, 9, 16, 21, 25, 28), and in four of these verses, it relates to men negotiating with other men to "give" and "take" women as property (vv. 4, 9, 16, 21).

The second verb used to describe Shechem's assault of Dinah in Gen 34:2 is *škb*, which has an array of meanings in Hebrew including "to lie down," "to go to bed, lie in bed," and (as a transitive verb) "to lie [with], have sexual intercourse [with]." In Gen. 34:2, Dinah is the object of *škb*: Shechem "lay with her." Blyth's semantic study of the verb *škb* shows that when it is used to denote sexual behaviour, it primarily describes acts of sexual intercourse that are in some sense deemed illicit within the biblical traditions, including incestuous relationships, adultery, bestiality, homosexuality, sexual intercourse with a menstruant, sex with a prostitute, and premarital sexual relations between a man and an unmarried woman (2010, p. 49). In relation to Gen. 34:2, however, it is particularly

significant that *škb* is directly preceded by the verb *lqḥ* (Shechem "took" Dinah and "lay with her"). In other Hebrew Bible texts, when *škb* is preceded by a verb of seizure (e.g. *ḥzq*, "to seize," or *tpś*, "to capture, lay hold of"),[6] it typically depicts a scenario of coercive and aggressive sex, the woman having been forced or seized prior to the sexual act occurring (e.g. Deut. 22:25, 28; 2 Sam. 13:14) (pp. 49–50). There is a sense, then, that the strategic use of the verb in Genesis 34 is referring to an illicit, violent, and sexual encounter, especially as the sexual act is described as defiling (v. 5).

The third verb used in Gen. 34:2 to describe Shechem's sexual encounter with Dinah is *ʿnh*, which again can convey a wide range of meanings, including "to oppress, afflict" (cf. Exod. 1:11), "to humble, humiliate, dishonour" (e.g. 1 Sam. 11:39; Isa. 58:3), and "to abuse, mistreat, overpower" (e.g. Gen. 16:6; Judg. 16:5, 6, 19). In relation to Gen. 34:2, David Clines defines the verb as "to humiliate (a woman sexually) by rape or unlawful sexual intercourse" (2009, p. 334). In the Qumran scroll 4QOrdinances[a] (4Q159), *ʿnh* is used in relation to a woman's humiliation when her virginity is questioned: "If a man brings an accusation against a virgin of Israel, if [it is at the time] he marries her, let him speak and they shall investigate her trustworthiness. If he has not lied about her, she shall be put to death, but if he has testified falsely against her (*ʿnh*), he shall be fined two minas and may not divorce her all of his life" (4Q159 frag. 2 col. 4 ll. 8–10). In 2 Sam. 13:14, the verb of seizure *ḥzq* along with the two verbs *škb* and *ʿnh* (in the piel form) are used to describe Amnon's rape of Tamar: "But he would not listen to her; and he seized (*wayyeḥezaq*) her,[7] he forced her (*wayʿanneha*), and lay (*wayyiškab*) with her." There is thus strong linguistic evidence to demonstrate that, in Gen. 34:2, the use of *škb* with the piel form of *ʿnh*—preceded by the verb of seizure *lqḥ*—conveys an aggressive sexual encounter between Shechem and Dinah. Yet, as I mentioned above, Dinah's experience of this encounter is never articulated in the narrative; rather, we hear only of the voices and responses of the male characters—her father, her brothers, and her rapist.

Despite the linguistic evidence suggesting Dinah's encounter with Shechem was coercive, some scholars have argued against this reading of Gen. 34:2, preferring to interpret the events in this verse as a consensual sexual encounter. Often, these scholars appeal to v. 3 as evidence for their interpretation, where the narrator tells us that, following the sexual act in v. 2, Shechem's "soul was drawn to Dinah daughter of Jacob; he loved the girl and spoke tenderly to her." Lyn Bechtel, for example,

argues that Shechem did not rape Dinah, because "sociological studies reveal that rapists feel hostility and hatred toward their victims, not love" (1994, p. 28). Gordon Wenham (1994), meanwhile, describes Shechem as an "affectionate young man" (p. 311) whose love and affection for Dinah (expressed in v. 3) denotes "precisely the right bond between a married couple" (p. 317). Yet these arguments seem only to exonerate Shechem's sexual assault and frame it in near romantic terms, while implying that a person cannot be raped by somebody who loves them or wants to marry them. The account I mentioned at the start of this chapter, where a man abducted and raped a young woman before coercing her into marriage, attests all too painfully that these understandings of sexual violence are simply not true. By treating Shechem sympathetically because of his "love" for Dinah, readers reinforce the common misperception (which lies at the heart of rape cultures) that rape is first and foremost a *sexual* act, driven by desire rather than by misogyny and violence. This misperception can likewise be heard echoing in the statement made by Brock Turner's father, who insisted that his son's life should not be ruined over "twenty minutes of action" (cited in Fantz 2016). This remark erases the violence inherent within Turner's acts of sexual assault, not to mention the devastating effects of these assaults on his victim. By lauding Shechem as a man "in love," or Dinah's "perfect" partner, readers of Genesis 34 likewise erase the violence of this duo's encounter in v. 2 and ignore the trauma it would have caused to Dinah's character. As Ilona Rashkow asserts, "the three verbs of force chosen by the narrator here [in v. 2] negate any possibility of seduction or mutual consent and imprints the act of violence on the reader's mind" (1990, p. 220). To insist that a narrative of rape is really a love story is simply to repeat and condone the violent act evoked therein.

Defilement, Rape, and Violence in Genesis 34

In Gen. 34:5, we witness Jacob's (lack of) reaction to his daughter's sexual violation: "Now Jacob heard that Shechem had defiled (*timmē'*) his daughter Dinah; but his sons were with his cattle in the field, so Jacob held his peace until they came." There are only three references to someone being "defiled" in Genesis, and each one appears in this chapter to describe the impact of Shechem's sexual violation of Dinah (vv. 5, 13, 27). The verb is key to understanding the remainder of the narrative and, after its first appearance in v. 5, it is used again twice with reference to the

vindication of Dinah's "defilement" by her brothers (vv. 13, 27). On each of these three occasions, *timmē'* appears in the piel perfect tense, which translates as "to make impure, make unclean, defile, or desecrate" (Clines 2009, p. 141). In Genesis 34, it is Dinah (and not Shechem) who is labelled as ritually unacceptable after her sexual assault.

For some scholars, however, Dinah's defilement is less the result of her rape per se than an effect of Shechem "taking" her virginity before she was properly given to him in marriage (e.g. Feinstein 2014, p. 67). Although Dinah's sexual status is not discussed in Genesis 34, we might presume that she was unmarried, and therefore likely a virgin (given that the text makes no mention of her husband). This is also hinted at in the Septuagint translation of this narrative, which describes Dinah as a *parthenos* (a term that can be translated as "virgin"). For Graff (2013), a culture in which women are expected to remain virgins until marriage is a rape culture; women's bodies are used primarily for procreation or male pleasure—women must therefore strive to maintain their sexual purity. And certainly, in the biblical traditions, a woman's social "value" was typically measured according to her sexual chastity and purity; an unmarried non-virgin could not expect to garner her father a generous bride price, as her sociosexual currency had been diminished (Brownmiller 1993, pp. 19–21). As with the woman I mentioned earlier, whom the judge described as being sexually undesirable after her rape (Wright 2015), Dinah too is identified in this biblical text, not as a victim of a violent crime, but as a woman who has been sexually "defiled" by the loss of her virginity outside of marriage.

Continuing this focus on shame, Johanna Stiebert suggests that Dinah's defilement may have resulted from the fact that her rape was considered a source of dishonour, not necessarily for Dinah herself, but for her father and brothers, because Shechem had not sought their permission before having sex with their kinswoman (2013, p. 52). For, according to biblical norms of sexual etiquette, a woman's sexuality "belonged" to her male kin, typically her father and then her husband. Moreover, male honour was also measured by how successfully men were able to protect the sexual purity of their women (Brayford 2007, p. 375; Baaz and Stern 2013, p. 19). Read within this framework of sexual violence and (dis)honour, Dinah's rape is again transformed from a violent assault on her personal integrity to a means of dishonouring and humiliating her male kin, because Shechem had "stolen" her virginity, thereby exposing the Jacobite men's incapacity to protect "their" women.

Reading Shechem's violation of Dinah as a violation of Jacobite male honour helps to explain Dinah's brothers' aggressive and deceitful reaction to hearing about her defilement. On learning what has happened, they plan their revenge (Gen. 34:7). Shechem's father Hamor proposes a programme of intermarriage between the Hivites and Jacobites, where both groups could swap their daughters with the other (v. 9). At first, Dinah's brothers Simeon and Levi appear to agree, but only on the condition that "every male among you be circumcised" (v. 15, echoing back to the covenant of circumcision made in Genesis 17). Throughout these negotiations, Dinah's life and her sexual integrity are treated as objects to be negotiated and exchanged amongst men (vv. 8–16). And still, she is rendered silent by the narrator, her thoughts about her sexual assault and the prospect of marriage to her rapist completely elided from the text.

Male violence continues in Gen. 34:25–30. As they had planned, Simeon and Levi kill all the Shechemite males in the city and take the women and children as war spoil. After killing Hamor and Shechem, the brothers "took Dinah" (v. 26) out of Shechem's house and went away. The use and echo of the verb *lqḥ* in vv. 2 and 26 is significant, as the reader can trace the aggression inherent within the narrative from these two pivotal moments—when Dinah is first "taken" by Shechem and, then, when she is "taken back" by her brothers. Again, her silence in this narrative is absolute. What she herself thought about the events around these "takings" is left unspoken. Had she been given the opportunity to write a letter and read it out to Shechem, what would it have said? How would she have described the impact of his rape and abduction on her literary life? Yet, like so many survivors of sexual violence, Dinah's voice—*her* narrative—is silenced and ignored.

Jacob expresses disapproval at his son's actions (Gen. 34:30). They retort, by asking their father, "Should our sister be treated like a prostitute (*zōnāh*)?" (Gen. 34:31). Exactly what they meant by this question is unclear. In the Hebrew Bible, a prostitute was understood to be a woman whose sexuality remained under her own control rather than that of her male kin. Dinah's brothers' words here may therefore suggest the real crime that took place in v. 2 was not Dinah's bodily violation, but rather Shechem's dishonourable act of "taking" her virginity without first seeking her father's consent.[8] And thus Genesis 34 ends—Dinah is still silent. Like the many rape survivors who feel they can never share their experience with anyone, even family and friends, Dinah too is denied the opportunity to give voice to her own experience of sexual violence.

Conclusions

As Gravett (2004, p. 298) demonstrates, recognizing rape in biblical narratives opens the text and its literary figures, allowing readers, teachers, and educators to question and query the social and gendered roles of these ancient societies in relation to our own. I have used Genesis 34 as a case study to demonstrate the importance of reading biblical rape narratives in a wider framework that takes seriously the damaging discourses of sexual violence expressed therein. In a modern context, the narrative of Dinah in Genesis 34 touches on larger issues surrounding rape, female sexuality, purity, and the status of women in biblical texts (Graybill 2015). These issues need to be read, written about, taught, and understood within a framework that takes into consideration the rape and purity cultures which pervade so many of our own contemporary contexts. This biblical narrative testifies to the silencing of rape survivors, the exoneration of rapists, the dismissal of rape as "just sex," and the insistence that survivors are somehow "damaged" or "defiled" by their rape. As readers living within global rape and purity cultures, we surely have a responsibility to contest these discourses, both in the biblical texts and within our own cultural locations. If scholars, clergy, and educators simply refer to biblical rape narratives, such as Genesis 34, as love stories, filled with passion, romance, and seduction, or accept unquestioningly the text's own insistence that Dinah is "defiled" by her rape, then they risk perpetuating the harmful rhetoric that underpins many rape and purity cultures throughout the world today.

Unlike Dinah, the survivor of Brock Turner's sexual assault was empowered with a voice to tell her story. While Dinah's own story would have been very different, separated as it was by space and time, this contemporary testimony invites us to remember the urgent necessity for *all* survivors' narratives (including ancient survivors, such as Dinah) to be heard. For testimonies such as this break the terrible silencing of rape survivors wrought by the shame and blame they so often encounter within rape and purity culture discourses. The letter ends with a powerful message to survivors, who, like Dinah, are denied a space to let their voices be heard:

> On nights when you feel alone, I am with you. When people doubt you or dismiss you, I am with you. I fought every day for you. So never stop fighting, I believe you. (Cited in Buncombe 2016)

Notes

1. The inspiration for this chapter developed from a discussion I began in Keady (2016).
2. Turner was found guilty of three felonies: assault with intent to rape an intoxicated woman, sexually penetrating an intoxicated person with a foreign object, and sexually penetrating an unconscious person with a foreign object.
3. Following the lead of many sexual assault prevention advocates, I have chosen to use the term "survivor," rather than "victim," when referring to people impacted by sexual violence. I do, however, use these terms interchangeably from time to time, particularly when referring to "victim blame" as an intrinsic part of rape culture.
4. This man was the first person in the United Kingdom to be jailed under the newly formed forced marriage law that was criminalized under the Anti-Social Behaviour, Crime and Policing Act in 2014.
5. All translations are taken from the NRSV.
6. The verb *ḥzq* precedes *škb* in Deut. 22:25 and 2 Sam. 13:14, two occasions where the violent nature of the sexual event described is unequivocal. In Deut. 22:28, *škb* follows *tpś*, and again the sexual event depicted is unambiguously coercive.
7. The NRSV translates this verb as "being stronger than she was"; I have amended the translation to highlight the use of the verb of seizure here.
8. This verse evokes another reference to prostitution in Genesis 38, where Judah sleeps with his daughter-in-law Tamar after she disguised herself as a prostitute (*zōnāh*). After negotiations, "he went into her and she conceived by him" (v. 15). Later, she is accused of "playing the whore" (v. 24). In Lev. 19:29, a harlotrous daughter (*zōnāh*) is described as a source of defilement and depravity (cf. Lev. 21:7, 9, 14).

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CHAPTER 6

Andrea Dworkin on the Biblical Foundations of Violence Against Women

Julie Kelso

In neo-liberal democratic societies, the last decade or so has seen a resurgence in second-wave feminist demands for women's safety not only in public spaces, but also in the private realms.[1] Domestic violence is now being described as an "epidemic" across the world. According to the 2013 World Health Organization Report, approximately 30 per cent of women in the world are affected by intimate partner violence. In Australia, where I live, on average one woman a week is murdered by her intimate partner.[2] While there has been a suggestion recently that this revived focus on male violence against women is part of a fourth wave of feminism,[3] it is important to note that this wave's demands are remarkably similar to that of the second wave of feminism known as "radical feminism." In particular, in mainstream media, we have seen the return of the 1970s radical feminist term "rape culture." One of the most infamous and certainly most divisive radical feminist figures of the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s who worked tirelessly, as both a writer and an activist, towards revealing the nature of rape culture was the late Andrea Dworkin. In this chapter, my interest is with

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her argument that intercourse itself must be analysed robustly in its context of male-dominated and male-supremacist societies, indeed as one of its principal institutions. While Dworkin never actually claimed that all intercourse is rape (despite the habitual and continued insistence of that thesis in the mainstream media and in cyberspace whenever her name is mentioned), she does insist that women's lives could never be valued as properly human—in the existentialist sense of being essential rather than inessential lives—without an unflinchingly honest appraisal of intercourse in male-supremacist societies. In other words, it is not the case that, for Dworkin, intercourse has always been and will always be demeaning for women, or that it is ontologically the same as rape. Rather, in societies that hold the male of the species as supreme and the female as delightfully incidental—a footnote to man's story or a moon orbiting around planet man—when asking why rape culture is able to persist, we must consider the role of intercourse itself.

When we think of the Bible and the issue of violence against women, we tend to go straight to those stories and legal texts that are well-known to us from decades of feminist work in the discipline. We are familiar with Genesis 34, Num. 31:7–18, 2 Samuel 13, Jdg. 21:10–24, the laws found in Deuteronomy (21:10; 22:23–9), and the gendered language of violence in the prophets (e.g. Ezekiel 16, 23; Hosea 1–3), to name but a few. In this essay, however, I want to explore Dworkin's discussions concerning the sodomy laws in Leviticus and the story of Adam and Eve in Gen. 2:4b–4:1 with respect to what she perceives to be their foundational role in the institutionalization of intercourse. Dworkin is interested in the religious and legal discourses that help to create the political meaning of intercourse and legitimize what she considers often to be the actual and devastating violence of the act for the woman in male-supremacist societies: the erosion of the self and the compliant acceptance of lower status. I shall first explore her arguments concerning intercourse before moving to a discussion of her readings of the biblical texts. In what follows, I carefully seek to understand Dworkin's arguments in the context of *Intercourse* as a whole. Dworkin has been (naively) either demonized or hagiographized in the media and in the Academy, and both sides pick and choose passages from her work without attending to their immediate ideational context and thus without giving her the *critical* attention I believe her ideas deserve.[4]

The Institution of Intercourse

In her notorious book *Intercourse* (1987), Andrea Dworkin claims that women's second-class status is possibly attributable to the socially constructed definition of our bodies as lacking in physical integrity during intercourse. In male-supremacist societies like ours, "Woman" is constructed as that which is entered, penetrated, occupied, and denied privacy—and naturally so (Dworkin 1987, pp. 144–6). As a strictly materialist analysis of intercourse, Dworkin's focus is on intercourse as an institutional practice distinct from intercourse as an unmediated individual experience (as if possible).[5] As such, Dworkin's focus is on those discourses (literary, philosophical, religious, legal) that have effectively constructed the political meaning of intercourse in male-dominated societies. Her analysis concerns the broad and complicated relations of power within which the act takes place and which have historically made the subjugation of women through the act somewhat mandatory for their existence. For so long now and, Dworkin maintains, across all cultures, woman "is defined by how she is made, that hole, which is synonymous with entry" (1987, p. 145). Dworkin points out that no other oppressed people are cast as "being made for intercourse: for penetration, entry, occupation" (ibid.). We cannot analogize this situation with colonial occupation, or racism, or the oppression and abuse of children, or the Gulag, for example, because, according to Dworkin:

> There is nothing that happens to any other civilly inferior people that is the same in its meaning and in its effect even when those people are forced into sexual availability, heterosexual or homosexual; while subject people, for instance, may be forced to have intercourse with those who dominate them, the God who does not exist[6] did not make human existence, broadly speaking, dependent on their compliance. (1987, pp. 145–6)

It is this socially and religiously constructed determination of intercourse as "a means or the means of physiologically making a woman inferior" that underwrites all violence against women, indeed what naturalizes it, according to Dworkin. And foundational to all of this, at least in the Judeo-Christian traditions, are "the metaphysical laws of dominance articulated in Genesis" (Dworkin 1987, p. 195).

For Dworkin, feminist thought in particular has more often than not been marked by a refusal to confront the political meaning of intercourse.

This refusal marks not only conservative thinking, but liberalism and radicalism as well. She states:

> Intercourse is fun, not oppression. Intercourse is pleasure, not an expression or confirmation of a state of being that is either ontological or social. Intercourse is because the God who does not exist made it; he did it right, not wrong; and he does not hate women even if women hate him. Liberals refuse categorically to inquire into even a possibility that there is a relationship between intercourse per se and the low status of women. Conservatives use what appears to be God's work to justify a social and moral hierarchy in which women are lesser than men. Radicalism on the meaning of intercourse—its political meaning to women, its impact on our very being itself—is tragedy or suicide … What intercourse *is* for women and what it *does* to women's identity, privacy, self-respect, self-determination, and integrity are forbidden questions; and yet how can a radical or any woman who wants freedom not ask precisely these questions? The quality of the sensation or the need for a man or the desire for love: these are not answers to questions of freedom; they are diversions into complicity and ignorance. (1987, p. 147)

It is necessary to point out that Dworkin's thinking is heavily influenced by the existentialism of Simone de Beauvoir and Jean-Paul Sartre. She is particularly committed to the Sartrean and Beauvoirean ideal of freedom as autonomous living, where subjects are free to pursue their transcendence, forging projects of their own, but *only* on the condition of the freedom of others. Like Beauvoir (2011) before her, Dworkin maintains that this pursuit is more difficult for women, if even possible at all, because of their prescribed function as inessential "other."

Dworkin thus rejects the 1960s and 1970s radical libertine mandate that sex is freedom, considering it yet another means whereby men get women to accept their lower status. With libertinism, thinks Dworkin, women do not experience their own sexual liberation, despite what they might think is the case; instead, they are merely agreeing to give men what they want and in greater quantities. In *Right-Wing Women* (1983), Dworkin points out that in the late 1960s, prior to the rise of radicalized feminism in the United States, the men of the counter-cultural New Left "agitated for and fought for and argued for and even organized for and even provided political and economic resources for abortion rights for women," because if abortion were not available to women on demand,

then "fucking would not be available to men on demand" (p. 95). With the rise of feminist consciousness came the demise of the men of the New Left's concern for women's abortion rights, as women began to see how they had been used as sexual objects: "The leftist men turned from political activism: without the easy lay, they were not prepared to engage in radical politics" (pp. 97–8).[7]

Writing about Flaubert's Emma Bovary, Dworkin declares that with Emma the modern era begins, an era she describes as "the petite bourgeoisie seeking freedom" (1987, p. 125). Emma's supposed liberation does not come about through increased education or economic reform, but through sex. Dworkin states with respect to Flaubert's novel: "Female freedom is defined strictly in terms of committing forbidden sexual acts. Female heroism is in getting fucked and wanting it" (ibid.). For Dworkin, the so-called sexual liberation movement of the 1960s and 1970s crystallizes this delusion—that sex is freedom—of the modern era (p. 169).

In her analyses of cultural products from pornography to high literature, Dworkin concludes that sexual intercourse currently cannot take place without the objectification of the woman. She wonders what intercourse could be like without objectification, whether it is even possible in societies drenched in the ideology of male power and dominance (Dworkin 1987, p. 166). Clearly, Dworkin's analysis of an act that for many heterosexual women is not (always, or perhaps even often) unpleasant or overtly subjugating is confronting to say the least. And, I presume, many heterosexual men resent being told they are violators of women. It is well-known that Dworkin was and largely still is dismissed as "anti-sex" or "sex-negative" by her theoretical adversaries, male and female. This typecast dismissal harkens back to reactions to Dworkin's earlier book, *Pornography: Men Possessing Women* (1989; first published in 1981), and her allegiance with the feminist lawyer Catherine MacKinnon, but then set in stone after the publication of *Intercourse*. Dworkin has indeed come to be understood as a thinker who rejects entirely what is known as "heterosex" in the West: intercourse. However, for Dworkin, the term "sex-negative" is "the current secular *reductio ad absurdum* used to dismiss or discredit ideas, particularly political critiques, that might lead to detumescence" (1987, p. 57).

Intercourse, Dworkin argues, is understood as a sacred act by both the moral Right and the progressive Left, and as such cannot in itself be

criticized. "Fucking" is a *good* thing, and this *good* thing is powerfully related to the idea of citizenship in "Amerika":

> In Amerika, there is nearly this universal conviction—or so it appears—that sex (fucking) is good and that liking it is right: morally right; a sign of human health; nearly a standard for citizenship. Even those who believe in original sin and have a theology of hellfire and damnation express this Amerikan creed, an optimism that glows in the dark: sex is good, healthy, wholesome, pleasant, fun; we like it, we enjoy it, we want it, we are cheerful about it; it is as simple as we are, the citizens of this strange country with no memory and no mind. (1987, p. 55)

To analyse the function of intercourse almost equates to treason. To question the function of intercourse, to analyse and scrutinize the act in search of its concealed political, cultural, economic, and social service to men, is to render oneself silent in the process. Or rather, it is women who must subscribe to this simplistic promotion of intercourse (Dworkin 1987, p. 56). The fact that Dworkin is today rarely engaged with in a substantial manner,[8] or that her ideas are rarely taught except as of interest to those keen on the history of feminism, is perhaps testimony to the fact that Dworkin was right on one count at least: if you, *a woman*, criticize intercourse, you will be silenced. In a sense, this is the main point of *Intercourse*: men are afforded the ability to describe intercourse in all its ambiguities, the good and the bad, while women must simply like it.[9] We should also remember that Leo Bersani's (1987) famous sentence "There is a big secret about sex: most people don't like it" also appeared in the same year as *Intercourse*. To my knowledge, Bersani was not dismissed as a "sex-negative" thinker.[10]

As a consequence, this general prohibition against women criticizing intercourse has led to gross distortions of Dworkin's analysis. Dworkin was and still is regularly charged with claiming in *Intercourse* that all intercourse is rape. Even those feminist sisters who have insisted on challenging the reduction of sex to intercourse find Dworkin too much to bear. For such feminists—who reject essentialist or biologically determined understandings of male-female sexuality—Dworkin seems to dismiss all forms of heterosexual intercourse under patriarchy because of the physical difference between women and men. Consider the following oft-quoted paragraph:

> This is nihilism; or this is truth. He has to push in past boundaries. There is the outline of a body, distinct, separate, its integrity an illusion, a tragic deception, because unseen there is a slit between the legs, and he has to push into it. There is never a real privacy of the body that can coexist with intercourse: with being entered. The vagina itself is muscled and the muscles have to be pushed apart. The thrusting is persistent invasion. She is opened up, split down the centre. She is occupied—physically, internally, in her privacy. (Dworkin 1987, p. 143)

When we consider this passage out of context,[11] it seems that Dworkin is quite clearly arguing that all intercourse is, if not rape, then an invasion, a violence perpetrated against the woman. Not only is this invasion physically violent, with muscles being pushed apart, but it is psychologically violent because a woman's sense of privacy (admittedly a modern conception of the individual) is negated through the act. Passages such as this one have led certain scholars to view Dworkin as a radically separatist feminist who insists that women refrain from intercourse with men because it has been, is, and *will always be* an undermining, indeed a destruction, of a woman's ability to exist as a viable, self-determining subject in the world, a human being with integrity. The problem for such scholars is one of biological determinism: *because* of our physical differences, men will always control women through the act of intercourse; women will always be victims because of their objectification.[12] But is this what Dworkin is actually saying?

First of all, Dworkin has always insisted she never argued that all intercourse is rape.[13] While not rape (and perhaps here is where the confusion begins), Dworkin does think that intercourse is a violent act. For example, in an interview with Michael Sheldon, she states: "Penetrative intercourse is, by its nature, violent. But I'm not saying that sex must be rape. What I think is that sex must not put women in a subordinate position. It must be reciprocal and not an act of aggression from a man looking only to satisfy himself. That's my point" (2000). Does this mean that, despite any agency or intention on the part of the man, no matter his goodness, his kindheartedness, or his desire for intimacy, by having intercourse with a woman he is, by its very nature, committing violence? It is interesting that Dworkin's comments about the *positive* possibilities of intercourse are rarely if ever quoted; she describes it as being a "communion, a sharing, mutual possession of an enormous mystery; it has the intensity and magnificence of violent feeling transformed into tenderness" (1987, p. 71).

Such possibilities are entertained all throughout Dworkin's *oeuvre*, especially the idea that it is a remarkably *human* accomplishment to transform what she believes (along with Freud and Bataille) to be the violent nature of *eros* into intimacy and tenderness. Yet, such aspects of her thinking never seemed to catch on, in the media or in the Academy. In other words, Dworkin believes it entirely possible for human sexuality to be conceived as having "the intensity and magnificence of violent feeling transformed into tenderness" (ibid.); it is just that we do not live in a world where this is the dominant sexual script.

In the book itself, Dworkin's concern is with the historically dominant *depiction* of intercourse as the occupation and possession of women by men, an act that sustains the sexual hierarchization of strictly differentiated genders necessary to male-supremacist societies. Her concern is to denaturalize all aspects of the act to reveal the ideology of male dominance at work, paying close attention to the possessive and militaristic language that overwhelmingly is employed to describe intercourse (Dworkin 1987, p. 73). Thus, while intercourse is not ontologically the same as rape, because Dworkin refuses to consider intercourse as isolated from broader discursive influence, she asks us to consider the very intrinsic service of intercourse in male-dominant societies, how these dominant scripts both create and maintain male power over women. And it is important to realize that Dworkin is making this argument through her critical analyses of predominantly male-authored literature. None of Dworkin's statements about intercourse are based solely on her own experience or anecdotal evidence: the book is largely about men and their conceptions and depictions of intercourse.

In the first section of the book, "Intercourse in a Man-Made World," Dworkin provides five chapters that are careful and incisive analyses of important works of literature by men whom she has described as "phenomenal writers on issues of power and freedom" (1992)—notably Leo Tolstoy, Kobe Abe, Tennessee Williams, James Baldwin, and Isaac Bashevis Singer (I will focus only on her reading of Tolstoy here). These chapters starkly reveal for Dworkin the truth of what men in male-supremacist societies think of intercourse with women and how they are depicted as treating women before, during, and after the act.

Interestingly, Dworkin shows how intercourse, for these men at least, is not simple, enjoyable, and unproblematic, as is the banal yet dominant cliché about sexuality, especially the young, straight man's sexuality. For

example, Leo Tolstoy's main character in his *Kreutzer Sonata* is driven by desire to have sex with his wife, only to be repulsed by her afterwards. In between their sexual encounters, he is either cruel to her or ignores her, until his desire gets the better of him and he wants to have sex with her again.[14] As Dworkin points out, however, the repulsion felt for the wife is not caused by his disgust at her body or some puritan loathing of carnality itself. He loathes her because, in intercourse, her necessary inferiority to him becomes apparent. Tolstoy, the great social critic of inequality, believes intercourse must be eradicated if men and women are to be equal because intercourse makes exploiters of men and slaves of women:

> [T]he enslavement of woman lies simply in the fact that people desire, and think it good, to avail themselves of her as a tool of enjoyment. Well, and they liberate woman, give her all sorts of rights equal to man, but continue to regard her as an instrument of enjoyment, and so educate her in childhood and afterwards by public opinion. And there she is, still the same and depraved slave, and the man still a depraved slave-owner. They emancipate women in universities and in law courts, but continue to regard her as an object of enjoyment. Teach her, as she is taught among us, to regard herself as such, and she will always remain an inferior being. (Tolstoy 1967, p. 385)

Tolstoy's protagonist also loathes his wife (and ultimately kills her) because, according to him, her sensuality renders him powerless to her charms. Because women are made to be inferior through their sexual objectification, they enact their revenge, says Tolstoy, by enslaving men through sex. As Dworkin points out, the logic here is somewhat perverse: men are favoured by laws, rights, and privileges and yet they perceive themselves to be dominated by women in their revenge against men for their lower status. Yet, women can only achieve some *perceived* level of power by assuming their *inferior* status in intercourse, because otherwise men would not desire them (Dworkin 1987, p. 19). It is crucial to note that it is Tolstoy who is arguing that intercourse reduces women to slavery. While Dworkin insists that intercourse must be rigorously analysed for its complicity in the maintenance of men's domination of women, it is Tolstoy who is in fact suggesting its *elimination* from human behaviour. To my knowledge, Tolstoy was never silenced because of this idea, nor deemed "sex-negative." Again, it seems that it is only women who must not criticize the act.

Law, Nature, and the (Biblical) Metaphysics of Male Supremacy

Dworkin's discussion in *Intercourse* of Leviticus and Gen. 2:4b–4:1 occurs in Chap. 8, "Law." This is the first chapter of the third and final section of the book, titled "Power, Status, Hate." This final section investigates the means by which intercourse has been and still is regulated through civil and religious institutions. Contrary to the idea that intercourse is simply a matter of choice and an act that takes place in privacy, Dworkin argues that the fact that religious and civil laws have always sought to control the determination of both legitimate and illegitimate sex is proof that intercourse is a social construct central to the institution of male supremacy (1987, pp. 173–4). Historically, and until very recently (see below), the only privacy afforded the act concerns a man's right to use his wife for anything and in any way he wants.

There are three ways that legal restrictions on sexual activity maintain the strict gender demarcation requisite if domination of one over the other can occur. First there are those laws that insist that a man only have sex with someone not like him, that is, someone with a vagina and a womb. Dworkin quotes Norman Mailer, whom she describes as combining the best of both Proust and Leviticus when he writes:

> Yes, it is the irony of prison life that it is a world where everything is homosexual and yet nowhere is the condition of being a female male more despised. It is because one is used, one is a woman without the power to be female, one is fucked without a womb. (Mailer, quoted in Dworkin 1987, p. 181)

Women are useful because of their capacity to reproduce for men. Indeed, argues Dworkin, in both Proust and Mailer, the "real man" as opposed to the "female man" is affirmed by women's ability to reproduce, "with the whole meaning of the fuck—gender—being resolved by its outcome in producing children. Sensual pleasure is not what distinguishes homosexual sodomy from heterosexual fucking: the woman bearing the child does—in religion, in Mailer" (Dworkin 1987, p. 182). Sodomy laws are thus obviously related to those laws that regulate what exactly a man can do to a woman, when and why (p. 184).

The second form of regulation concerns laws that prevent men from being treated like women, that is, penetrated. These are the biblical

sodomy laws themselves. Dworkin argues that all laws concerning sexuality, especially the sodomy laws deriving from Leviticus ("Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind; it is an abomination," 18:22; "And if a man lie with mankind, as with womankind, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them," 20:13)[15] along with the "cross-dressing" law in Deut. 22:5 ("A woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a woman's garment; for whosoever doeth these things is an abomination unto the Lord thy God"), are there to maintain a strict demarcation of gender, so that the heteronormative hierarchy of man over woman can be maintained. When gender is blurred, particularly in sexual acts, male supremacy as a system of power becomes less potent.

Dworkin is particularly interested in sodomy laws and how their true purpose, according to her, is to maintain man's civil and sexual superiority over women through the controlling of men's lust. The logic is that if men as a class are dominant, each male feels it his right to dominate another, anyone he might choose. If he starts to dominate another man instead of a woman, however, then these men have to endure what women are there for in the service of male supremacy, and "naturally" so. Dworkin begins her discussion with Augustine's association of lust with dominance. Before the fall, thinks Augustine, man and woman had sex without lust: "a man and his wife could play their active and passive roles in the drama of conception without the lecherous promptings of lust, with perfect serenity of soul and with no sense of disintegration between body and soul" (Augustine 1958, p. 318). In Eden, before the fall, we see the dichotomized gender positions as active and passive, even without lust. Sodomy, according to Augustine, is a sin against nature, male nature at least, as created by his God, and thus a crime against his God. As Dworkin points out, despite the centuries between them, both Mailer and Augustine are remarkably similar in their descriptions of the lust of dominance as:

> an ecstasy, a frenzy, cruelty, all-encompassing, dominance in the fuck as a supreme and superb pleasure. Men are not supposed to have to endure being the victims of this lust; perhaps there is an implicit recognition that the subordination itself, the carnal experience of it, would change them, their so-called nature—create in them the incompleteness, the low self-esteem, so commonplace in women under male dominance. (1987, p. 183)

Sodomy laws are there to protect men as a class from the degradation of being made woman-like. In the Jewish and Christian traditions, sodomy is understood as an abomination, a violation of male nature such that it presents "a nightmare vision of one kind of sexual equality: men used by men as women are in sex to satisfy the lust for dominance expressed in the fuck" (Dworkin 1987, p. 183).

Relatedly, the third category concerns those laws that maintain male control over their women, adultery laws and rape laws especially. The issue for Dworkin, with respect to these laws, is one of restraint. While it is obvious that the controlling of women's and men's sexual activities is an integral part of social organization, what Dworkin argues is that the morality often behind these laws is also, as she puts it, "brilliantly pragmatic. Male dominance does best, after all, when men do not, generally speaking, fuck themselves to death by fucking whatever moves. Restraint is a key to power" (Dworkin 1987, p. 186). Men must not fuck other men's women because this depletes the power of men as a class by causing conflict between them (p. 190).

For Dworkin, the legitimation of rape in marriage, which she worries now extends beyond marriage to include the rights unmarried men have over unmarried women, derives in our culture not just from the biblical laws concerning legitimate and illegitimate sexual practices but from the story of the first man and woman in Gen. 2:4b–4:1, where she claims that "the metaphysical ground rules for male and female were set" (1987, p. 193). While in the first version, as we know, there is a *possible* reading of equality between the sexes ("And God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them," Gen. 1:27), the second creation myth clearly makes woman subservient to man (Genesis 2); she is "made for him from him; bone of his bones, flesh of his flesh; and God affirms they are 'one flesh'" (Dworkin 1987, p. 191). It is because of this version that, as Dworkin puts it, "jurists for centuries after recognized a man and his wife as one flesh: the man's" (ibid.). And the reason for this is that in the second story we get a strict separation of humanity into two genders, whereas the first story hints at their sameness.

In her reading of the story, when Eve eats the forbidden fruit, her "natural" inferiority is manifest, allowing herself to be seduced by a snake. Having disobeyed God and seduced Adam into eating the fruit, it seems that her difference from him becomes most apparent: "All of the bone-of-my-bones business disappears, in a sense for ever. She and he are 'one flesh' in that he has sovereignty over her body; but they are different from

then on, her bones not reminding one of his at all, her flesh so different from his that it might as well have been made out of some different material altogether" (Dworkin 1987, p. 192).

Here, Dworkin's thinking is reminiscent of Simone de Beauvoir's existentialist reading of the biblical first man and woman (Beauvoir 2011, pp. 164–5). For Beauvoir, the second creation story in Genesis, like all creation myths in her view, expresses man's self-servingly necessary conviction that woman is his inessential other. Upon her (unorthodox) Hegelian reading, woman is thus:

> the perfect intermediary between nature that is foreign to man and the peer who is too identical to him. She pits neither the silence of nature nor the hard demand of a reciprocal recognition against him; by a unique privilege she is a consciousness and yet it seems possible to possess her in the flesh. Thanks to her, there is a way to escape the inexorable dialectic of the master and the slave that springs from the reciprocity of freedoms. (Beauvoir 2011, p. 164)

The Genesis myth, for both Beauvoir and Dworkin, reveals how woman is conceived by man as a being who, as "a naturally submissive consciousness" (Beauvoir 2011, p. 165), is able to become the property of man, as "one flesh: the man's" (Dworkin 1987, p. 191). Both Beauvoir and Dworkin pursue the historical outcomes of this "othering" of woman, exploring the effects of this biblically gendered metaphysics of dominance on women who are "privileged prey" (Beauvoir 2011, p. 165). For Dworkin, this becomes clear in the Genesis myth if we continue to read beyond the fall. Eve is famously cursed with pain in childbirth, desire for her husband, and is made subservient to him (Gen. 3:16). Immediately upon their expulsion, in Gen. 4:1, Adam has intercourse with Eve and she bears Cain: "And Adam knew Eve, *his* woman, and she conceived and bore Cain and she said 'I have gotten/acquired a man from/with YHWH'" (*qanîtî 'ish et yhwh*).[16] The issue of Eve's consent is obviously unimportant. Furthermore, Adam and Eve do not walk out of paradise and straight into a story concerning Adam's punishment of life-long toil, nor do they emerge from the garden and get attacked by snakes; we go straight to intercourse and the issue of man's dominion over woman. So, summarizes Dworkin: "Eve's curse is in the pain of childbirth and in feeling desire for her husband; they are her punishments. The rule of the husband over the wife is in sexual intercourse; his sovereignty over her is in the fuck" (1987, p. 192).

We might claim that Dworkin's (and Beauvoir's) sentiments concerning Gen. 2:4b–4:1 and the Levitical laws are no longer relevant, given the current (*prima facie*) recognition of women as "humans" with attendant rights. In particular, the idea that a man owns his wife seems rather outdated. However, it is quite astonishing to remember that for most western countries it was only in the last decades of the twentieth century that laws admitting the *possibility* of raping one's wife came to be enacted.[17] In other words, until recently the law in all liberal democracies insisted that woman belonged to her husband and part of his ownership concerned his freedom to fuck her whenever he wanted, despite her desire. And for Dworkin, "men's ownership of women through the fuck" derives in our biblically-based cultures from the Genesis myth:

> The metaphysical ground rules for male and female were set in Genesis, in the beginning. The implications have been comprehended deeply and honed into laws and practices. The implications go far beyond the letter of the law, especially beyond the specific small laws that regulate the when and how of intercourse. The implications honor the basic law, men's ownership of women through intercourse. (1987, pp. 193–4)

We might think that we have moved well beyond such a patriarchal proprietary model. However, research into the recent alarming rises in the number of women in Western societies who are raped, abused, and murdered by their intimate partners, married or not, suggests otherwise. So too does the well-documented form of male online aggression towards women, in order to silence them, which is overwhelmingly expressed through language of extreme sexual violence.[18] However, while there currently is much outrage from men and women over this rise in violence against women, Dworkin cautions us that social outrage might not be as trustworthy or as progressive as we might think. She says:

> Social outrage is power protecting itself; it is not morality. There is always a tension between the law that protects male power—basic fundamentalism, religious or secular—and men's wanting to break that law: exercise the privileges of power for the sake of pleasure … How much license can men take without destroying the effectiveness of the laws that formally restrain them in order to protect their power as men? … The regulation of men by men in sex for the sake of upholding the power of men as a class is the least recognized, least scrutinized aspect of male dominance and law as an institution of social control. (1987, pp. 188–90)

Thus, just as in the ancient world of the Bible the so-called "rape laws" did not recognize the woman as the victim (the victim generally understood to be the father or the husband), despite appearance to the contrary, rape laws today are *still* protecting men from a potentially depleted access to resources: women.

Conclusion

For Dworkin, violence against women, especially domestic abuse and rape, cannot be understood or even attended to without a rigorous and uncompromising analysis of the meaning of intercourse itself as constructed within societies that hold the man as the supreme being; the only one with any real right to self-determination and indeed humanity. Now, of course, not all men have the same levels of power in society, and Dworkin acknowledges this as such. However, the physical differences between men and women are always conceived and experienced within a male-dominant context (Dworkin 1987, p. 148).

The question of whether intercourse could express sexual equality is a difficult one because, Dworkin says, "How to separate the act of intercourse from the social reality of male power is not clear, especially because it is male power that constructs both the meaning and the current practice of intercourse as such" (1987, p. 150). Intercourse is not and has never been a private act. Indeed, Dworkin argues that the classic second-wave radical feminist slogan "the personal is political" is ironically in principle the logic of patriarchal law, where the social rights given to men in male-supremacist societies are translated to the private sphere, where men (still) hold rights of ownership over women. She states: "The principle that 'the personal is political' belongs to patriarchal law itself, originating there in a virtual synthesis of intimacy and state policy, the private and the public, the penis and the rule of men" (p. 187). All of the laws around legitimate sexual practices, including those that formally restrain men, are, according to Dworkin, instituted to protect male supremacy itself, both within the home and beyond. And crucial to the maintenance of this ideology is the subjugation of women as "owned through the fuck" (p. 188).

Certain reforms are of course necessary to the task of women's liberation—economic equity; the election of women to political office; progressive role models for girls; emphasis on the physical strength of women's bodies; effective rape laws and strategies to diminish the incidences of violence against women. Moreover, Dworkin recognizes that

reforms around women's sexuality have also been necessary—foreplay that defers to female sensualities; less verbal assault of women; the eradication of the romanticization of rape, to name a few (1987, pp. 149–51). However, while these reforms might be necessary to the task, they are not in themselves sufficient because for Dworkin they do not address the main question: "Is intercourse itself then a basis of or a key to women's continuing social and sexual inequality?" (p. 151).

In other words, Dworkin sees no point in trying to rethink intercourse without recognizing its formative function as an institution of male domination and supremacy. She recognizes that women and men do experience pleasure in intercourse, but thinks it is most likely because we have internalized those binary gendered erotics of male dominance and female submission, even if we simply swap roles. We could imagine the female body as hospitable, as Irigaray does in her *oeuvre*, for example, rather than as occupied territory.[19] Perhaps her body can be conceived of as welcoming the male, with enough preparation, such that no violence is intended or experienced. The question Dworkin insists on asking, though, is how such a rethinking could dismantle the broader structures of male-dominant society, because until such a dismantling occurs, intercourse will remain in its service as its most brilliantly effective tool due to the concealment of its mechanisms in pleasure. What we see from Gen. 2:4b–4:1 and the Levitical laws concerning sexuality is that this *institutionalization* of intercourse is entrenched at the base of our male-supremacist culture, a base we sadly deem sacred.

Notes

1. This chapter is an abbreviated version of Kelso (2016). My thanks to *The Bible and Critical Theory* journal for allowing this reprint. Thanks also to the anonymous reviewers for their insightful comments and suggestions.
2. See the White Ribbon website for details and access to the criminological research data behind these figures. Available online http://www.whiteribbon.org.au/white-ribbon-importance.
3. On the question of whether a fourth wave is underway, see Munro (n.d.).
4. A notable exception to this is Jenefsky with Russo (1998).
5. As Jenefsky with Russo (1998) helpfully point out, this is akin to Adrienne Rich's now classic analysis of motherhood as an institution rather than any individual experience of motherhood (Rich 1976; Jenefsky with Russo 1998, p. 99).

6. Dworkin repeatedly uses this phrase "the God who does not exist" throughout *Intercourse*. She is gesturing at these points to Edna O'Brien who, in *Girls in Their Married Bliss* (1964), writes "Oh, God, who does not exist, you hate women, otherwise you'd have made them different."
7. The most cited example of the sexism of the counter-cultural New Left is Stokely Carmichael's statement in 1966, that "the only position for women in the SNCC [Student Non-violent Co-ordinating Committee] is prone." For a critical history of the problematic relationship between feminism and the New Left in the United States, see Echols (2002), who, while obviously agreeing with the well-documented problems between feminists and the men of the New Left, nevertheless suggests that all was not as grim as feminists like Dworkin, Marge Piercy, and Robin Morgan would have it.
8. Though see Brecher (2013). As part of its "Patriarchy 2013" series, The New Left Project included the topic "Why we should re-read Andrea Dworkin's 'Pornography: Men Possessing Women.'" See also Lucas (2011, pp. 74–81).
9. In the Preface to the second edition of *Intercourse* (republished in the Twentieth Anniversary Edition), Dworkin explains: "In general women get to say yea or nay to intercourse, which is taken to be a synonym for sex, *echt* sex. In this reductive brave new world, women like sex or we do not. We are loyal to sex or we are not. The range of emotions and ideas expressed by Tolstoy et al. is literally forbidden to contemporary women. Remorse, sadness, despair, alienation, obsession, fear, greed, hate—all of which men, especially male artists, express—are simple no votes for women. Compliance means yes; a simplistic rah-rah means yes; affirming the implicit right of men to get laid regardless of the consequences to women is a yes" (2006, p. xxxiii).
10. Thanks to Erin Runions for reminding me of Bersani's essay.
11. She is, in fact, responding to the depictions of intercourse given by the male authors she has analysed in the preceding six chapters, along with a passage from Edna O'Brien's *Girls in Their Married Bliss*, used as the epigraph to Chapter Seven "Occupation/Collaboration" (Dworkin 1987, p. 143).
12. An alternative criticism comes from the stalwart liberal philosopher Martha Nussbaum, who insists on the potentially positive aspects of objectification during sex. See Nussbaum (1995), Papadakis (2015), and Lucas (2011, pp. 74–81).
13. See especially her interview with Michael Moorcock (Dworkin 1995).
14. The story is largely autobiographical (though Tolstoy never actually murdered his wife), as revealed by the diaries kept by the Countess, Sophie Tolstoy. See Dworkin (1987, pp. 5–8).
15. All biblical citations are taken from the JPSV.

16. Genesis 4:1b is notoriously problematic because of the obvious suggestion that it is Yahweh, not Adam, who is the father of Cain.
17. The idea of the impossibility of rape in marriage is usually traced to Matthew Hale, Chief Justice in seventeenth-century England, who wrote: "But the husband cannot be guilty of a rape committed by himself upon his lawful wife, for by their mutual matrimonial consent and contract the wife hath given up herself in this kind unto the husband which she cannot retract" (Hale cited in Dworkin 1987, pp. 194–5).
18. See, for example McNally (2015), who reports on the growing ubiquity of online misogyny.
19. For example, see Irigaray (2004).

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CHAPTER 7

Twelve Steps to the Tent of Zimri: An Imaginarium

Yael Klangwisan

> And he came after the man of Israel into the [tent] and stabbed the two of them,
> the man of Israel and the woman, in her [belly],
> and the scourge was held back from the Israelites.
> …
> And the name of the man of Israel who was struck down,
> who was struck down with the Midianite woman
> was Zimri son of Salu chieftain of the Simeonite father's house.
> And the name of the Midianite woman who was struck down,
> was Cozbi daughter of Zur, who was chieftain of the leagues of fathers' houses in Midian. (Num. 25:8, 14–5)[1]

I'll be honest with you. I want to save them. I want to save them both. I want to stop death from coming. I want to hold back the priest. If I could, I would take his poisoned spear and throw it away. I would prevent him from this slaughter, stop him before he enters the tent. But each time I read this text death comes again. The climax of the text is that graphic, blood-soaked, incomprehensible spectacle. The narrative of the text itself

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is patchy and out-of-sync, like a mosaic of scenes that only loosely align; a bad fit. But, for all the words, the reader is left with the dramatic and horrid finale, half swallowed. An image; or a splice that devastates (the remains, or a bone at the bottom of a burning heap). But, for all of this, it is a terrible love that I bear for this text. It is a love as strong as death. It is like fiery coals. It burns me up and leaves me gasping with its torment. It is a revolving door. I read anew, another time, and behold, the couple are resurrected. In each reading, they take those same fateful steps past the *ʾōhel môʿēd* (tent of meeting) to Zimri's tent, and death comes after them spear in hand each time. It is a fate that cannot be turned away from them. They are doomed the moment they enter the camp. But also, in rereading the text, it is as if I murder the couple continually. I don't want to believe it but it's true: "the loving couple is outside the law, and the law is deadly for it" (Kristeva 1987, p. 210). As reader, however reluctant, the narrative compels my participation with a law of death.

> For love is as strong as death
> Jealousy as cruel as Sheol
> Its coals are coals of fire,
> Which has a most vehement flame. (Song 8:6)

The cataclysmic scene of Numbers 25 and others are like fiery flashes in my imaginarium, as the words become photographs in my mind's eye or spliced together as a film. I enter the text, and for a moment I (and my imagination) am made vulnerable to it. In an effort to explain this kind of reading I appropriate the terms *studium* and *punctum* in the way of Roland Barthes's exposition of photography (Barthes 2010, p. 51). The *studium* is the wider scene or spectacle in which I find myself a spectator: compelled by the presentation of politics, geography, dialogue, the interactions of characters, the justifications, the sequence of events, and characterization of actors. But it is the *punctum* that I most desperately resist and am struck by. The *punctum* is the element that breaks through and that punctuates the scene; the moment in the spectacle that fixes my vulnerability upon a single detail that threatens to tear, that like a sharpened arrow or a poisoned spear stabs me in the belly or the eye. This *punctum* stains my thoughts with its blood and quite frankly haunts me after reading. It might not even be fully described in the text but regardless the text leads me to it, as captured in my mind's eye, words become images and the loose endings of the story attach and reattach in alternative

ways, or unfinished/forgotten actions extrapolate, and veiled consequences come alive in the imaginarium. These images, like photographs that spontaneously appear in my mind, cause a trigger, a prick, a tearing, a stigma; a break from the symbolic that becomes the face of death replete with sound, texture, and smell.[2]

In Numbers 25, the *punctum* (for this reader) is the head of the spear as it breaks the clothed covered skin on Cozbi's belly. It is the shock and silence that accompanies the movement. It is also the heavy breathing of Phinehas after his exertions. The abbreviated shout from Zimri as he turns aghast towards the disturbance.

> I decompose, I enlarge, and, so to speak, I retard, in order to have time to know at last. The photograph justifies this desire but does not satisfy it: I can have the fond hope of discovering the truth … Alas, however hard I look, I discover nothing: if I enlarge, I see nothing but the grain of the paper: I undo the image … I am a bad dreamer who vainly holds out his arms. (Barthes 2010, pp. 99–100)

Studium

Twelve steps to Zimri's tent. The reader walks the plains of Moab to find the Hebrew encampment; a city of tents. I see through my *camera lucida* the wailing crowd at the tent of the meeting. While Moses is in hazy view, the tension is thick and impossible to ignore. I add the acrid smell of the burning of those plague-infested bodies (Num. 25:9). They burn in piles, the putrid smoke drifting across the camp when the wind changes. I walk now with the beloved couple. They are young, beautiful, lively, and energized by hope and future as newlyweds. Everything possible. Everything beginning. But these two have more. They are privileged and powerful, each in their own right. This is the paradox, and the naivety of their wedding journey from the gates of the tent city to the privacy of Zimri's own tent. How could they possibly miss the public foment over the events of Baal Peor and plague? Not to mention the furore in the mythosphere, the beloved couple seem oblivious to the otherworldly battle going on between two territorial gods. It matters not whether it has been projected from or into the mortal realm or whether it represents the friction between two cultures. There is an incipient and violent polarizing of two cultural groups and after initial assimilation they are separating like curdled milk. Religious tension heated by grief, has thickened to a point of catalyst.

Superstition is crashing into politics. Blood must be spilt to ease back the masses from the threshold of mayhem. Propitiation through blame and punishment is the first route deliberated (and articulated) to reinstall patriarchal order but then it seems to segue into expiation through sacrifice in a spontaneous, preconscious, instinctive step.

As a metaphor of the people's unrest, it is the restless wrath of a jealous Hebrew God which can only be soothed by blood. But the question of concern is: whose blood will do? First decreed are the chiefs, to be impaled out in the sun. In the narrative, the chiefs are quickly given a reprieve to be replaced by a satisfactory number of guilty men. The narrative then pauses to allow for a carnival of eyes (Num. 25:6). The mixed-race couple walks by like a proverbial ram in a thicket and all eyes are fixed on the two. I, the reader, walking with them, stop at six steps to Zimri's tent and look back. The couple have already gone on inside their tent of love, so obsessed with each other they have not caught a single scent of the latent furore outside. I, however, see Moses' eyes, the eyes of the chiefs, of the guilty men, of the grieving mob. I see a torment cross through Phinehas's eyes. I see him lift his spear and I see him take that the first step. "Watch out," I shout to the couple, "he's coming." But I am mute and unseen and their eyes and ears and hands are only for each other. Phinehas's hand has fixed on his spear. He shifts it, turns it, tests its weight as he takes the second slow step. His progress to Zimri's tent is another ten steps. Like the stages of the cross he moves. Each pace, each cubit draws the string tight towards the climax. The momentum carries him, faster and faster. He doesn't hesitate now on reaching the tent. His course is fixed. And helpless to attenuate the fate of Zimri and Cozbi, I still attempt to stand in his way, but he pushes through as if I wasn't there. He will crash into a delicate and potent scene. Zimri's hands are holding Cozbi. He's whispering and kissing her and she him. She holds him close. I see each pulse of blood at her throat. Her eyes and lashes and hair. Her body with all its softness and curves. His with its warrior's musculature, hard planes, and youthful virility. Everything that is young and glorious and lively and fine. The bright energy that is the mystery of desire, the magnificent generosity of flesh, spirit, and soul. The luminosity that veils difference, the overcoming of self and other in a single brilliant moment. The phenomenon of this inevitable human right of passage, of intimacy, of belonging, of sharing, of fertility. The momentary assailing of limits and boundaries. It doesn't take more than a step and thrust for Phinehas to corrupt this

scene to an obscene end. I sink to my knees in the tent. The young lovers have been taken by surprise and are mortally wounded. The plague ceases and the priest is a hero.

Who is Phinehas, who receives an ode for his righteous act of murder and a gift of power in the tent of meeting? I see him as Cerberus, Hade's three-headed hellhound: a three-headed Phinehas takes my fancy. His first face is of a guilty man. It is his guilt, shame, and the fear of impalement that carries him the twelve steps to Zimri's tent. The second face is that of Phinehas, a grieving man—his own wife and children victims of the plague. This face is half crazed in grief and his madness and despair carries him to the tent like a scream. The third face of Phinehas is that of a jealous man; his lustful gaze on Cozbi, murderously covetous of Zimri. The perfect love triangle and crime of passion (Sivan 2001).[3] This face is fixed on the voluptuous Cozbi and frustrated in his own desires. The jealousy of Phinehas of Numbers 25, his jealous jealousy. His wicked jealousy. His jealously that is a simulacrum of the jealously of God. He is its mortal, fleshy enactment (Num. 25:11).[4] But I call him Snake because he slips twelve steps into the garden and takes the beloved couple unawares. Which face of Phinehas was upon the beloved couple and which hated them? As in the stories of other tragic and star-crossed lovers: "They were being watched. The tunnel was swarming with people who hated them" (Cixous 1985, p. 100).

There are two tents here and a liminal space in between. One is the tent of meeting. One is the tent of the Simeonite prince. In one tent is weeping, and at the centre of it is the law. In the other a marriage takes place, and at the centre of it the dreamy fires of love. One is a tent of death, circled round by the black feathered carrion birds. The other a tent brimming with the potency and potentiality of life. One a tent of judges and lawmakers, one a tent of brothers. One a tent of fear, one a tent of naiveté. It is Phinehas who charges those twelve steps from one tent to the other bringing chaos and death in his wake. It is he who brings the poisoned spear. It is he who traverses the liminal space in between. It is he who brings the law and death into a tent of love. The reign of the Proper is reinstalled with brute force, and ascends within this blood-drenched fantasia of control, an ultimate scene of castration. Phinehas, veiled by a veneer of righteous anger takes two lives. Phinehas, stinking of fear, saves his order by substituting the lives of the guilty with the life of two, Zimri and Cozbi, who for all intents and purposes are innocent[5] of the crimes that initiate the narrative. Life, thy name is Cozbi. Death, thy name is Phinehas.

Punctum

I rebel against the narrator as I read and reread. This is a story of desire, or, a myriad of desires that conflict and converge. One story is told by the narrator, another is told through my horror. I see this story in a single scene through a *stenope*, the pinhole or "keyhole" of the *camera obscura* (Barthes 2010, p. 10). My eye focuses through a small round lens on the scene that unfurls before me. In the spectacle, there are three. The murderer with the spear is there, and the couple, the man and the woman. Adam, Eve, and Snake.[6] Through the *stenope*, I see in this single spectacular scene a crime of passion, or if not that, one that reeks of fear and hatred of life and love. I see Zimri turn in surprise and place his body before hers. I see Cozbi grasp hold of his arm in fright. The shout as this prince of Simeon steps forward with hand outstretched. Phinehas, with his blanched face and sheen of sweat. The tremble in his hand. The stink of his cowardice and his murderous arousal. The spear that he thrusts past Zimri to stab Cozbi through the middle. He's aiming for her belly, her belly that would have carried Zimri's child. Zimri draws her behind him but the spear finds its target. How long they lie dying in this profane scene, skewered like pigs, cut down like beasts, with their life blood mingling, soaking through the mats of the tent. The observer is not permitted to know. I know because in the imaginarium I hopelessly hold my hands to Cozbi's side but can't stem the blood flow. It keeps seeping out, its tinny scent, sticky on my fingers. She whimpers, clasps my wrist and dies slowly, Zimri collapsed near her, arm across her. A bloodied Romeo. Was his death instantaneous or was it slow? It might be very slow, perhaps days. But I wonder, as I view the hidden scenes. In one photograph I see it is Zimri who died first and Cozbi who watches him bereft as she too passes from the world. In the other, it is Cozbi who dies first and Zimri who requires a second stabbing to send him after her. In one sequence, they are dragged half-dead from the tent for the community to witness their degradation. In another, it is Zimri's brothers who provide a dignity of burial. In yet another sequence, also veiled from the text, I see Phinehas pull the spear free of the flesh. He has placed his foot on Cozbi's abdomen in order to more easily wrench it out, but the heft drags her tangled intestines out with its edges. In another, Phinehas must finish the job by slitting their throats. In a short black and white sequence, he stabs with the spear more than once; this scene plays out as a crime of passion. He hefts and thrusts wildly until the bodies of the two are torn open and all movement and breath is gone, until they lie

together on the floor of the tent like broken dolls. Their graceful, youthful bodies gored. Then they are taken out and burned atop the smoking piers of plague victims. A veil lies across these scenes (like the flap of a tent), yet they haunt the text. The miasma of horror seeps out of the print, and writhes. Like a fold or a *punctum*, in the narrative it waits.

> The beloved couple will die.
> The beloved couple will surely die.
> The beloved couple will die horribly.

The impossible couple die horribly. And as a reader, compelled and drawn into the spectacle, I experience this violence in the text like the stab of a poisoned spear through my belly. The author's use of the image of the spear like an iron phallus is abhorrent.[7] It is a ghastly violation. It is a violation of a kind of love that might have, had it lived, overcome cultural difference. But such an evolution would disrupt the established order. The beloved couple receive into their bodies a violation that is in effect a substitution of the judgement that a jealous God has decreed for the chieftains of Israel: impalement, or that which Moses has decreed on guilty men (Alter 2004, p. 818). The innocent couple, the woman not even Moabite, seem to have been sacrificed to right this warp or glitch in the corridors of Hebrew power.[8] They are a perfect pair of scapegoats (Monroe 2012, pp. 211–31).[9] The spear is a symbol for the re-establishment of the power of the proper and specifically Aaronid power.

The grief of the reader deepens with the naming of the couple in vv. 14–15. Before, they are every young woman and every young man, on the eve of their wedding. But after the murderous acts of the Aaronid priest their naming is a poignant nod to their dignity. The naming is an epitaph: *hic jacet* … here lies. My grief is given a name, and it is Zimri and Cozbi. I have wondered why their names appear like a gift at the end of this text. The two have been given the honour and dignity of their names, titles and houses, the dignity that was not afforded their deaths. Their names, their titles, their fathers, their tribes are forever wedded in the text. I fancy, in my mind, that the miracle of their naming is a poignant testament to love: *hic jacet,* Zimri *et* Cozbi, *semper fidelis amoribus* (Rees 2012). I want to believe that if nothing else, Zimri's love for Cozbi escaped that of the blood of patriarchal politics cloaked by a murderous whirlwind of a God. But of course, there is the unfathomable segue (vv. 17–18) regarding Hebrew-Midian politics, and a final slur against Cozbi, a final stab of the

pen against her honour and her person, as if this tragic young woman horribly murdered in her husband's tent is such a dangerous entity that she necessitates ravaging by both spear and pen; thus, the narrator needs to make her into a political whore as well (v. 18). I have no time for it. It says more about patriarchal fear of the feminine than patriarchal assertion of order, this orgiastic spectacle of blood (Blyth 2014, p. 44).[10]

> But blood, as a vital element, also refers to women, fertility, and the assurance of fecundation. It thus becomes a fascinating semantic crossroads, the propitious place for abjection where death and femininity, murder and procreation, cessation of life and vitality all come together. (Kristeva 1982, p. 96)

I grant that if another looked through the *stenope*, perhaps they would see a different story, and many have. A witch, a mole, an exotic and dangerous femme fatale (Blyth 2014) with her male succubus, put down by a zealous hero. Perseus meets the Gorgon, spear in hand. Bellerophon slays the Chimera. Jason, the harpies. This trope also plays out in mythos throughout human time as a veneration of the patriarchal order against the feminine. In this, the haze of gendered and othering violence in the text becomes tangible in the death of Cozbi and the one who dares love her.

I try to imagine that, lying hidden in the grotesquery of Numbers 25, is a story of tragic love that escapes the callous hypocrisy of the phallocentric narrative. I paint a scene where Zimri and Cozbi were deeply in love and not merely a political alignment of houses. That here, in the annals of the Hebrew migration to the Promised Land, is more than a gratuitous slaughterhouse, something akin to Tristan and Iseult, Paris and Helen, Romeo and Juliet, Diarmuid and Gráinne, Fionn and Sadbh, and Clíodhna and Ciabhán. Yet another of the legendary tragic couples fated to taste the height of human passion and to suffer separation. They are a foil illuminating the precious seed that is love. In their legends are lawyers, judges, kings, priests—power mongers who wreak havoc on these ones who dare sip from the cup of Eros.[11] In light of the campaign against them the love is richer, more exuberant, more dramatic, and overwhelming. These tragic tales might share with Numbers 25, in the common backdrop of tension and enmity between families, between tribes, the involvement of the gods, the conflict between heaven and earth that the lovers stumble into. There is a common backdrop of warfare and dispute. There is also the common quest for political power, a game of thrones, warlords, and priests. Thus

the need for a mythos of filial duty which sets itself above and beyond the love that might deconstruct it. The lovers escape the realm of father, word, and law, and thus become illicit, outlaws. The antidote to this disturbance of the proper order is death. Tristan is stabbed with a poisoned lance. For Juliet it is suicide by dagger, Romeo, poison. Diarmuid is gored by a wild boar. Sabdbh is turned into a deer. Iseult willingly pours out her soul. Clíodhna and Ciabhán are particularly tragic, Clíodhna is of the *sidhe* and Ciabhán an Ulster prince. The beyond and the mortal can never be permitted to coexist in love. Thus, Clíodhna is swept to her death by a magical wave and Ciabhán suffers all eternity alone. I read their stories again and again, however, and I want more. I want them to escape the inevitability of castration and to live.

> I have been all the couples between whom abysses opened up, or rather I have been this two-bodied flesh that the jealousy of the world seeks to dismember, against which are pitted the dirty alliances of kings, laws, surly egos, families, accomplices, go-betweens, representatives of the Empire of Appropriation, of the worst kind of proprietorship, the mouthpiece of the "you are (what is) Mine," not Adam and Eve who lose only the paradise of the blind, who are banished only from the point of view of the divine, who are born at last, who emerge, who become: I was the couple hacked apart, severed, condemned in the flesh for having found out the secret of pleasure, because in its body Eros marries masculine with feminine, because Juliette is loved in Romeo more than the Law and the fathers, because Isolde enters Tristan as his joy, his femininity, Tristan resists castration in Isolde. (Cixous 1991, p. 25)

So even more secretly, in the darkest, coldest watches of the night, I light the lamp in my imaginarium and rewrite the climactic scene of Numbers 25 myself (in the mode of Barthes's bad dreamer) and, believe it or not, this time they escape. In my wildest manuscript, while Baal and HaShem settle their differences over a game of chess, Phinehas with spear in hand opens the flap of the tent and behold, the lovers are gone, perhaps through a suspicious tear in the back of the tent. It doesn't matter how the miraculous escape has occurred, the tent is as empty as the proverbial tomb. Phinehas turns this way and that, racing like a rooster in every direction, hefting his spear in vain, finding no target for his impotent rage. Quite incredibly, the beloved couple have split the scene, never to be threatened again by these assassins and murderers of love. Somewhere they are skipping like young stags on the hills, thigh deep in mounds of spice, they are

harvesting wheat and baking bread, plucking grapes, and drinking pomegranate juice whenever it takes their fancy. With a bounty of dates, raisins, and wine, they live merrily in gardens of love, the happy and beloved couple, in fairy tale scenes, and with their children and their children's children gathered around them. I see them age slowly, to mellow, until they creak like Abraham and wrinkle like Sarah, tilling and harvesting the Elysian Fields, tending their orchards and vineyards, shepherding their flocks. Or, as per the flight of Tristan and Iseult, in a less utopian world mayhap:

> They wandered in the depths of the wild wood, restless and in haste like beasts that are hunted, nor did they often dare to return by night to the shelter of yesterday. They ate but the flesh of wild animals. Their faces sank and grew white, their clothes ragged, for the briars tore them. They loved each other and they did not know that they suffered. (Bédier 2005, p. 44)

And yet, even with the possibility of a new story in sight, via the miraculous work of the imaginarium, I must eventually let the beloved couple sleep the sleep of all tragic lovers. The tragedy of their love expiates for us, momentarily, the unrelenting plague of our own desires, in "the exhaustion of desire" only possible in their bitter end (Kristeva 1987, p. 233). I would put up with a plague of desire I think, because of such a thirst I have for love to be victorious in Numbers 25. I would risk its pyre. Death there is so bloody, and so final. The rivalry between powers that causes these incidental deaths of non-combatants is so monstrous. Is love so strong that it might make a "magical challenge of death" (ibid.)? Death seems so powerful and absolute, can anything at all escape it? Religious-Divine-Public order is so replete in its dominion. It seems pointless to cry, "Wait!" But it is a corollary of the text that the reader rebels at the point of *punctum*; at the point where it "explode[s] in the face of whoever looks at it" and where it is possible that through this *punctum* a single dove escapes (Barthes 2010, p. 117). There is a juncture where the reader hesitates, cries out or winces at the injustice of the spear; feels its poison; carries its stigmata. And so, it is still the case each time I read the bloody, beautiful, and barbaric lines that I cry, "Wait!"

> "Wait. Give me time," I begged. "I'm with you in spirit! Wait a minute! Let me try!" Why interrupt the book? Do you really think you can change what has already been done? I didn't think anything, I wished. Love needed to. If life wanted to, it was up to me to sort it out. What would I have lived on if

love had been killed? … With all my dreams to help me I tried to create another scene for love, ignoring the laws, not believing in it, yet unable to stop myself from racking my soul … I felt I had been born to stop love dying: so that I wouldn't die before I had saved them … And I held it back with prayers and promises, I kept it alive by keeping it in sight. I tried with the help of all my visions to draw the flickering image which would make it possible to overcome separation. (Cixous 1985, p. 99)

Notes

1. Translation by Alter (2004, pp. 819–20). In Hebrew, the words "tent" (*qubbâ*) and "belly" (*qēbâ*) are arguably a play on words.
2. For example, the vivid *puncta* that haunt me from other biblical texts are a frozen still of the body of Jezebel in the midst of her trajectory from balcony to the ground. I see her fall. I literally see her frozen in mid-air, in that liminal space between life and certain death, which comes in the text with the added ornament of dogs. In another I imagine a close-up photograph of a graphic spurt of red aortic blood from the throat of Bat-Jepthah on her father's sacrificial altar. The blood is red, but the rest of the image is in black and white. I see the fatty tissues of her throat inside the mean, straight cut. One of her anguished father's hands is clamped in her hair and holds her still. The other hand holds the bloodied knife. We are not privileged with this scene in the text, but we know it must come with a certainty like an arrow in the night. In a brief sequence of shots I see the eyelids of Eli's daughter-in-law fluttering closed in her clammy and pale face, the name Ichabod escaping in a death rattle as she breathes her last. Sometimes I see only a single photograph of her bloody, wailing babe on her chest. Finally, the otherwise banal photograph of a closed door made horrendous by the fact that it represents a living burial. This is the door that was closed on David's raped concubines. It is the finality of the sealed door and its sterile banality that most terrifies me.
3. Sivan (2001) describes Phinehas's actions as a rape that delegitimizes Cozbi's relationship with Zimri "to a level of arbitrary passion" (p. 74).
4. Variations on the word *qānā'* (jealousy) are chanted three times in the celebratory ode in v. 11.
5. Rees asks the question, "What does the young Midianite woman have to do with [the national lament]? She has of yet no part in the machinations of Israelite social life" (2012, p. 28). Sivan asserts that the couple are "respectable" and "murdered in the privacy of their own bedroom" (2001, p. 70). Blenkinsopp also suggests that, in light of Moses' own marriage to a Midianite, the justification for such "homicidal rage … vindicated post factum" against Zimri and Cozbi is questionable (2012 p. 94).

6. Rees posits a relation between Genesis 3 and Numbers 25 in the characters of Zimri and Cozbi and Adam and Eve (2012, p. 21). In Genesis 3, Eve is, in part, described as a femme fatale, as Cozbi is at the end of Numbers 25 (ibid.).
7. Phinehas's method of murder as a rape is discussed in Sivan (2001), and further in Rees (2015, p. 140).
8. See Blenkinsopp's comments on the agenda of the Aaronid goup in "The Baal Peor Episode."
9. Monroe (2012) describes an eerily similar Hittite tradition where a man and woman are selected as sacrificial victims to appease divine wrath. The couple take the place of king, chiefs, and army. See also Monroe (2013).
10. According to Blyth (2014), "Creators of the femme fatale sculpt these anxieties into the shapely, sensuous female form, *justifying* their fears of female licentiousness and gendered anarchy by insisting on her dangerousness, rationalizing episodes of their own weakness and vulnerability by blaming her perverse animalistic allure" (p. 44).
11. Sivan (2001, p. 77) describes the tragedy of Zimri and Cozbi as that of a private event that destabilizes the public. She goes on to explain the actions of the priest as a manifestation of the struggle for power between religious leadership and the nobility of Israel. Thus, the lovers' identification as aristocrats intensifies collision between private and public, and religious and civic. Or, for Barthes (2010, p. 98), a case of the private becoming the property of the public.

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CHAPTER 8

Abandonment, Rape, and Second Abandonment: Hannah Baker in *13 Reasons Why* and the Royal Concubines in 2 Samuel 15–20

David Tombs

The Netflix series *13 Reasons Why* (2017) sparked headlines and prompted considerable concern and criticism from viewers.[1] However, the controversy surrounding the series did little to dampen its appeal, and the show proved so popular that a second series was announced for 2018. Based on the young adult novel, *Thirteen Reasons Why*, by Jay Asher (2007),[2] it tells the fictional story of high school student Hannah Baker who takes her life after a series of events that she describes on a sequence of cassette tapes. She arranges for the tapes to be circulated among a group of students at her school whom she names on a list. Each student is asked to listen to all the tapes, learn how they (the students) have contributed to her decision to end her life, and then send them on to the next person on the list. The viewer shares the point of view of Hannah's friend, Clay Jensen, as he listens to the tapes. The time-frame goes back and forth between Clay's experiences as he listens and Hannah's experience of each decisive event.

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The series' engaging and suspenseful format has proved a huge hit with teen and young adult audiences. Some viewers, however, including a number of mental health organizations, strongly criticized the way it depicts Hannah's suicide, including the length of the scene and the graphic detail included. There has been particular concern that when young audiences watch they might see it as glorifying suicide or legitimating suicide as a solution to difficult life events. Moreover, some critics have argued that the series fails to address many of the issues commonly involved in suicide, such as depression and other forms of mental illness. In New Zealand, these concerns led to the Classification Office creating a new PR18 category rating for the show, which prohibits (or at least warns against) young people under the age of eighteen from watching the series without parental guidance. The Classification Office cited the portrayal of suicide and its aftermath as a real risk for teen viewers who may be struggling with depression or suicidal thoughts.[3]

The questions and concerns raised over the representation of suicide in *13 Reasons Why* are important, especially in a country like New Zealand, where suicide rates in 2016 were the highest in the developed world.[4] Yet these discussions around the series' depiction of suicide also need to be set in context. *13 Reasons Why* is not primarily about Hannah's suicide; rather, it is her life experiences *prior* to her death that are central to the story. In contrast to the public attention that has been given to her suicide, there has been relatively little discussion about the thirteen events she speaks about and the impact that these had on her. As the story develops, Hannah explains that even though some of these experiences were relatively small, they had a cumulative effect upon her:

> I recorded twelve tapes. I started with Justin and Jessica who each broke my heart. Alex, Tyler, Courtney, Marcus who each helped to destroy my reputation. On through Zach and Ryan, who broke my spirit. Through tape number twelve, Bryce Walker, who broke my soul. (Episode 13, cassette 7, side A)

The public focus on the portrayal of Hannah's suicide, rather than the reasons underlying it, are perhaps due to the fact that these involve her experiences of the often-taboo topic of gendered violence and rape culture, including sexual shaming, objectification, invasion of privacy, groping, harassment, and rape. Hannah dwells on each of these experiences

in turn, using one side of a cassette to explain how they have impacted her. In this chapter, I focus on one of these events in particular—Hannah's rape by fellow student Bryce Walker in a hot tub at a student party—and consider its place in her story. My approach is to "read" Hannah's story in dialogue with a biblical story, in which I see similar themes around gender violence emerge, particularly in relation to the theme of abandonment. This dialogical approach, in which we allow the biblical text and Hannah's experience to speak to and illuminate each other, can reveal how they each attest to the devastating impact of gender violence on victims' lives and identities.[5] While in no way wishing to minimize the harm done by the violence itself, my primary intention is to broaden the focus to explore the harm that is often caused by both the *actions* of others in precipitating sexual violence and the *reactions* of others in the aftermath of sexual violence. Both these actions and reactions can be seen as forms of abandonment, whose impacts are often insufficiently acknowledged. An attentive reading of what happens to Hannah both before and after her rape suggests that actions and responses by other people deserve far more scrutiny than they usually receive.[6]

The first part of what follows identifies a three-step framework for viewing Hannah's rape and its effects upon her. First, Hannah's classmates physically abandon her when they leave her alone in the hot tub after the party. Second, Bryce rapes her. Third, she feels a "second abandonment" by both her classmates and the school guidance counsellor, Mr Porter, whom she hoped would offer her some much-needed help. I then use the same three-step framework (abandonment—rape—second abandonment) as a lens to read three biblical passages in 2 Samuel (15:13–16; 16:20–3; 20:3).[7] These passages relate the tradition of the ten concubines in King David's royal household, who are abandoned by David, raped by Absalom, and then abandoned again by David.[8] In the second part of the chapter, I explore whether the biblical reading can offer additional insights back into Hannah's story, particularly in terms of her double abandonment. I suggest that in addition to David failing the concubines *after* their rapes, he may also have been more culpable in leaving them to their fate than first appears. That is, he may have *knowingly* left the concubines as an offering to Absalom. This interpretation offers a new perspective on the culpability of Hannah's classmate Courtney Crimsen in the events that led to her own rape.

The Twice Abandoned Hannah Baker

Hannah describes her rape by Bryce on cassette 6, side B (episode 12).[9] She sees the rape as the culmination of other experiences she has already described in previous tapes; these began with the rumours that circulated about her sexual promiscuity after Justin lied to his friends about what happened on their first date.[10] Shortly afterwards, she experiences sexual objectification when her name is added to a "Who's Hot/Who's Not" list as "Best Ass in Freshman Class" by another student. This in turn leads to two separate incidents where fellow students, Marcus and Bryce, touch her inappropriately. In the tape, Hannah says that each of these experiences built on the previous one. After her rape, she feels she has eventually become the person that others already believed her to be. This event (or at least the version of it that will be told by Bryce) will finally validate the rumours that have made her life so miserable.

Hannah's Initial Abandonment

Hannah was not planning to attend the student party, but after having a row with her parents, she goes out for a walk and is eventually drawn to the sounds of the party. In the series, the party is at Bryce's house. Hannah sees a group of people she knows relaxing in the hot tub—Jessica, Justin, Zach, and Stephanie. They invite her over and encourage her to join them. When she demurs, they reassure her that she does not need a swimsuit, since they are all just wearing underwear. After a while, however, the others in the group gradually get out of the hot tub for various reasons and go back into the house, leaving Hannah in the hot tub by herself.[11] While they might not intend to abandon her in this potentially vulnerable situation, this is, nonetheless, one of the consequences of their actions. Before Hannah can follow them, Bryce appears and climbs into the hot tub next to her.

In the novel, the party is at Courtney's house rather than Bryce's. Courtney and Bryce are in the hot tub when Hannah arrives, and the other classmates have already left. Courtney's subsequent decision to leave Hannah alone with Bryce (a student known for his sexually predatory behaviour) is more ethically ambiguous and raises questions about her motivations for "abandoning" Hannah. I will return to this issue later.

Hannah's Rape

When Bryce and Hannah are alone in the hot tub, they talk for a bit, but soon Bryce starts to touch her. It is clear that Hannah does not want this but Bryce persists, eventually forcing himself upon her. As Hannah recalls on the cassette: "Bryce, you had to see my jaw clench. You had to see my tears. Does that kind of shit turn you on?" (Asher 2007, p. 264). Within the novel, there is more attention to the complexity of Hannah's thinking and feelings about her rape, and less reference to Bryce's use of physical force:

> I did not say no or push his hand away. All I did was turn my head, clench my teeth, and fight back tears. And he saw that. He even told me to relax … And that's all you needed, Bryce. You started kissing my shoulder, my neck, sliding your fingers in and out. And then you kept going. You didn't stop there. (Asher 2007, p. 265)

In the series, however, Bryce uses much more obvious force. When he gets into the hot tub, Hannah tells him that she had "better get going" and stands up to leave, but Bryce tugs at her arm to get her to stay (cassette 6, side B, episode 12). When Hannah sits back down, Bryce starts to fondle her bra and again, Hannah says, "Sorry, I got to go." She turns to climb out of the hot tub but he grabs her arm again, this time with enough force for her to lose her balance. He traps her against the side of the tub and pulls her hair while he rapes her. When she gets home and undresses, there are red marks on her arms and shoulders.

Hannah's Second Abandonment

The rape leaves Hannah distraught and overwhelmed. She understands it as a progression and consequence of other ways that she has been objectified, harassed, and mistreated during her time at the school. It leads her to write down the names of the people involved in the different events that have occurred and figure out the connections between them. One of the positive outcomes from this is that she recognizes her need for support if she is to cope with these traumatic incidents. She decides to approach the school counsellor, Mr Porter, in a final attempt to seek help. Despite her turmoil about all that has happened, she has not yet decided to take her life.

In the series, Hannah describes her meeting with Mr Porter on cassette 7, side A (episode 13). She initially tells him how she is feeling, describing herself as "lost and sort of empty." She then goes on to recount some details about what happened with Bryce. Hannah does not use the word "rape" here, but she starts to cry and it is clear that she is talking about something serious. Mr Porter is well-intentioned and genuinely concerned, but fails to ask the right questions. He initially thinks Hannah made a decision about having sex with someone that she now regrets. Hannah flatly rejects this. He then asks, "Did he force himself on you?" Hannah replies, "I think so." Instead of taking this at face value, Mr Porter undermines what she is saying, by replying, "You think so, but you are not sure." He then asks if she told the person to stop or said "no" to him, and Hannah says that she did not, without expanding further.[12] Mr Porter then suggests that perhaps she consented but then changed her mind. Hannah tells him it wasn't like that, but instead of asking her what it *was* like, he presses her to tell him the boy's name. Hannah hesitates, and then asks Mr Porter to promise that the boy will go to jail and she will never have to face him again. Mr Porter acknowledges that he is unable to do this, and can only promise to do everything in his power to protect her. He asks again for the boy's name but Hannah will not give it. Mr Porter fails here to recognize the signs of Hannah's desperation, despite her telling him that she is tired of life.

Eventually, since Hannah continues to refuse to say who raped her, and remains adamant that she does not want her parents involved, Mr Porter suggests that "moving on" is her only option if she does not wish to report her assault. Hannah interprets this as the end of the conversation and rises to leave. Mr Porter encourages her to stay, but she says that they have figured it out and she does indeed need to "move on." Despite his good intentions, Mr Porter leaves Hannah feeling alone and in a state of despair. She exits his office and closes the door behind her, waiting outside to see if he will come after her and offer further help or support. When he does not appear, she feels her isolation and abandonment is complete. As she puts it on cassette 4 side A (episode 7), "The kind of lonely I'm talking about is when you feel you have got nothing left. Nothing and no-one. Like you're drowning, and no-one will throw you a line." In the novel, she initially tells Mr. Porter that she wants "everything to stop. People. Life." When Porter seems alarmed by these words, Hannah responds by telling him "I don't want my life to end. That's why I'm here" (Asher 2007, pp. 272–3). Mr Porter is her final resort, and when she feels he

abandons her, she decides that there is no alternative but to take her own life. As she puts it: "I think I've made myself very clear, but no one's stepping forward to stop me … A lot of you cared, just not enough" (p. 279).

The Twice Abandoned Concubines of 2 Samuel

This threefold narrative pattern of abandonment, rape, and second abandonment recounted in *13/Thirteen Reasons Why* is likewise evoked in the biblical tradition about David's ten concubines. In 2 Sam. 15:13, we are introduced to these women, whom David left to look after his house when he fled from his son Absalom. We subsequently hear about their fate in two very brief passages (16:21–3 and 20:3). The biblical narrative is not terribly interested in the story of these women, nor does it treat them as characters in their own right. Their story—mentioned momentarily in only a few verses over six chapters—affirms that they form a fragmented aside in what the narrator sees as the more central story of a competition for power between men: David's conflict with Absalom and Absalom's attempt to usurp David from the Israelite throne.[13] Yet if we look closely at these three passages, we can see they follow the same three-phase sequence of abandonment, rape, and second abandonment that unfolds in Hannah's story.

The Initial Abandonment of the Concubines

> A messenger came to David, saying, "The hearts of the Israelites have gone after Absalom." Then David said to all his officials who were with him at Jerusalem, "Get up! Let us flee, or there will be no escape for us from Absalom. Hurry, or he will soon overtake us, and bring disaster down upon us, and attack the city with the edge of the sword." The king's officials said to the king, "Your servants are ready to do whatever our lord the king decides." So the king left, followed by all his household, except ten concubines whom he left behind to look after the house. (2 Sam. 15:13–16)

The story of Absalom's rebellion against his father David is part of a much longer sequence of family betrayals and broken alliances related by the narrator of 1 and 2 Samuel.[14] When David hears about Absalom's growing popularity in Israel, he decides to flee, fearing that Absalom is about to bring disaster upon both his family and the city (v. 14).[15] He leaves, we are told, with his "household" in tow, except for ten concubines, whom he left to "look after the house" (v. 16). The total number of

concubines David had in Jerusalem is not specified, so it is unclear whether these ten women constituted *all* of his concubines or whether there were others who accompanied him and his wives on the household flight.[16] Since Absalom was expected to "attack the city with the edge of a sword," it is clear that David was leaving these women in a perilous predicament. My use of the word "abandoned" here is therefore appropriate; David's intention may not have been to leave them defenceless and exposed to danger or sexual violence, but this was nonetheless a consequence of his actions. Yet in this narrative, it is the urgency of David's flight (and the question mark hanging over his fate), rather than the vulnerability of the ten women, that attracts the reader's attention.

The Rape of the Concubines

> Then Absalom said to Ahithophel, "Give us your counsel; what shall we do?" Ahithophel said to Absalom, "Go in to your father's concubines, the ones he has left to look after the house; and all Israel will hear that you have made yourself odious to your father, and the hands of all who are with you will be strengthened." So they pitched a tent for Absalom upon the roof; and Absalom went in to his father's concubines in the sight of all Israel. Now in those days the counsel that Ahithophel gave was as if one consulted the oracle of God; so all the counsel of Ahithophel was esteemed, both by David and by Absalom. (2 Sam. 16:20–3)

Ahithophel's words here can be interpreted in different ways. The degree of force and physical violence that "going into" the concubines might involve is not specified. There is insufficient detail given for the reader to discern if the rapes were enacted in full view of the public or if they took place out of sight; Ahithophel speaks of Israel "hearing" about this event, but the narrator then tells us that Absalom "went into" the concubines "in sight of all Israel." Whether or not this last phrase should be taken literally is unclear. Nevertheless, the passage leaves open the possibility of an orchestrated spectacle of public rape to signal the power and virility of Absalom as a military conqueror.[17] An alternative reading is that the tent would offer privacy, and what happened inside was closer to a wedding ritual to establish the women as Absalom's possessions. This more benign reading, however, would still have involved rape, even if "rape" is not the term that would have been used at the time.[18]

Likewise, there might be different interpretations of how Absalom's public rape of David's concubines will "strengthen the hands" of Absalom's followers. Will these followers be filled with admiration (or fear) for the supposed "manliness" of Absalom's actions? Is this a public display that seals Absalom's superior power and authority over his father, demonstrating David's inability to protect "his" women? Whatever the reason, neither Absalom nor Ahithophel give any thought to the effects Absalom's actions will have on the ten concubines; their sole concern is that the event will be "odious" to David.[19]

Of course, Absalom would surely have been aware of the devastating impact of rape on women's lives, given that he witnessed the "desolate" state of his sister Tamar after her sexual assault by Amnon (2 Sam. 13:20); it does not seem to cross his mind, however, that he will be visiting the same desolation on these ten women. Such indifference is also apparent in the narrator's response to these events, as the text reveals almost nothing from the women's perspective. What was going through their minds when David left them behind after he fled from Absalom with the rest of his family? Did they anticipate what would happen to them? Were they afraid? Did they try to protect themselves, or seek help? Did they cry out in fear when Absalom approached them? Did they plead with him or try to fight him off? And how did they feel after he raped them? Were they shocked, angry, and in pain? Did they speak to each other about what happened, or try to console each other? The narrator remains silent about these issues, inviting the reader too, perhaps, to pay little heed to these women's abandonment and consequent assault.

The Concubines' Second Abandonment

> David came to his house at Jerusalem; and the king took the ten concubines whom he had left to look after the house, and put them in a house under guard, and provided for them, but did not go in to them. So they were shut up until the day of their death, living as if in widowhood. (2 Sam. 20:3)

After Absalom rapes the ten concubines, the action moves swiftly to his ill-fated pursuit of David and his eventual defeat, flight, and death. Absalom's death causes David renewed grief but allows him to return to Jerusalem and reclaim his throne. On his return, we are told that he shuts the ten women up under some form of house arrest, and never sleeps with them again. Some might read this as relatively benign treatment, given

that David provided for the women and offered them protection. Yet the statement that he did not "go into them," but rather left them to live "as if in widowhood," suggests he saw them as in some sense irreparably damaged. Under the honour-shame code that permeated this ancient Near Eastern culture, the women would have been viewed as damaged or defiled, their sexuality having been "misused" by a man other than their husband. The shame associated with their defilement would have transferred to David—the "owner" of their sexuality.[20] This would likely have been Absalom's intention. David was the primary target of Absalom's public display. David seems to accept that their defilement could not be reversed or the stigma removed, so he endeavours to contain or mitigate its impact, to some extent at least, by isolating the women. The guard whom he sets over their house may have been more their jailer than their protector; this is hinted at in the last sentence, when the narrator tells us that the women were "*shut up* until the day of their death." This term conveys little in the way of protection or care, but instead conjures up images of imprisonment, or even entombment.

David's actions, therefore, need to be understood against the values of the honour-shame code of the day and the contagious stigma associated with sexual defilement. David's reaction could, of course, have been even harsher. Even so, this does not mean that his response should be ignored or excused. As concubines in the royal household, the ten women would not have had the power or authority to question or confront David about their treatment. Nevertheless, a contemporary reader is entitled, indeed obliged, to consider the events in this tradition from these women's perspective, and not just from David's. Being secluded for the rest of their lives seems tantamount to a punishment, and we are left wondering if these women are being blamed in some sense by David for the violence to which they had been subjected.

Moreover, to excuse David's response as understandable in its historical context—in keeping with the social dynamics of the honour-shame code—is to miss the ethical challenge posed by 2 Sam. 20:3.[21] Rather, David's behaviour needs to be recognized as a misguided and damaging reaction to sexual violence, prompted by assumptions that are still prevalent within contemporary rape cultures, and which *still* need to be challenged. Shame should attach to the perpetrators of sexual violence *not* to the victims. David's reaction, driven by his wish to protect his own honour, has disastrous consequence for the women. Far from challenging the

dynamics of gender and power linking the rape of Tamar (2 Samuel 13) to the rape of the royal concubines (2 Samuel 16), David's decision to seclude the concubines only reinforces these dynamics further.

Nevertheless, David's attitude to the concubines in 2 Sam. 20:3 is often passed over as an almost irrelevant aside in the succession narrative. The narrator keeps our focus firmly on David and his sons, eclipsing the female characters. A more attentive reading, however, shows that there is much more at stake. It is David's abandonment of his concubines in the aftermath of their rape, not just Absalom's initial act of rape, which requires ethical scrutiny.[22]

In a similar way, contemporary survivors of sexual violence who turn to their community for help or compassion are often subjected instead to blame, stigma, and social rejection (e.g. Madigan and Gamble 1989; Tearfund 2015). The initial trauma caused by sexual violence is thereby reinforced afterwards through the secondary victimization at the hands of people who could instead offer their support. Perpetrators can therefore typically rely on these negative reactions of others to heighten the impact of their actions on individuals and communities. This should be of particular concern to Christian churches and other religious communities, whose own responses to sexual violence often reinforce the stigmatization and discrimination felt by survivors of sexual violence; as Elisabet Le Roux writes:

> Many, if not most, churches are promoting sexual violence through their teachings, practices and response to sexual violence survivors, for example by admonishing those who disclose violations and ordering them to keep it secret. Unfortunately, those churches that choose non-involvement actually also contribute to the continuation of sexual violence. By not condemning it they are implicitly condoning the beliefs, perceptions and activities that facilitate sexual violence. (2015)

Hence, addressing such secondary victimization is one of the most appropriate and effective contributions that churches and faith-based organizations can make to support survivors of sexual violence and to challenge the rape-supportive discourses that sustain such violence.

As a means of examining the destructive impact of rape and the ways that rape trauma can be reinforced by the subsequent responses of others, a hot tub scene in a popular Netflix series seems very remote from a

dynastic battle in an ancient biblical narrative. Yet, despite their markedly different geographical and historical locations, we can still discern shared tropes of sexual violence *and* the re-traumatizing social responses to it within these two texts, suggesting that they have much more in common than might first appear. As I have outlined above, there are three steps to Hannah's experience of gender violence: first, she was physically abandoned by her friends and rendered vulnerable to being raped; second, she experienced rape; and third, she felt socially abandoned and isolated after her rape. In particular, she was failed by the school counsellor Mr Porter when she turned to him in a last-ditch attempt to seek help; like David, though, he effectively closed the door upon her. Considering *13/Thirteen Reasons Why* intertextually alongside the story of David's concubines allows us to read this biblical tradition with fresh insights, and we begin to see that these women's story parallels each of these stages inherent within Hannah's own story. Of course, important differences as well as similarities exist between the two texts. For example, while viewers and readers of *13/Thirteen Reasons Why* are granted intimate insight into Hannah's experience of sexual violence,[23] 2 Sam. 20:3 does not report the inner world of David's concubines—their point of view is utterly elided from the narrative. We are given no details about how their experiences of sexual violence and their double abandonment affected *them*—physically, emotionally, or psychologically. Instead, the narrator chooses to focus solely on *David's* reaction to their rapes.

Re-reading *Thirteen Reasons Why* in Light of 2 Samuel

Having explored how Hannah's story might offer a lens for reading the biblical passages in a similar framework of double abandonment and secondary victimization, the following section offers an interpretive reading in the opposite direction: what light might this biblical story shed on our understanding of gender violence in *13/Thirteen Reasons Why*? Here the focus will turn from the "second abandonment," and the harm done by those who fail to respond appropriately to survivors (David and Mr Porter), to the possibility that some characters may have an even more direct culpability for the violence itself. This involves a further examination of David's role in his first abandonment of the concubines, and Courtney Crimsen's abandonment of Hannah in the novel.

An Intentional Offering by David?

As mentioned above, David's first abandonment of his ten concubines occurs when he leaves them behind to look after the palace while he flees from the city with the rest of the household. What are his motivations for doing so? Since the narrator does not offer an explanation, David's decision begs further questions. Why does his house need to be looked after? Is he concerned about protecting his property from looters, or from Absalom and his forces, or someone else altogether? Furthermore, how exactly would the ten women protect the household? Did David assume that they had sufficient authority and influence, given their status as members of the royal court, to deter potential intruders, even Absalom himself?

It is possible that David left other followers and household staff (soldiers or servants) with the women to provide for their physical security. If so, this is not mentioned in the narrative; the narrator may simply have left it out, focusing solely on the fate of the women because this has the most direct bearing on David's honour. But their sense of vulnerability—their aloneness—is accentuated in 2 Sam. 15:16, where David is said to leave his house, "followed by *all* his household, *except* ten concubines whom he left behind."

Another possibility for understanding David's abandonment of the ten women is to consider it in light of the ideologies underpinning rape during warfare. Particularly in recent decades, the rape of civilians and military personnel by enemy combatants has rightly received increasing scrutiny and condemnation in both the media and academic and political discussions around human rights during armed conflict (e.g. Baaz and Stern 2013; Höglund 2003; Callimachi 2015; United Nations General Assembly Security Council 2017). Other forms of sexual violence associated with conflict have also come to the fore, including sexual slavery, trafficking, and forced prostitution. War is not required for women's bodies to be commodified and traded by men in these ways, but it often contributes towards making such gendered violence more prevalent. For example, during times of conflict, military leaders can use women as payment to reward their followers or bribe those they need to influence.[24] Might David have *intended* to leave the ten concubines for Absalom—an intentional gift, bribe, or offering from one warlord to another? Was David willing to explore some form of pact or power-share with his son, and therefore attempted to "sweeten the deal" by gifting him "his" women?

Perhaps he saw these women as an acceptable price to buy Absalom off, or soften his anger, or even distract him temporarily from pursuing his father.

Viewing David's decision to leave his ten concubines behind as an intentional offering for Absalom presents his action in an even more negative light than if he had left them behind with unintentional unconcern for their safety and well-being. Admittedly, this reading has to be tentative and there is a degree of speculation at stake. Nonetheless, it would offer an answer to David's otherwise ambiguous decision, and if correct, it may also be suggestive for a re-reading of Hannah's own abandonment prior to her rape in the *Thirteen Reasons Why* novel.

What Was Courtney Thinking?

As noted above, the *Thirteen Reasons Why* novel and the series locate the party Hannah attends at different people's houses. In the series, it takes place at Bryce's house, whereas in the novel, it is held at the home of fellow student Courtney Crimsen. Courtney has already featured in the story, especially on cassette 2, side B and cassette 3, side A (episodes 5–6). On cassette 2, side B, Hannah and Courtney had collaborated to expose the school year book photographer, Tyler, who was stalking Hannah and taking photos of her. Hannah therefore hoped that she and Courtney could become friends. Instead, Courtney spread false sexual rumours about Hannah, which further reinforced the damage to Hannah's reputation.

In the novel, Courtney and Bryce are already in the hot tub when Hannah arrives. Bryce invites Hannah to join them, and Courtney encourages her and offers to give Hannah a ride home afterwards. Courtney's subsequent decision to leave Hannah alone with Bryce raises questions about her complicity in Bryce's sexual assault, which follows shortly thereafter. Of course, Courtney may not have realized that leaving Hannah with Bryce places Hannah at risk of Bryce's unwanted attentions.[25] Nevertheless, there are a number of other clues in the novel that infer Courtney may have been more complicit than Hannah's own comments suggest. For example, when Hannah initially joins Bryce and Courtney, she makes clear that she distrusts *both* of them[26]:

> With the calming water also came terror, I should not be here. I didn't trust Courtney. I didn't trust Bryce. No matter what their original intentions, I knew them each well enough not to trust them for long. And I was right not to trust them. (Asher 2007, pp. 261–2)

Hannah also observes that Courtney's "perfect" exterior masks something less pleasant. Hannah had noticed "the little smiles on your faces" when she first encounters Bryce and Courtney in the hot tub (p. 261), hinting at a certain complicity between the duo. Courtney's intentions are further suggested as the scene develops. When Bryce slowly slides over next to Hannah and rests his shoulder against hers, Hannah recalls that "Courtney opened her eyes, looked at us, then shut them again" (p. 262). Bryce says Hannah's name in a soft voice, which Hannah interprets as "an obvious attempt at romance" (ibid.). His fingers touch her thigh, she clenches her jaw and his fingers move away. Then, when he tries again, Hannah opens her eyes and sees that "Courtney was walking away" (p. 263). When Clay hears this on the cassette, he comments: "Do you need more reasons for everyone to hate you, Courtney?" (p. 264).

Courtney does not leave Hannah alone with Bryce until he has begun sexually harassing Hannah.[27] At best, Courtney might mistakenly believe that Hannah's silence in the hot tub indicates her consent. Shutting her eyes when she sees Bryce move next to Hannah and then leaving the hot tub may therefore be her way of giving them some privacy.[28] It is possible that Courtney is not expecting Bryce to sexually assault Hannah, but it is equally possible that Courtney is actively complicit in offering him this opportunity. Hannah describes how much Courtney wants to be popular, and Bryce is one of the most influential boys at the school. Perhaps, then, Courtney's departure is, like David's gift to Absalom, a tacit sexual "offering" motivated by her own self-interest. In David's case, it is an attempt to save his own skin, whereas Courtney's motive is harder to guess. It is possible that she is paying Hannah back after Hannah's earlier rebuke when Courtney spread rumours about her. Or perhaps Courtney is simply ingratiating herself with Bryce, by giving him the opportunity to carry out an act (raping Hannah) that, deep down, she knows he wants to do. Courtney's abandonment of Hannah raises the same disturbing question as David's (first) abandonment of the concubines. In each case, the abandonment might be more calculated and callous than first appears. To be sure, the fate of the concubines, and of Hannah, is the same whether the abandonment was intentional or not. Nevertheless, the question marks hanging over David's and Courtney's intentions make it even more urgent to look beyond the immediate perpetrators of the violence, Absalom and Bryce, and recognize the roles and responsibilities of others.

Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, I have argued that the *13 Reasons Why* television series and the novel upon which it is based treat a number of themes that are important to understanding rape culture, including how the responses of others may both precipitate rape and also increase its impact and legacy for survivors. My reading of *13/Thirteen Reasons Why* has illustrated the three-step sequence in Hannah's rape story. First, Hannah is physically abandoned in the hot tub and left vulnerable to Bryce's unwanted attentions. Second, Hannah is raped by Bryce. Third, after the rape, Hannah has an overwhelming sense of isolation and despair. She experiences a "second abandonment" in which she feels isolated from her classmates and let down by the school counsellor, Mr Porter. It is this sense of second abandonment and not just the rape itself which prompts her to take her life. This sequence is echoed in the three passages of 2 Samuel that relate the story of David's ten concubines. First, they are physically abandoned when David and his household leave Jerusalem. Second, they are then raped by Absalom. Third, when David returns to Jerusalem, he confines and abandons them again, leaving them to a life of social isolation as "living widows."

Reading these 2 Samuel passages in light of Hannah's story draws attention to the failure in David's decision to leave his ten concubines in such a vulnerable situation, and, particularly, his inadequate and harmful response to the sexual assaults on these women. This does not in any way detract from Absalom's guilt as the perpetrator of multiple rapes, but it does suggest a wider context in which to understand the impact of sexual violence on these women. It is not only rapists who contribute to survivors' trauma. Other people often compound and reinforce the damage by the responses that they make in the aftermath of the rape. These responses frequently leave survivors feeling rejected, isolated, and abandoned, rather than supported along a path towards recovery and healing.[29] Recognizing this failing in both David and Mr Porter helps to focus attention on the different ways that survivors can experience social harm from the negative or insensitive reactions of others, even when this might not be the intention. The social response to rape can make its impact even worse for those affected. While Bryce and Absalom are fully responsible for the *act* of sexual violence, the negative or thoughtless *reactions* of others and the failure to support survivors of sexual violence also need to be highlighted and challenged.

Furthermore, when we read back in the other direction, from biblical text to television series and novel, we might notice that the biblical text leaves an unanswered question about what David *really* intended when he left the concubines behind. A similar question can be asked of the hot tub scene in the book. Viewers of the series who are unfamiliar with the novel are likely to be surprised that this question even arises. Nevertheless, the fact that the series alters how the scene plays out in the novel may be a telling indicator that the series producers sought to remove this disturbing aspect of the book. When Courtney walks away from the hot tub, leaving Hannah with Bryce (p. 263), the possibility is raised that she is complicit (to some extent at least) in Hannah's subsequent rape.

Thus, reading 2 Samuel through the lens of the television series *13 Reasons Why* has highlighted the responses and reactions of others in the aftermath of rape, and the damage done to survivors by a "second abandonment." Reading in the other direction, from 2 Samuel to the novel *Thirteen Reasons Why*, has raised a question mark over both David's and Courtney's intentions during their "first abandonment." Again, while Absalom and Bryce must take full responsibility for their perpetration of rape, David and Courtney may likewise be held culpable for their (perhaps deliberate) complicity in its execution. These two seemingly very different stories can therefore be read alongside each other as part of a wider conversation on rape cultures, both past and present.

Notes

1. This chapter originated as a Bible study that was part of a Student Christian Movement (SCM) Otago series on sexual assault in 2017. I am grateful to the SCM group for the invitation to speak to them and for the many helpful comments on the material. Thanks also to Katie Marcar, Johanna Stiebert, James Harding, Judith McKinlay, and the editors for comments on an earlier draft, and to Tanya Findlater for identifying Stephanie in the Netflix series.
2. In this chapter, I will refer to the *13 Reasons Why* (2017) Netflix series as "the series," and Asher's novel *Thirteen Reasons Why* (2007) as "the novel." When I am referring to both simultaneously, I will use the moniker *13/Thirteen Reasons Why*.
3. For further details, see "13 Reasons Why" (2017).
4. Shuttleworth (2017). In 2015–2016, 579 people committed suicide in New Zealand (including fifty-nine people under the age of twenty) (Waters 2016). In 2016–2017, the figure was 606 (Law 2017). These are the highest rates since figures began to be recorded in 2007–2008.

5. For similar work, which considers the sexual violence of crucifixion in the light of Latin American torture reports, and the death of Saul (1 Sam. 31) in the light of the violation of Muammar Gaddafi, see Tombs (1999, 2014). While both these works read the biblical text from a contemporary context, neither gives sustained attention to reading back from the text to the present, as attempted in this chapter.
6. In recent years, faith-based organizations have become far more active in preventing and responding to sexual and gender-based violence; see Le Roux et al. (2016). Organizations like "We Will Speak Out," (https://www.wewillspeakout.org), a global coalition of Christian-based Non-Governmental Organizations and church groups committed to ending sexual violence across communities around the world, are at the forefront of this work. Primary prevention of sexual violence is of utmost importance, but churches and faith communities can also make a crucial contribution beyond this. They are especially well placed to address secondary victimization and challenge negative attitudes and responses towards survivors. At present, however, this potential goes largely unfulfilled (Tearfund 2011).
7. Phyllis Trible's *Texts of Terror* (1984) is an early classic in what has become an extensive literature by feminist biblical scholars on the prevalence of rape and sexual violence in the Hebrew Bible. On more recent works on biblical rape, see especially Scholz (2010) and Blyth (2010).
8. The language of 2 Samuel 16 does not unequivocally state that Absalom rapes the women by force, or that they did not consent. This is hardly surprising; in the Hebrew Bible, a woman's right and ability to give or withhold her consent is rarely acknowledged. Many interpreters therefore fail to consider the presence of rape in this tradition. A common reading of the passage is that Absalom takes possession of the royal harem as a claim to the throne (McCarter 1974) and/or an assertion of his male prowess (Newsom et al. 1998, p. 162). There can be little doubt that this political symbolism is indeed central to his actions, but it is important to also name Absalom's actions here as rape. Even if he did not use physical violence, there is nothing to suggest that the ten concubines granted their consent, especially given the huge disparity of power between themselves and Absalom, the king's son. The passage thus presents sexual decision-making and agency as entirely a male concern. Furthermore, reading these passages in light of the rape of Absalom's half-sister Tamar in 2 Samuel 13, and Nathan's prophecy in 2 Samuel 12, offers a clear context for reading 2 Samuel 16 as a narrative of rape (Stone 1996).
9. This forms the basis of episode twelve in the Nextflix series, and Chap. 12 in the book.

10. These rumours were compounded by the fact that Bryce shared a photo of Hannah taken by Justin on their date while she is coming down a slide in the playground. Although entirely innocent, Justin misrepresents what is happening in the photo to his friends, and given Hannah's pose (she is lying supine on the slide, her clothes dishevelled), they are quick to believe his version of events.
11. Justin and Jessica go back to the house to find a room where they can make out. A little later Stephanie leaves the hot tub to find a bathroom in the house, and Zach offers to show her the way because "it's like a maze in there."
12. Hannah's slightly hesitant reply, and Mr Porter's interpretation of her reply as expressing doubt, are strange given the way the rape is depicted in the series. The discrepancy is best understood as a plot device which allows the meeting with Mr Porter in the series to remain reasonably close to the version in the novel, despite the two slightly different depictions of the rape. In the novel, the rape is depicted as involving less explicit use of force, and at the meeting, Hannah tells Mr Porter: "You mean rape? No I don't think so" (Asher 2007, p. 276), which makes his response easier to understand.
13. See Exum (1993) on the fragmentation of women's experiences in biblical texts. For ways in which biblical depictions of violence against women typically ignore the perspectives of the women themselves, see Exum (1995).
14. The story forms part of what is often referred to as the Succession Narrative (2 Samuel 9–1 Kings 2). This narrative focuses on David's reign (including the events unfolding in his household and court), and ends by describing how his son Solomon came to succeed him as king. Absalom has already featured in 2 Samuel 13, when his sister Tamar is raped by their half-brother Amnon (Absalom and Tamar are full siblings, and all three are children of David). David's role in this event is critical for understanding the unravelling of his relationship with Absalom. Amnon draws his father into an enabling role in the rape by asking him to instruct Tamar to go to Amnon's house and cook some heartening fare for her "ailing" brother (v. 7). It is when she is there that Amnon rapes her. When David learns what has happened, he becomes angry with Amnon but does not punish him (v. 21). From this moment, Absalom hates Amnon and stops speaking to him (v. 22). The honour-shame values of the day mean that David's inaction leaves the responsibility on Absalom to exact revenge to satisfy (his) family honour. Two years later, Absalom entices Amnon to a feast where he has his servants kill him (vv. 23–9). There are interesting similarities and echoes with the earlier incident. Absalom requests that David send "my brother," which echoes Amnon's earlier request that David send "my sister." Once again, David plays a crucial but unwitting role, and sends Amnon to his death. Absalom then flees Jerusalem for three years, until

David eventually allows him to return. A further two years will pass, however, before David agrees to a reunion with his recalcitrant son (14:28–33). For further discussion on the rape of Tamar, see Trible (1984); Keefe (1993); Yamada (2008).

15. 2 Samuel 15 opens with Absalom seeking to endear himself to the people of Israel, thereby building up his power base in Jerusalem (vv. 1–6). After four years, he travels to Hebron in order to develop his support further. When he summons David's respected counsellor Ahithophel to join him in Hebron, it signals that a tipping point has been reached, and a revolt against David is imminent (v. 12). The opportunity to take the crown may have been Absalom's primary concern here, yet the story suggests that he still has a keen sense of the great dishonour done to him by Amnon and his father, and that this dishonour and shame require revenge.
16. David was first married to Michal, daughter of Saul; he then married six further wives during his time in Hebron (Ahinoam, Abigail, Maachah, Haggith, Abital and Eglah). 2 Sam. 5:13 says that in Jerusalem "David took more wives and concubines." This included his marriage to Bathsheba, after arranging the death of her husband Uriah. He also made provision for Saul's widows, and may have married them.
17. See, for example, Stiglmayer (1994); Allen (1996); Zarkov (2007); Skjelsbæk (2012) on the public rapes that took place during the war in Bosnia. On connections between war and rape in the Bible, see Thistlethwaite (1993); Gordon and Washington (1995).
18. As Scholz argues, "Even if it were true that the Israelites did not recognise rape as a sexual violation, contemporary readers bring contemporary vocabulary and sensitivity to the interpretative process" (2017, p. 81).
19. There are probable echoes of the Bathsheba story, including David seeing Bathsheba from his roof (2 Sam. 11:2). The prophet Nathan had denounced David for taking Bathsheba and killing Uriah, and warned of God's punishment (2 Sam. 12: 11–12): "Thus says the LORD: I will raise up trouble against you from within your own house; and I will take your wives before your eyes, and give them to your neighbor, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this very sun. For you did it secretly; but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun." This passage offers the particularly troubling suggestion that the rapes are part of a divine plan to punish David. In addition, Ahithophel appears to be Bathsheba's grandfather, and may therefore have been motivated by avenging his own family honour (2 Sam. 11:3 and 23:34).
20. On adultery as a source of male dishonour, see Pressler (1993, pp. 42–3). For a critical discussion of honour-shame values in biblical texts, see Stiebert (2002).
21. For a discussion about the necessity to recognize and acknowledge gender violence in biblical texts, see Scholz (2005).

22. Commentators often fail to see the problem in David's action, and some ignore 20:3 completely. Arnold Anderson (1989, p. 240) does not offer any comment on v. 3—his discussion jumps from v. 2 to v. 4. McCarter (1974, p. 423) merely acknowledges but does not question or challenge the action: "Now that these women have been illegally claimed by Abshalom (16:21–22), they must be put away." Graeme Auld (2011, pp. 561–2) presents David's action as benign, and his comment on 20:3 mainly discusses whether or not there is an allusion between the ten women and the ten tribes.
23. Martinez (2017) offers a thought-provoking interpretation that although *13 Reasons Why* appears to be told from Hannah's perspective, it is actually Clay's perspective that shapes the overall narrative as a tale of unrequited love.
24. Examples include the use of "comfort women" by Japanese troops during the Second World War, the trafficking of women in Bosnia in the 1990s, and recent stories of sexual slavery by Boko Haram and Islamic State. See, for example, Stiglmayer (1994), Chang (1997), Sancho (1997), Yang (1997), Barstow (2000), Tanaka (2002), Callimachi (2015), Global Justice Centre (2015).
25. There is some support for this from Hannah herself, who says at the start of the cassette: "No, this tape is not about Courtney … though she does play a part. But Courtney has no idea what I'm about to say because she left just as things got going" (Asher 2007, p. 259).
26. Even before the previous week's party at Jessica's house, Hannah had seen Bryce's true character. On cassette 3 side B, Bryce and a girlfriend come to the cinema where Hannah and Clay worked. About halfway through the film, they see the girl run out, clearly distressed (p. 146). After the film, Bryce stays to talk to Hannah. Clay warns Hannah against Bryce, and Hannah replies, "I know who he is Clay. I know what he is like. Believe me" (Asher 2007, p. 147). Even more importantly, at Jessica's party the previous week, Hannah witnessed Bryce rape Jessica, but had not intervened. In the novel, Hannah describes this on cassette 5 side B (pp. 220–31), which is included in episode 9 of the series (cassette 5, side A). Hannah's previous experience with Courtney also gives her good reason to be distrustful. On cassette 3, side A, Hannah warns that Courtney's sweet persona is misleading: "And you … are … just … so sweet. Right? Wrong" (p. 94). She goes on to explain how Courtney used her to get a lift to a party, only for Hannah to discover that Courtney was spreading rumours about her (p. 113).
27. Courtney's awareness of the threat of male predatory behaviour has already been confirmed earlier, when, at another party, she warns Hannah against spending time with a guy who gives Hannah a drink and then invites her to stay and talk to him (p. 103). Moreover, Hannah is likewise familiar with Bryce's predatory reputation among their fellow students when she

notes on the cassette, "Everyone knows who you are, Bryce. Everyone knows what you do" (p. 263). Clay, too, seems familiar with Bryce's reputation; when he hears Hannah say on the cassette that Bryce calls her name in the hot tub, he exclaims "God no. This can only end one way" (p. 260).

28. In some ways, such a charitable reading of Courtney's character would fit with Hannah's perspective in the book: that her (Hannah's) problems often stem from people genuinely not understanding how their behaviour impacts her. There is, however, enough evidence in the book to suggest that Courtney's decision to abandon Hannah with Bryce in the hot tub may have been more intentional than Hannah realizes.
29. Tearfund (2011, 2015).

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CHAPTER 9

"To Ransom a Man's Soul": Male Rape and Gender Identity in *Outlander* and "The Suffering Man" of Lamentations 3

Emma Nagouse

Outlander is a popular series of novels written by Diana Gabaldon and adapted for television by Ronald Moore.[1] The series tells the story of Claire Randall, an English nurse during World War Two, who, on a visit to Scotland, is transported back in time to 1753, where she meets her soon-to-be lover and husband, Jacobite rebel Jamie Fraser, and becomes embroiled in the politics and events surrounding the Jacobite uprising. Described by writer and television critic Shaunna Murphy (2015) as "unapologetically feminist since its inception," the *Outlander* television series challenges mainstream representations of sex, from addressing sexual violence against both men and women to providing a "rare acknowledgment of the female gaze" through its cinematographic focus on both men's *and* women's bodies (Virtue 2015). It therefore provides a valuable vehicle to examine contemporary discourses around sexuality and gender prevalent within popular culture.

At the end of the first *Outlander* novel, Jamie is tortured and raped by British army officer Captain Jack Randall. The depiction of these events,

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retold in the final two episodes of season 1 ("Wentworth Prison" and "To Ransom a Man's Soul"), received much media attention, with many of the show's viewers praising the sensitivity *and* integrity with which the oft taboo issue of male rape was portrayed. The violence of the scene was hard for many to watch, but equally hard was witnessing the way that Jamie's entire persona—his psychological, emotional, and spiritual self—was splintered in the aftermath of his assault.

I found the episode deeply thought-provoking, not least because it brought to mind another "text of terror" which likewise bears painful witness to a man's suffering as the result of trauma: the "Man of Sorrows" poem in Lamentations 3. Reading this biblical text alongside the cultural text of *Outlander*, I would suggest that, like Jamie's narrative of sexual violence, the Man's poetic lament in Lamentations 3 may also testify to the trauma of rape. Whether or not this was the intention of the biblical author(s) of this text is a moot point; both texts draw upon shared tropes, structures, and vocabularies that invite us to reflect intertextually on their commonalities and mutual concerns, despite the geographical and historical distance that separates them. Particularly, the resonances between *Outlander* and Lamentations 3 can inspire us to consider the biblical tradition with fresh eyes, granting us space to create *new* readings which connect Jamie's rape narrative to the Man's own experience of suffering. In other words, *Outlander*'s unequivocal depiction of gender violence inflicted on a male body can shed light upon the biblical text, helping us to identify the expressions of violation and trauma shared between these traditions. And, through this intertextual reading, we are invited to open our eyes to the possibility that the lament of the suffering Man is a lament about rape. The violence expressed in the lament is horrifying and brutal; the *possibility* that it is evoking male rape deserves our attention, not least because this sacred text is read and granted meaning within rape cultures around the world, where sexual violence against people of all genders is often elided or dismissed. To ignore or write off the possibility that the violence perpetrated against the Man in Lamentations 3 may be *sexual* violence is to be complicit with such acts of elision.

Lamentations and the Suffering Man

The Book of Lamentations consists of five poems expressing intense grief in the aftermath of the fall of Jerusalem at the hands of the Babylonian Empire (c.587 BCE). Set within the traumatic context of the city's

destruction, these poems offer raw and unfiltered expressions of deepest sorrow and suffering; in the words of Adele Berlin, the book acts as a "memorialization of that suffering … it eternalizes that catastrophic moment and its aftermath … probing it from various perspectives, and preserving it forever" (2004, p. 1). Various metaphorical figures haunt these poems, their testimonies bearing witness to the gender-coded nature of their suffering. The fallen city, Daughter Zion, is personified as a raped and unfaithful wife (Lamentations 1) and as a mother who has lost her children (Lamentations 4). Lamentations 3, meanwhile, introduces the reader to the "Man of Sorrows," or suffering Man, whose experiences of trauma are evoked using traditionally masculine tropes of military combat and extreme physical violence (Berlin 2004, p. 9).

Unlike the other poems of Lamentations which are unrelenting in their expression of grief, Lamentations 3 offers readers a rollercoaster of emotional responses; it begins with a harrowing lament of suffering, then shifts into a more optimistic tone towards the middle of the poem, before swinging back to complaint, and ending, once again, with expressions of hope. Despite its deeply affecting images of pain and loss, hope finds stronger expression here than in any other poem within the book; this has led some commentators to describe the "Man of Sorrows" lament as the "theological nub" of Lamentations (see Mintz 1984, p. 32; cited in Linafelt 2000, p. 6).

As a book that evokes the timeless trauma of human catastrophe, Lamentations resonates deeply for many readers, and continues to be interpreted by scholars in light of more contemporary contexts of violence and war. Tod Linafelt (2000, p. 1), for example, notes the importance of reading Lamentations alongside the horrors of the Holocaust, while Kim Lan Nguyen (2013, p. 1) reflects on the book's testimony of suffering in light of the Vietnam War. As these poems carry with them such heavily gendered depictions of trauma, pain, and survival, the need to read these texts in the context of rape culture, a phenomenon which is arguably one of the most devastating traits of contemporary society, appears not only timely, but urgent.

Outlander: A Contemporary Intertext

Near the end of the first *Outlander* novel, British government troops capture Jamie and he is subsequently sentenced to death. Captain Jack Randall halts Jamie's execution and has him transported to Wentworth Prison,

where he proceeds to torture him. Claire sets out to rescue Jamie and manages to enter the prison before being caught by Randall. Jamie agrees to submit to Randall's rape in exchange for Claire's safety, knowing that Randall has long been sexually obsessed with him. "Do what ye wish to me," he tells Randall. "I'll not struggle, though I'll allow you to bind me if ye think it needful … But first you'll see the woman safe from the prison" (Gabaldon 2001, p. 720). Randall concurs, and proceeds to torture Jamie, while raping him repeatedly. Letting down his long hair and perfuming it with lavender oil, he masquerades as Claire, asking Jamie to think of his wife while he is being raped ("To Ransom a Man's Soul," episode 16, season 1). This particular aspect of Randall's assault exacerbates Jamie's trauma, both during the rapes and after his eventual rescue, when he struggles to separate Claire in his mind from the memories of his rapist.

This harrowing portrayal of the trauma of male rape resonates strongly with the lament of the suffering Man in Lamentations 3. The vivid depictions of torture perpetrated against both Jamie and the Man are strikingly similar in both intertexts. Like Jamie, the Man is bound in chains (3:7). His bones are broken, and his skin is wasting away (3:4), just as Jamie suffers broken ribs and "smashed bones" after being beaten by Randall (Gabaldon 2001, p. 748). The Man feels torn to pieces (3:11), and is made to "cower in ashes" (3:16); Jamie, meanwhile, is burned with a brand that leaves his skin "puckered, reddened and blistered … charred, rimmed with white ash" (Gabaldon 2001, p. 742). Moreover, the man is penetrated with arrows (3:12), while Jamie's hand is pierced with a nail when Randall pins it to the table (Gabaldon 2001, p. 721), and his body too is penetrated through the brutal act of rape (p. 793). These shared experiences of violence and suffering connect our two male characters together, allowing us to see them both as victims and survivors of the most dreadful abuses.

Having established an initial intertextual connection between these two characters, I proceed in my analysis by drawing on psychological theories around rape trauma to read Lamentations 3 in light of Jamie's rape in *Outlander*. In particular, I consider some of the particular issues faced by survivors in the aftermath of their rape, including their struggles to maintain intimate relationships and their re-traumatization. I also explore the construction of shame within a rape culture framework, considering how this enables victim blaming and male survivors' perceived loss of masculinity as a result of their rape. Finally, I examine both Jamie's and the Man's violation in terms of male acquaintance rape, considering the dynamics and discourses surrounding this form of gender violence. My

aim for this intertextual reading is thus to further readers' understanding of and ability to recognize male rape in both ancient and contemporary texts, and to provide a vehicle with which to interrogate contemporary discourses around male rape.

The Trauma of Intimacy

The trauma of rape commonly impacts survivors' sexual and romantic relationships (Kelly 1988, pp. 204–8). Sex and other forms of intimacy can trigger memories of their attack, or evoke anxieties that even trusted partners will respond violently should they withhold their consent (p. 205). Intimacy may also reinforce survivors' own feelings of defilement after their rape, causing them to avoid romantic encounters or distance themselves from current partners (pp. 205–6).

This particular aspect of rape trauma is poignantly evoked in *Outlander*. In the aftermath of his rape, Jamie is unable to find comfort in Claire's touch or presence. Once he is rescued from Wentworth Prison, he is successfully transported to the Abbey of Ste. Anne de Beaupré to recover from his injuries and evade further capture. During his time at the Abbey, Claire observes his behaviour, noting at one point, "He picked up the pillow … and hugged it to him as though for protection, a substitute for the comfort he could not seek from me" (Gabaldon 2001, p. 790). Jamie's discomfort around his partner is compounded by the fact that Randall masqueraded as Claire while he was raping Jamie, making Jamie associate the rape with his wife. As a result, Jamie craves love and comfort from Claire, while simultaneously being repulsed at the prospect of her touch. He tells Claire that, despite feeling that he would "die" without her "touch," she is now "linked" in his mind with his violation at the hands of Randall. As he explains to her, "I canna think of you … kissing you or touching your hand, without feeling the fear and the pain and the sickness come back" (p. 795). In essence, Jamie now associates Claire with violence and pain.

This connection between intimacy and pain is likewise evoked in Lamentations 3; at the start of his lament, the suffering Man complains bitterly that the one who should care for him the most—his God—has abused him:

> I am the one who has seen afflictions under the rod of God's wrath.
> He has driven and brought me into darkness without any light;
> Against me alone he turns his hand, again and again, all day long. (Lam. 3:1–3)

Here, and in the first eighteen verses of this chapter, the suffering Man laments the brutal violence perpetrated against him, while voicing his disillusionment that the God whom he trusted has turned his hand against him. Any intimacy he may once have sought from God is now a source of trauma, because God has "besieged" him, trapped him, torn him to pieces, and pierced him with arrows; in other words, whenever God is close, the Man can expect only pain and violence. Why would he want his God to be near him then, when he can no longer trust God *not* to cause him harm? As Van Hecke notes, the lament of the suffering Man, and the book of Lamentations as a whole, gives anguished voice to the realities of a "shattered relationship with God" (2002, p. 277). The Man's pain is so devastating and absolute that he struggles to comprehend how he can rebuild a relationship with his abuser. "Gone is my glory," he laments, "and all that I had hoped for from the Lord" (Lam. 3:18).

Re-traumatization

Re-traumatization, or the "second rape," refers to the psychological trauma rape victims may experience after their abuse (Campbell et al. 2001). This re-traumatization was initially identified by Burgess and Holmstrom (1974), and the symptoms, described by Abdullah-Khan (2008, p. 48), include "phobic anxiety, depression, somatic complaints, tearfulness and behavioural changes," along with emotional reactions including "fear, humiliation and embarrassment … anger, revenge and self-blame." Rape survivors may also experience a sense of extreme disorganization in the aftermath of their rape, and suffer from disturbing flashbacks and nightmares (Scarce 1997, p. 21). Re-traumatization can take place in many contexts, particularly when victims recount their abuse to others. This can be significantly worsened if those to whom they disclose do not provide support, but instead blame the victim for their assault or treat them as defiled or damaged (Campbell et al. 2001, p. 1241).

Jamie's own experience of re-traumatization after his rape is associated with Claire's presence. He self-medicates with alcohol (Gabaldon 2001, p. 776), and his mood deteriorates to the point that he contemplates suicide (p. 794). He also presents with longer-term symptoms of re-traumatization in the series' second book, *Dragonfly in Amber*, where he suffers nightmares relating to his torture and abuse (Gabaldon 2002, p. 154). Furthermore, his difficulty in engaging in consensual sex with Claire without suffering traumatizing flashbacks is explored in depth in

Season 2, episode 4, "La Belle Dame Blanche." Now living with Claire in Paris, he starts to regain a sense of his sexual self, but admits to Claire that he has been feeling "naked, alone. Trying to hide under a blade of grass." His soul was exposed through the rape, and he now feels uncertain of who he is and where he is going. Although he now feels able to resume their sexual relationship, viewers are left in no doubt that this after-effect of his rape has deeply impacted Jamie's sense of self *and* his relationship with his wife.

Similarly, the Man's testimony in Lamentations 3 articulates his own battle to confront his experience of trauma. His words read like a stream of consciousness, where he staggers between anger, confusion, hope, and anguish. Although he appears to start moving towards some form of hope and healing, it is not long before he plunges back into a mood of bleak despair, as though he simply cannot shake off the memories of past traumas. Such ongoing emotional turmoil is evocative of male rape survivors' attempts to make sense of their assault and their own experiences of re-traumatization. Michael Scarce, for example, affirms this in relation to his own encounter with rape, noting that his journey towards healing and recovery was slow and painful: "It was not until a year later that I began to make more sense of my experience … Gradually I came to terms with the fact that I had physically and mentally resisted that night … and that I had been, in fact, raped" (1997, p. xvi).

Humiliation, Shame, and a Perceived Loss of Masculinity

Themes of humiliation and shame often appear in the testimonies of male rape survivors. Scarce suggests that male rape is often erased in public consciousness because society is unwilling to recognize the "vulnerability of masculinity and manhood" (1997, p. 9). Such attitudes then reinforce the belief that men must be the primary physical guardians of themselves and others, and any perceived failure on their part would severely compromise the masculine ideal. As Nathan, a rape survivor interviewed by Scarce, says, "I'm not sure I'll ever tell any of my family or my friends [that I was raped]. They would probably understand, but I'd just be too embarrassed. I'd always be wondering if they thought less of me" (p. 19).

Exploring the dynamics of manhood within a rape culture, Michael Messner suggests that contemporary discourses of masculinity render men vulnerable to "misogynistic or homophobic ridicule" when they adopt the role of a "symbolic woman" in a male space (2005, p. 41). In dominant

gender discourses, to be a woman is to be vulnerable, passive, and penetrated. When a man is compelled to occupy this role through the act of being raped, he essentially becomes "unmanned," because he no longer complies with cultural expectations of hegemonic masculinity. This process is further articulated by Javaid (2016, p. 288), who notes:

> While "real" men are forced to take on a masculine role and avoid behaviours linked to femininity, male rape victims may be judged to have failed as men for not fighting off their aggressor … Feminising or gendering victimisation is mostly seen through the use of derogatory labels ascribed to men who have not achieved expectations of hegemonic masculinity … and men who have been the victim of a sexual attack undermine the dominant, social ideal of masculinity (sexually dominant, powerful, potent and in control).

Returning to *Outlander*, it is possible to recognize some of the dominant discourses of masculinity shaping Jamie's own experiences of shame and stigma following his rape. As a proud Scottish soldier, known for being able to withstand a great deal of physical pain, he feels that the rape has compromised his masculinity. As he tells Claire, "I didna use to think myself a coward, but I am. I had no reason to live, but I was not brave enough to die" (Gabaldon 2001, p. 733). After admitting his own sense of weakness and emasculation, he tells Claire that he is no longer fit to be her husband; even the thought of touching her makes him want to "vomit with shame" (p. 794). Immersed in his own humiliation, Jamie thus believes that he cannot embrace the two roles deeply woven into his masculine identity: those of husband and soldier.

Reading Jamie's experiences of shame alongside those of the Man in Lamentations 3 allows us to understand the Man's crippling sense of humiliation as a response to his feelings of being "unmanned" in the aftermath of his rape. For, according to Ken Stone, these gendered discourses of hegemonic masculinity are also prevalent in the biblical texts, and explain why the threat of male rape is an effective means of intimidation and humiliation in narratives such as Genesis 19 and Judges 19:

> Within a culture marked by rigid gender differentiation and hierarchy, a man who assumes the role allotted by convention to a woman is moving, socially, downward … The subject of the rape, the man who does the forcing, is thereby making a statement about the inability of the male object to emulate a certain socially inscribed model of masculinity. This is also a statement about relative power relations, since by definition men are considered to have power over women. (1996, p. 79)

This association of feminization and male shame is also evoked in the book of Jeremiah, where the prophet describes defeated warriors as having "become women" (Jer. 50:37; 51:30). Clearly, the status of being akin to "women" stands as the antithesis of military power and masculinity—a potent emblem of weakness, defeat, and inadequacy.

Drawing on these tropes of emasculation, the Man's loss of power in Lamentations 3 is evoked in painful detail. He describes himself as hunted prey; God has lain in wait for him like "a bear … a lion in hiding," before capturing him and tearing him apart (vv. 10–11). As quarry rather than hunter, the Man attests his own loss of masculinity—he is the figure of vulnerability and weakness, whose soft body will be ripped open by the hard, sharp masculinity of a fearsome, violent God. Similarly, gendered connotations are conjured by the Man's complaints about being pierced and penetrated by God's "arrow" (v. 12), an allusion that is inescapably phallic and can be understood as indicating some form of divine collusion in the Man's experience of rape. As a penetrated body, he is again compelled to adopt a feminine subject position, his bodily integrity violated and his masculinity shattered. He thus experiences shame and humiliation in the aftermath of his abuse. Conceptualized as a victim of sexual violence, he becomes a "laughing stock" to his people, the object of their "taunt-songs" all day long (v. 14), because he has been dragged into the space of "symbolic woman"—the penetrated, not the penetrator; the victim of violence, not its perpetrator.[2]

Moreover, given his location within a context of military conflict, the possibility that the Man has been a victim of wartime rape cannot be overlooked. Sexual violence against both men and women has been employed as a weapon of war for millennia, serving as a grimly effective means by which the victors stamp their superiority over the losing side. Wartime rape relies on those dominant gender discourses which assume women's "ownership" by their male kin. To rape enemy women is thus to humiliate the men to whom these women "belong"; it demonstrates that the men of this vanquished community were too weak to protect "their" sexual property (Albanese 2001; Brownmiller 1993, pp. 35–40). And to rape enemy men is likewise a potent symbol of their emasculation and their dishonour as "symbolic women," violated and penetrated by the superior masculinity of the victors. The ubiquity of wartime rape throughout history thus highlights the timeless intersections between colonialism, conquest, and gender violence.

The use of sexual violence as a weapon of war is also attested in the biblical traditions with depressing regularity (e.g. Gen. 34:29; Deut. 21:10–14; Numbers 31; Jdg. 5:28–30; 21:12–14; Isa. 13:16; Jer. 6:11–12; Zech. 14:2; see Reeder 2017). Indeed, Lam. 5:11 bears witness to the occurrence of wartime rape perpetrated against women in the vanquished city of Jerusalem. The Man appears to allude to this himself in 3:51: "My eyes cause me grief at the fate of all the young women in my city." His act of *seeing* the suffering of female rape victims here may hint at his own experience of gendered violence; as v. 1 attests, the Man's *witnessed* trauma appears to be related to his *experienced* trauma (Reyburn 1992, p. 77). The sight of those violated women may perhaps have retraumatized the Man, reminding him that his own rape has forced him into the subjective space of "symbolic woman." Like Jamie, then, he too may have been the victim of gendered violence perpetrated against him by the enemy during military conflict and invasion.

Victim Blaming

Immediately after raping Jamie, Randall asks him, "How could [Claire] ever forgive you?" ("To Ransom a Man's Soul," episode 16, season 1). Randall's question infers that Jamie's rape was something Jamie himself had chosen to do, rather than something that had been *done* to him; it was therefore an event for which he would be held accountable by his wife. This echoes with the discourse of victim blame that is so ubiquitous in contemporary rape culture, where responsibility for rape is, both directly and indirectly, attributed to the victim (Scarce 1997, p. 20; Abdullah-Khan 2008, pp. 44–7). This rape myth holds both male and female victims accountable because of their behaviour (e.g. drunkenness, flirting, lack of resistance, ambivalent expression of non-consent), choice of clothing, or presence in particular spaces (such as bars, nightclubs, or locations considered "dangerous"). The propensity for others to blame rape survivors for their assault may also be internalized by the survivors themselves, causing them immense psychological trauma (Scarce 1997, p. 19). Thus, while Claire reassures Jamie that there is "nothing to forgive," Jamie is unable to shrug off his own crushing sense of guilt, telling his wife that he has been "broken" by Randall through his horrific acts of abuse (episode 16, season 1).

In Lamentations 3, the suffering Man likewise articulates his own sense of self-blame for the violence that has been perpetrated against him. God

is the source of this violence; it therefore has to be justified. "The Lord is good to those who wait for him, to the soul that seeks him," says the Man (v. 25). Are we to infer that he does not believe he has waited for or adequately sought God? Is this how he understands the cause of his suffering? He then admits that God "does not willingly afflict or grieve anyone" (v. 33), while questioning whether anyone should complain about "the punishment of their sins" (vv. 39–40). He openly admits to God that "We have transgressed and rebelled, and you have not forgiven" (v. 42); in turn, this divine lack of forgiveness has led to an unrelenting onslaught of divine violence and neglect (vv. 46–8). These admissions of guilt are interwoven with stark images of the abuse suffered by the Man at the hands of his angry God, and one is left with the sense that this self-blame significantly compounds his trauma.

The Abuser as Lover and Carer

During Jamie's assault, Randall asks him, "Why do you force me to hurt you?" Then, while forcing Jamie to touch his erection, he tells him that he could "take" him now, but "will not give in to coarse passion" ("Wentworth Prison," episode 15, season 1). Not only is Randall blaming Jamie here for his own assault, he also re-visions the act of rape as an act centred around love, desire, or even care. As Jamie later reflects, Randall was "by turns vicious and tender, bit by bit, using pain as his weapon, he had destroyed all barriers of mind and body … He did not just hurt me … it was an act of love to him" (Gabaldon 2001, p. 793). This disturbing trope of rapist as "carer" is further evoked when Jamie describes how, before raping him for the first time, Randall was "verra careful with me. He used oil, and took a long time, rubbing it all over me … touching me gentle in all my parts" (ibid.). Furthermore, in "To Ransom a Man's Soul" (episode 16, season 1), Randall is shown cradling Jamie in his arms after physically torturing him; he then cools Jamie's brow with water and kisses him gently on the lips before continuing to sexually assault him. Again, this reflects the common rape culture discourse, which equates rape with sex, desire, or even love on the part of the rapist, rather than an act of violence and control (Gavey 2005).

This same trope of the abuser having some form of emotional relationship with their victim is also articulated in Lamentations 3. Just as Jamie acknowledges Randall's attempt to reframe his abuse as love, the suffering Man assigns *his* abuser (God) the role of caregiver. As in cases of intimate

partner violence, such ambivalence surrounding the abuser's motivations can disorient the victim, leading to a repeated cycle of violence where victims stay within abusive relationships, hopeful that the abuse will end and be replaced again by care (e.g. see Cruz 2003, p. 317). This is clearly expressed by the Man in Lamentations 3, who, despite acknowledging God's relentless violence, cannot help but maintain hope and faith in God's "steadfast" and abundant capacity to love and show mercy:

> For the Lord will not reject forever.
> Although he causes grief, he will have compassion
> According to the abundance of his steadfast love;
> For he does not willingly afflict, or grieve anyone. (Lam. 3:31–3)

Contesting the Elision of Rape

In the above discussion, I have demonstrated the ways that an intertextual reading of *Outlander* and Lamentations 3 highlights the various tropes of male rape that can be discerned within this biblical lament. Themes of trauma, shame, and victim blaming—often overlooked in the biblical text—are brought into sharp relief as we view the experiences of the suffering Man alongside those of Jamie Fraser. Although I cannot claim that the author(s) of Lamentations 3 *intended* to portray the suffering Man's experience as that of male rape, my analysis of this lament, read intertextually alongside Jamie Fraser's own narrative, affirms that such a reading is possible. For these two texts share a number of allusions to gendered violence that invites us to at least consider the suffering Man's experiences in light of male rape.

Moreover, I would contend that such an interpretive strategy is invaluable, if not necessary, given our location as biblical readers and interpreters within a global rape culture. For, as I mentioned at the start of this chapter, the possibility that Lamentations 3 gives voice to the experiences of a male rape victim is rarely entertained by interpreters of this text. This may be due, in part at least, to the veil of silence that so often shrouds this particular form of gender violence in both public discourses and popular culture. While the rape of women in film and television dramas has become so ubiquitous that it seldom evokes a strong audience response (just think of the multiple rapes that occur in the television drama *Game of Thrones*), public reactions to Jamie's experience confirms that male rape is still a topic considered both shocking *and* newsworthy. Jamie's rape and torture

evoked strong responses from viewers, many of whom admitted they found it both sickening and "almost impossible to watch" (see Murphy 2015; Hughes 2015); meanwhile, Claire's multiple brushes with sexual violence throughout the *Outlander* series passed by relatively unremarked by audiences or television critics. It is as though female rape has become "enduring and inevitable" within dominant discourses of gender and sexuality (Healicon 2015, p. 4), contributing to what Roxanne Gay (2011) describes as a "cultural numbness" around female sexual violence, which prevents people from grasping the enormity of this violence for those who experience it. On the contrary, people are less able to cope with (as in *Outlander*) or even recognize (as with Lamentations 3) any narrative of rape that fails to comply with these dominant discourses, including narratives of male rape. The result is an overwhelming elision of gender violence from our cultural consciousness, either because it is simply "expected" (in the case of female rape) or, conversely, it is deemed too *un*expected or shocking (as with male rape).

This, then, is why the depiction of male rape in *Outlander* is so important—it refuses to elide or deny the perpetuation of such violence within contemporary rape cultures; moreover, this too is why we need to consider the *possibility* of male rape in Lamentations 3. For both texts remind us of the violent and brutal reality of sexual violence perpetrated against men; these texts also bear powerful witness to the trauma felt by male victims in the *aftermath* of their assault, as they face the ongoing battle of re-traumatization and recovery. Finally, these two intertexts also offer a sense of hope that survival after rape *is* possible—it may be lengthy and difficult, but it is possible nonetheless. After "Wentworth Prison" and "To Ransom a Man's Soul" were aired, over two hundred viewers (both men and women) posted messages on Gabaldon's Facebook page, grateful for the overarching message of the episodes: that, despite the uncompromising brutality and torture Jamie had endured, they were left with "hope, catharsis and a sense that healing was possible" for survivors of rape (Doran 2017).

Like Jamie, the suffering Man in Lamentations 3 stands as witness that, despite the horrors of violence and abuse he has faced, and despite his own re-traumatization and his perpetual search for meaning within his suffering, he is still speaking and surviving—he refuses to be silent. It is our task, then, to listen to his voice and bear witness to his survival, even as he continues to battle injustice and oppression. For just as Jamie did not receive care or healing from his abuser, nor did our lamenting Man. If

Claire stands as the one bringing healing to Jamie, through listening to him, believing him, and refusing to let him blame himself for his rape, perhaps we as readers can perform this same role for the Man—listening to his testimony, believing in his suffering, and reassuring him that he is *not* to blame for the violence perpetrated against him by a wrathful and abusive God.

Notes

1. The original series of *Outlander* novels (published from 1991) are multi-genre, and have been described as historical fiction, historical romance, science fiction, and fantasy. They have sold over 26 million copies worldwide and have been translated into thirty-eight languages. The television adaptation of *Outlander* is produced by Sony Pictures Television and Left Bank Pictures for Starz; season 1 originally aired in 2014, with seasons 2 and 3 following in 2016 and 2017 respectively. The Outlander franchise also includes *The Exile: An Outlander Graphic Novel* (2010).
2. As Javaid notes, "In a culture that emphasises male superiority, power and control, subordination or powerlessness are unacceptable … Instead, men are seen to commit most conventional crimes and serious crime (including sexual violence; Connell and Messerschmidt 2005); not suffer it" (2016, p. 288).

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CHAPTER 10

Homophobia and Rape Culture in the Narratives of Early Israel

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Conclamat vir paterque.
(Livy, *Ab urbe cond.* 1.58.12)

"Somewhere, in another world, someone was howling as the sin eaters of old must have howled, fleeing the houses of sorrow weighed down with strange sins. Up on the hills the wind swept softly around the old church where the saint slept on undisturbed" (Ellis 1977, p. 192). Thus ends Alice Thomas Ellis's novel *The Sin Eater*, in which the disturbing narrative of the outrage at Gibeah (Judg. 19:22–30) seems, to Ermyn, to speak presciently of the moral chaos by which she finds herself surrounded in the present. The question I wish to draw from this unexpected biblical allusion is: how might Judges 19–21, a narrative of brutal rape from a distant and imperfectly understood literary culture, help us to comprehend what makes contemporary cultures of rape possible?[1] Furthermore, how might the connections implicit in Judges 19–21 help us to recognise otherwise

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obscure commonalities between modern cultures of rape and other kinds of gender-based violence? I am particularly interested in the commonalities between gender-based violence (against both women and men) and the subjective (physical) and objective (symbolic and systemic) violence[2] associated with homophobia.

The literary heritage of ancient Israel and Judah, canonised and scripturalised in the Hebrew Bible, has, alongside the more substantial literary heritage of the Graeco-Roman world, played a complex and variegated role in shaping the cultures and intellectual history of Western Europe, and, by extension, those cultures that have fallen under their spell as a result of European colonialism and imperialism. The historiographical narratives of early Israel and Rome alike contain accounts of rape. And rape culture is woven into the very identities of those for whom such narratives comprise their cultural and religious ancestry. In the case of Rome, Livy narrates accounts of rape that precede the most significant political developments in the early history of the city (Arieti 1997),[3] beginning with the rape by Mars of the vestal virgin Rhea Silvia, who consequently bore Romulus and Remus (Livy, *Ab urbe cond.* 1.4). Then we have the rape of the Sabine women by the men of Rome (1.9–13), enabling the population of the city to increase, solving the problem caused by the lack of both women and the right to intermarry (*connubium*) with Rome's neighbours (Ovid, *Fast.* 1.195). Book one of *Ab urbe cond.* ends with the rape of Lucretia by Sextus Tarquinius, precipitating the downfall of the Tarquinii and the monarchy (1.57–60). A further act of collective rape precedes the first dictatorship (2.18), and the demise of the Decemvirate is preceded by the abduction of Verginia (3.44–58), which Livy explicitly connects with the earlier rape of Lucretia (3.44.1). Dionysius of Halicarnassus (*Ant. rom.* 2.30–47) and Plutarch (*Romulus* 14–20) also narrate, in Greek, the rape (*harpagē*) of the Sabine women and the ensuing war, and there are further accounts, in Latin, in Cicero (*Resp.* 12–14) and Ovid (*Ars* 1.101–34; *Met.* 14.799–804; *Fast.* 1.167–258). There are comparable traditions of the collective abduction of women in Greek tradition.[4]

Livy's narratives have been transmitted in the cultural history of Western Europe through the visual arts, and in the case of the rape of Lucretia, through literature and music; they have therefore long been familiar even to those who have never leafed through the pages of Livy or Plutarch. In the case of Israel, there is the narrative of the rape of the Levite's concubine (*pîlegeš*)[5] in Judg. 19:22–30, the more ambiguous narrative of Dinah and Shechem in Genesis 34, and the harrowing account of Amnon's rape

of his sister Tamar in 2 Sam. 13:1–23. The rape of the Levite's *pîlegeš* begins a catastrophic descent into a brutal war of revenge against the tribe of Benjamin, concluding with two further instances of sexual violence—the abduction and rape of the virgins of Jabesh-Gilead and Shiloh. The accounts of the abduction of the Jabesh-Gilead and Shiloh virgins share a number of similarities with the abduction of the virgins of Midian in Numbers 31. Indeed, there is an explicit connection between the Benjaminite war and the war with Midian, in that Judg. 20:28 makes mention, anachronistically,[6] of Phinehas, son of Eleazar, son of Aaron, the priestly "guardian of Israelite sexual boundaries" in Num. 25:6–18 (Landy 2016, p. 152). These narratives, like the narratives of the rape of the Sabine women, situate rape squarely within the sphere of the wars of men, which brings us to one more troubling text, Deut. 21:10–14, where provision is made for the capture of women in war within the commandments of the Torah.

Scholars are increasingly acknowledging the similarities between the Israelite, Greek, and Roman rape narratives,[7] but one significant difference between them is that in Judges 19–21, the rape of virgins belongs to a larger narrative that begins with a threat on the part of the men of Gibeah to rape a *man*, a Levite from rural Ephraim, who, along with his *pîlegeš*, had been offered hospitality by an elderly Ephraimite, another male outsider in the Benjaminite town. The Ephraimite begs the men not to carry out their threat, offering his own virgin daughter and the Levite's *pîlegeš* instead, echoing the earlier narrative of Sodom (Genesis 19).[8] It is relatively straightforward to identify a connection between the rape of a single woman and the mass rape of two groups of women at a later point in the final form of the narrative.[9] It is not so easy to connect the threat to rape the Levite with the rape of the virgins of Jabesh-Gilead and Shiloh.[10] This is perhaps because of an assumed distinction between male and female rape. Definitions of rape are not stable and consistent between cultures, or even within the same culture over time. Even a minimal definition, such as that "rape is a sexual act perpetrated against the victim's will,"[11] would depend on two factors. First, the biological sex, age, social status, marital status, sexual orientation, and ethnicity of perpetrator and victim would play no role in defining "rape." Second, the criterion of consent would be fundamental to the definition. This, however, is by no means universally valid in terms of legal and popular usage across time and between different states, nations, and cultures.

Even though John Bullokar's definition of rape in 1616—"[a] violent ravishing of a woman against her will"—entails both sexual violence and lack of consent, it limits the definition of rape to an act in which the victim is a *woman* (Feinstein 2014, p. 69).[12] More recently, the *Oxford English Dictionary*, under "rape, *n.3*," distinguishes between "1. The act of taking something by force," "2a. Originally and chiefly: the act or crime, committed by a man, of forcing a woman to have sexual intercourse with him against her will, esp. by means of threats or violence," and "3. The act of carrying off a person by force; *esp*. the abduction of a woman, usually for the purpose of sexual violation" (2017). The acts perpetrated on the Levite's *pîlegeš* and the virgins of Jabesh-Gilead and Shiloh could all be described as instances of "rape" if we accept an overlap between 2a and 3, but the threat against the Levite would apparently not come under 2a at all. Moreover, within the thought-world implied by Judges 19–21, there is arguably a stronger overlap between 1 and 3, since the virgins were property in the households of men (i.e. their fathers and brothers; see Ackerman 1998, p. 256).

That the rape of the Levite's *pîlegeš* and the abductions of the virgins of Jabesh-Gilead and Shiloh might have been regarded as different types of events could be indirectly corroborated by the analogy, albeit imprecise, of Pausanias' account of the abduction of virgins from the shrine of Artemis Caryatis (*Descr.* 4.16.9). There, Aristomenes abducts (*sullambanō*) certain virgins dancing at the shrine (cf. 3.10.7)—those superior in terms of their wealth and the rank of their fathers—and entrusts them to young men in his raiding party who, apparently drunk, attempt to violate them (*pros bian etreponto tōn parthenōn*). It is only the second of these acts that is regarded as obnoxious,[13] prompting Aristomenes to try to prevent it (4.16.10).[14] The text clearly implies that the two acts are different, even though one might well describe both using the English word "rape."

That Pausanias implies such a distinction does not, however, entail that no similarity exists. The initial abduction is, after all, merely a different kind of gender-based violence. It still implies a society marked by the pervasive reality of masculine domination.[15] Equally, the fact that, in Judges 19–21, a sexual assault on a woman leads to the abduction of a whole group of women suggests that the narrator intended some commonality to be perceived by the reader.[16] In reading such texts, we need to do two things: first, to determine as precisely as possible how the narrative was meant to be understood in its ancient context; second, to identify underlying commonalities that do actually exist between discrete acts portrayed in the texts that may once have been regarded as distinct.

It is not entirely clear that rape was a culturally significant category at all in ancient Israel and Judah, nor does there seem to have been any single Hebrew equivalent of the sexual sense of the English word "rape." The narrative of Judges 19–21 uses several different verbs. The men of Gibeah demand to "know" (*yāḏaʿ*) the Levite, but his host offers them his daughter and the Levite's *pîlegeš* so that they may "do violence to" (*ʿinnâ*)[17] them, and "do" (*ʿāśâ*) with them what is good in their eyes. They proceed to "know" (*yāḏaʿ*) the Levite's *pîlegeš* and to "abuse" (*hiṯʿallēl*)[18] her. Later, the Benjaminites are to lie in wait and "seize" (*ḥāṭaph*) virgins who come out dancing from Shiloh. They all "took" (*nāśâ*) women for themselves from among the dancers whom they had "stolen" (*gāzal*). The abduction of virgins from Jabesh-Gilead is described in terms of the violent slaughter of all the inhabitants of the town except virgin girls, who were left unprotected to be taken as wives for the Benjaminites. The verb *ʿinnâ* is not used, and the abductions are apparently understood as acts of socio-political necessity, to enable the repopulation of Benjamin and the reintegration of the tribe into Israel (Bach 1998, pp. 4, 7, 9).

Language, however, can be deceptive. In reading these texts, it is important to understand as precisely as possible what their language originally meant without eliding meanings that their authors and earliest readers would have kept distinct. Yet, it is also important to recognise the subtle connections that exist between superficially distinct parts of the text that the particularities of the language in which they are written might otherwise obscure. Equally, when looking back across centuries at a difficult, ancient text, it is important not to read it anachronistically, through the lens of a later age that might conceitedly suppose itself to be more enlightened. Yet, it is also important to find a form of language that will suffice both to interpret the text accurately, and to identify the points of commonality between the ancient text and the various modern contexts in which that text is being read.

I am going to use "rape" to refer equally to the threat against the Levite, and the acts perpetrated against his *pîlegeš* and the abducted virgins, on the grounds that they have two things in common with one another and with modern legal and popular usage. First, in each case, a significant factor is the lack of consent of the potential or actual victim.[19] Second, sexual violation is the intent in each case, albeit in the case of the virgins of Jabesh-Gilead and Shiloh, the ulterior motive of the abduction is the repopulation of a tribe rather than the gratuitous sexual humiliation of the virgins. Furthermore, the threat and act of rape reflect an underlying symbolic violence shared with modern cultures of

rape, namely the violence of masculine domination. Following Pierre Bourdieu (2001), I understand such domination to be a largely unspoken pattern of thought and action that unconsciously forces men and women to think, speak, and act in ways that reiterate and reinforce the domination of men over women (and other men). Under the same rubric, homophobia—a modern term and notion in English entirely unknown to classical Hebrew—may also be considered, which, as scholars are increasingly realising, may not be wholly irrelevant to the threat to rape the Levite (e.g. Carden 1999; Harding 2016; Landy 2016, pp. 154–6).

Where, then, do we find masculine domination encoded in the text of Judges 19–21? The very Hebrew out of which the text is woven reflects an "extreme gender asymmetry in favour of men" (Jost 2006, p. 316), indicating underlying social structures in which women are commodities to be circulated between men, cementing relationships not primarily between men and women, but between men, through the objective mediation of women (Lévi-Strauss 1969, pp. 98–118).[20] Thus a man "takes" (*lāqaḥ*) a woman from another man, who becomes his father-in-law by virtue of having "given" (*nāṯan*) her to him. The narrative opens with the Levite having "taken a woman, a *pîlegeš*," and the opening scene is based on the premise that the woman is a commodity that has been traded between the Levite son-in-law (*ḥāṯān*; Judg 19:5) and his "father-in-law" (*ḥōṯēn*; vv. 4, 7, 9),[21] to whose house she returns. Like Dinah (Genesis 34), the woman is silent, while the scene plays out between the two men, with a (presumably) male servant playing a small speaking role (Judg. 19:3, 9, 11, 13, 19). Immediately following the massacre of Benjamin (Judg. 20:48), we are told that the men of Israel had earlier taken an oath at Mizpah not to "give" (*nāṯan*; 21:1, 7) their daughters to the Benjaminites as wives. This necessitated a more explicitly violent course of action, beginning with the genocide of everyone in Jabesh-Gilead apart from virgin girls, whom they "gave" (*nāṯan*; 21:14) to the Benjaminites, and concluding with the abduction of the virgins of Shiloh, also necessitated by the fact that the Israelite men could not "give" (*nāṯan*; 21:18) their daughters to the Benjaminites.

There are two further sets of indicators that the abducted girls function as tokens of exchange between men. The virgins of Jabesh-Gilead are described as "four hundred young girls *who have not had sex with a man*" (*'arbaʿ mē'ôṯ naʿărâ bᵉṯûlâ 'ăšer lō' yāḏᵉʿâ 'îš lᵉmiškaḇ zāḵār*; Judg. 21:12), distinguished from the other women of Jabesh-Gilead, who have had sex

with men (*kōl ʾiššâ yōḏaʿaṯ miškaḇ zāḵār*), and must therefore be devoted to destruction (*taḥărîmû*; v. 11). This description is shared with the narrative about the abduction of Midianite virgins (Num. 31:17, 18, 35). What gives these women value as items of exchange is their status in relation to men. They have not had sex with men, and have thus not been owned sexually by a man other than their father. These girls are items of exchange in an economy of symbolic goods, who thereby become instruments of their own symbolic domination (Bourdieu 2001, pp. 42–9, 96–102). They serve "the material and symbolic interests of the lineage, that is, of the men" (p. 97), becoming the means by which Benjaminite men secure their progeny. Their virginal status is essential to this symbolic exchange. In Luce Irigaray's words, "*The virginal woman … is pure exchange value*. She is nothing but the possibility, the place, the sign of relations among men … Once deflowered, woman is relegated to the status of use value, to her entrapment in private property; she is removed from exchange among men" (1985, p. 186, italics original; cf. Kelso 2003, pp. 102–3).

The language of masculine domination is found most clearly in Judg. 21:22, where despite the textual difficulties,[22] the issue is manifestly that the elders envisage that the fathers and brothers of the abducted girls may protest, not necessarily on account of the abduction per se, but on account of a fear that they had drawn down upon themselves the curse of v. 18 (cf. v. 7). As virgins, their sexuality is under the protection of their fathers and brothers,[23] a detail that is shared with the story of Dinah in Genesis 34, and the story of Amnon and Tamar in 2 Sam. 13:1–23, where David could in principle have given permission for Tamar to be given to Amnon (v. 13). It is not, however, necessarily all brothers who have this moral obligation. As Abimelech's rhetoric in Judg. 9:2 implies, sons of the same mother have a stronger moral bond with one another than non-uterine brothers.[24] The pollution of Dinah is avenged by the brothers Dinah shares with the same mother, Leah.[25] In 2 Sam 13:1–23, Tamar's violation is avenged by her uterine brother Absalom (Chapman 2016, pp. 98–102). In the case of Dinah and Tamar, the wrong avenged by their brothers had shamed not primarily the woman—though this *is* clearly the case with regard to Tamar—but men among her kin, especially her uterine brothers.

The narrative of the abduction of the virgins of Midian differs at a number of points from Judg. 21:1–14. Most obviously, there is no note of condemnation from the narrator, whereas there may be in the case of Judg. 21:1–14, which in the final form of Judges apparently comes under

the redactor's judgement in v. 25 that "in those days, there being no king in Israel, every man would do what seemed right in his own eyes" (*bayyāmîm hāhēm ʾên meleḵ bᵉyiśrāʾēl ʾiš hayyāšār bᵉʿênāw yaʿăśeh*).[26] Furthermore, there is a strong note of religious and ethnic othering (Levine 2000, p. 463),[27] grounded in the fact that the Midianite war, like the Amalekite war later undertaken by Saul (1 Samuel 15), was an act of revenge against a foreign people for an earlier act committed against the people of YHWH. The *casus belli* was the fact that Midianite women had purportedly been involved in leading the Israelites astray in worshipping Baal-Peor (Numbers 25).[28] In Judges, by contrast, while the failure of the men of Jabesh-Gilead to join their brother Israelites in the war against Benjamin has provoked sacral revenge, the conflict takes place within Israel. Ironically, the war was ultimately provoked because a Levite trusted too much in the Israelite tribal bonds of hospitality. Whatever his grounds for suspicion of the Jebusite other (Judg. 19:12), they surely could not have been as grievous as what lay in wait for the Levite and his *pîlegeš* in Gibeah of Benjamin.

The Midianite war does, however, share with Judg. 21:1–24 the implied social reality of masculine domination. The Israelite army slew all the men of Midian, but took the women and children captive. This was not, however, an ordinary war in which women could be taken as booty, but one in which certain females had to be exterminated in revenge for the way the theological integrity of Israel had been compromised, and certain other females had to be spared to be wholly assimilated into Israel.[29] Those to be spared were "all [those] female children who have not had sex with a man" (*kōl haṭṭaph bannāšîm ʾăšer lōʾ yāḏᵉʿû miškaḇ zāḵār*; Num. 31:18, 35). The Midianite girls clearly serve "the material and symbolic interests of the lineage, that is, of the men" (Bourdieu 2001, p. 97), but the significance of this for understanding the various cultures of rape in the biblical narratives does not end there. For this narrative invests a particular sort of rape—of virgin girls in a war of sacral revenge—with the odour of sanctity and religious obedience, and this odour of sanctity and obedience is profoundly gendered.

Numbers 31 and Judges 19–21 also point to a connection between the male rape of women in war and homophobia. The wearisome debates in recent decades around the relevance of the Jewish and Christian scriptures for the moral status of same-sex relationships have obscured an important point. The threat to rape the Levite in Judg. 19:22, if that is what it is—that, at least, is how the elderly host interprets it (v. 23)[30]—has often been

studied alongside Gen. 19:1–11 in relation to the attitude of the biblical authors to homosexuality, rather than as evidence for the ingrained homophobia of the societies implied by the texts. Even studies that do not fall into this trap collude in the problem by using the language of "*homosexual* rape" to describe the threat,[31] as if this were not so much a particular kind of *rape* as a particular kind of *homosexuality*. How often do we read, by contrast, of the fate of Tamar or the Levite's *pîlegeš* as instances of *heterosexual* rape? Yet that is exactly what they are, reflecting the symbolic violence of masculine domination in just the same way as the ideology of compulsory heterosexuality.

The threat against the Levite is a threat of sexualised humiliation, of feminisation, whereby the Levite would be shamed by being treated as if he were a woman. To quote Francis Landy: "Through lying with the man 'as with a woman,' the Gibeahites effectively turn the Levite into a woman" (2016, p. 154; cf. Stone 1995, 1996, pp. 69–84; Carden 1999; Jost 2006, pp. 306–17; Gudme 2014, p. 167). His *pîlegeš* can serve as a surrogate because her sexuality is under his protection and reflects his honour, so that by degrading her, the men of Gibeah are thereby degrading him. That male rape is understood to feminise the victim is suggested by a comparison with Lev. 18:22 and 20:13, read in light of Num. 31:17, 18, 35 and Judg. 21:12. The command in Lev. 18:22 is, I think, best understood as "with a male you are not to lie as if he were a woman" (*wᵉ'eṯ zāḵār lō' tiškaḇ miškᵉḇê 'iššâ*) (Olyan 1994, pp. 183–8, 204–6),[32] where the vocabulary and syntax are almost exactly equivalent to Num. 31:17, 18, 35 and Judg. 21:12. The accent is on one man penetrating another man as if the latter were, in terms of sexual and social status, a woman. What Lev. 18:22 and 20:13—together with their sequels in Gen. 19:1–11 and Judg. 19:22–30—bear witness to is a tendency towards a certain kind of homophobia in the societies implied by Genesis, Judges, and the Holiness Code, a distinctively ancient Israelite—and/or Yehudite—iteration of homophobia expressed in the language of masculine domination.[33] Judg. 19:22–30, thus, has nothing to do with "homosexuality" or "homosexual" rape, but everything to do with an ancient form of homophobia grounded in an implicit understanding of sex as a matter of the sexually mediated power of men over women, and over other men.

Moreover, what Judg. 19:22–30 shares with Genesis 34, Numbers 31 and the laws in Lev. 18:22 and 20:13 (at least in their present context) is a connection between humiliating and possibly violent sex and an ancient form of xenophobia. The Levite and his host are outsiders to the men of

Gibeah. Dinah is a daughter of Jacob (and Leah)[34] sojourning among Hivites, of whom Dinah's "lover" Shechem is one. The origins of the Midianite war lie in an incident in which foreign women have compromised the theological integrity of Israelite men. The sexual prohibitions of Leviticus are presented in terms of the Israelites avoiding the abominable acts of Egyptians and Canaanites.[35] In the case of Judg. 19:22–30, the "threat of rape posed by the men of the city has not so much to do with homosexuality or sexual desire. It is entirely a dramatic display of inhospitality and xenophobia" (Gudme 2014, p. 167). This display of inhospitality and xenophobia is expressed in terms of sexual humiliation tinged with what we would now term homophobia.

Francis Landy has recently developed this notion of the Gibeahites' queering of the outsider by drawing attention to the way the book of Judges represents the tribe of Benjamin, a literary construct that is part of the narrator's—post-exilic, according to Landy, *inter alios*—negotiation of Israelite identity:

> [The Benjaminites] are a queer lot, as is evident from their lefthandedness. Lefthandedness, especially in a tribe whose very name means "righthanded," signified deviance, evoking the motif of strangeness, particularly sexual strangeness, throughout Judges. It is a queer book. If the cardinal sin of the Israelites is their transgressive sexual union with the inhabitants of the land, homosexual sex goes one step further. According to Lev. 18:3 and 24–28, it characterises the practices of the Egyptians and the Canaanites, a typical ethnic slur. It crosses the sexual boundaries that define Israel. Through accusing the Gibeahites of homosexual desire and annihilating them for it, the Israelites are repeating the homophobic panic that they perpetrated on the Levite. (Landy 2016, p. 155)[36]

There is thus an extra layer to the nexus between xenophobia and homophobia in the narrative. It is not simply that the men of Gibeah react to the Levite with homophobic violence within the text, but that the narrator additionally projects homosexual desire onto the men of Gibeah as a means of distancing them from what it truly means, in terms of sexual ethics, to embody the Israelite ideal. It is the Benjaminite men of Gibeah, after all, who demand to transgress Lev. 18:22 and 20:13, and pay the price.

Masculine domination is the implicit symbolic system—indeed, the form of symbolic *violence*—that links each threat and act of sexual violence in Judges 19–21, connecting a certain kind of homophobia and homophobic (xenophobic) violence with certain kinds of sexual violence of men

against women. With what realities in the world today might one compare the narratives of Judges and their Greek and Roman *comparanda*, always alert to the manifold risks of anachronism and trans-cultural misprision?[37] The most apparently obvious might be events such as the mass abduction in April 2014 of schoolgirls from Chibok in north-eastern Nigeria by Boko Haram insurgents,[38] which, though not directly connected to the early Rome recreated by Livy and Plutarch, the Peloponnese imagined by Pausanias, or the Israel depicted by the book of Judges, is nonetheless connected indirectly with them, not so much by the superficial commonality of the male abduction of girls,[39] as by the deeper underlying reality of the symbolic violence of masculine domination. We must, however, add to this the many instantiations around the world of homophobic violence,[40] which are all too often connected with various forms of subjective and objective violence of men against women. But it would be facile to stop there, for the ways in which the abduction of the schoolgirls from Chibok, for example, has been represented in the Western media has arguably served the function of reinforcing a distinction between "us" (the morally enlightened West) and "them" (the primitive, debased forces of radical Islam in Africa), albeit that far more than broken shards of truth have undoubtedly survived the vagaries of the Western media.

What if we were to use the closing chapters of Judges as a mirror, reflecting back to us our own dark lies? There we see an attempt to negotiate Israelite identity by projecting onto the tribe of Benjamin a series of interconnected acts of gender-based violence, rooted in the mentalities of masculine domination, beginning with a threat of male rape against an outsider and ending with the mass abduction of girls. The narrator, however, is engaged in his own act of othering, queering the men of Gibeah by projecting onto them both a willingness to engage in sex with another man and a depraved desire to engage in the mass rape of a woman. If, as readers, we are prepared to collude in this, should we not at the same time ask ourselves with honesty how our own beliefs, thoughts, and acts enable all manner of gender-based violence to thrive?

Notes

1. Following Susanne Scholz, whose book *Sacred Witness* invites readers "to engage biblical literature and to learn how to read it in conversation with contemporary debates on rape" (2010, p. 2).
2. I am drawing here on Žižek's categories of subjective and objective violence (2008).

3. Anne Gudme (2014) builds, in part, on Arieti's argument to advance a similar case for interpreting biblical narratives of rape (Genesis 34; Judges 19–21; 2 Sam. 13:1–23) as marking key political developments in the narratives of the early history of Israel.
4. On marriage by abduction (*harpagē*) in Sparta, see Plutarch, *Lyc.* 15.3–5; perhaps compare with Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 2.30.5. Pausanias gives two contradictory accounts of an incident at the sanctuary of Artemis Limnatis on the border between Messenia and Laconia (*Descr.* 4.4.1–3). The Laconian (Lacedaemonian) version has a group of Laconian virgins visiting the sanctuary for a festival, only to be seized (*biazomai*) by Messenian men when they got there. Trying to prevent the abduction, their king Teleklos was also killed (cf. *Descr.* 4.31.3). The Laconians further claim that the abducted virgins killed themselves out of shame (*tas biastheisas tōn parthenōn diergasasthai legousin hautas hupo aischunēs*) (on the suicide of those violated, perhaps cf. Herodotus, *Hist.* 2.131; Livy, *Ab urbe condita* 1.58.10–11). The Messenian version contradicts this, and has beardless Laconian youths disguised as virgins coming armed to the sanctuary as part of a plot to acquire Messenian land, and Messenian men killing them in self-defence. Pausanias leaves it to the reader to decide which of the two is correct. The Laconian version was presumably thought to be at least plausible, and Strabo had earlier alluded to some version of it (*Geogr.* 8.4.9). Pausanias later recounts another tradition of abduction at the shrine of Artemis Caryatis (*Descr.* 4.16.9–10). Although these traditions in Strabo and Pausanias share some similarities with Judg 21:15–24, there are also important differences (Gnuse 2007, pp. 238–9).
5. This noun is imperfectly understood, and its various occurrences in the Hebrew Bible may reflect different senses, so I use the Hebrew henceforward in lieu of "concubine" in acknowledgement of the difficulty. There is a scholarly opinion, associated particularly with Mieke Bal (1988a, pp. 83–6, 89; 1988b, pp. 2, 28 n. 1), that the noun denotes not a secondary wife, but a wife in a form of marriage in which she continues to reside in her father's house (cf. Judg. 19:2). This view has not been widely accepted, for there are at least some texts where this noun can only refer to women who live in the household of their husband (Landy 2016, p. 143 n. 28) (e.g. 2 Sam. 16:20–2). There seems to be some etymological relationship with the Greek *pallakis* and *pallakē* (cf. Latin *pellex*), *pallakē* being the noun used in the Old Greek of Judg 19:1, 2, 9, 10, 24, 25, 27, 29; 20:4, 5, 6 and consistently for the Hebrew *pîleḡeš*, wherever it occurs in the Hebrew Bible. The related noun *pallakis* is used only once in the Old Greek, in Job 19:17, where it occurs in parallel with *gunē*, in this context "wife," though the Old Greek—*kai hiketeuon tēn gunaika mou, prosekaloumēn de kolakeuōn huious pallakidōn mou*, "and I entreated my

wife, I called earnestly to the sons of my concubines"—appears to be a rather free rendering of the difficult Hebrew *rûḥî zārâ le'ištî weḥannōṯî liḇnê biṭnî*, apparently, "my breath is revolting to my wife, and I am rancid to the sons of my belly" (i.e. my offspring, or perhaps the sons borne by my wife).

6. This may well be a "priestly gloss" (Levine 2000, p. 286).
7. Among earlier scholars, see Rosenmüller (1835, pp. 425–6), Moore (1908, p. 451), Burney (1920, p. 494), Gaster (1969, pp. 444–5), Boling (1975, p. 294), Soggin (1987, p. 304). More recently, see Ackerman (1998, pp. 253–87), Gnuse (2007, pp. 233–40), Gudme (2014, pp. 170–4), and Southwood (2017, pp. 17–19). Hans J. L. Jensen (1987) explores the commonalities and differences between the Roman tradition of the rape of the Sabine women and the narratives in Genesis about the marriages of Isaac and Jacob.
8. Earlier in the final form of Genesis–Kings, though not necessarily earlier in terms of the tradition-historical development of the narratives. While the precise relationship between the two narratives remains uncertain, a majority of scholars still favours dependence of Judg. 19:22–30 on Gen. 19:1–11 (e.g. Lasine 1984; Soggin 1987, p. 282; Matthews 1992, pp. 6–10; Yamada 2008, pp. 67–100; Milstein 2015, pp. 16–17; Edenburg 2016, pp. 174–95; Landy 2016, p. 144 n. 31), though there is still some room to advance the contrary case (Jüngling 1981, pp. 210, 291; Niditch 1982, pp. 375–6).
9. I do not propose to discuss the composition history of Judges 19–21 and the extensive scholarly literature on the subject, on which see, for example, Edenburg (2016) and the literature cited there.
10. See further Harding (2016), including a more thorough engagement with pertinent scholarly literature.
11. This is Eve Levavi Feinstein's summary of modern popular and legal definitions of the English noun and verb "rape," taken from her nuanced discussion of the pertinent issues (2014, p. 69). For comparable understandings, see, for example, Harrison (1997, p. 188) on Herodotus; Milstein (2015, pp. 18–19) on 1 Sam. 2:22.
12. In his discussion of Livy's narratives of rape, Arieti (1997, p. 219) defines rape without further ado as "the sexual violation of a woman."
13. This rape (*bia*) of the virgins is described as something "not customary to Greeks" (*ou nomizomena hellēsi*). While there is surely no direct connection, this recalls 2 Sam. 13:12, where Tamar tells Amnon that what he intends to do to her "ought not to be done in Israel" (*lō' yē'āśeh ḵēn beyiśrā'ēl*), for it is an "outrage" (*neḇālâ*) (cf. Gen. 34:7; Deut. 22:21; Judg. 20:6, 10). More distantly, it perhaps recalls the function of the Hebrew *tô'ḇâ* ("abomination") as denoting an ethnic boundary marker in, for

example, Gen. 43:32; 46:34; Exod. 8:22 (on which see Crouch 2015, pp. 523–6).

14. In his retelling of a version of this story, Jerome refers to Aristomenes as "a most just man" (*vir justissimus*) and "the defender of their virtue" (*defensor pudicitiae suae*). Jerome cites this tradition in response to Jovinian as part of his apology for virginity (*Jov.* 1.41; *PL* 23:284). Rosenmüller cites Jerome, alongside Livy's account of the rape of the Sabine women, in his *scholium* on Judg. 21:23 (1835, p. 426).
15. Note that Aristomenes chooses virgins on the basis of their wealth and the rank of their *fathers* (*axiōma paterōn*). On masculine domination, see further below.
16. For the *pílegeš* as a prototype of the virgins of Jabesh-Gilead and (especially) Shiloh, see Landy (2016, p. 158).
17. The precise meaning of the verb *ʿnh* is difficult to establish (Feinstein 2014, 67–74). My gloss follows Koehler and Baumgartner (2001, p. 853b), which lists "to rape a woman" as the meaning of the piel form found in Gen. 34:2; 2 Sam. 13:12, 14, 22, 32; Judg. 19:24; 20:5; Lam 5:11. Of these references, Gen 34:2 remains disputed (Feinstein 2014, pp. 67–77).
18. Koehler and Baumgartner (2001, p. 834a) gives this gloss for the verb in Judg. 19:25, as a subset of the more general sense "deal with someone wantonly, play a dirty trick on someone."
19. Consent is not entirely absent from Judg. 21:15–24. The consent in question, is not, however, that of the girls but of *their male relatives* (Judg. 21:22). It is the consent of the man responsible for a woman's sexuality that is necessary for her marriage to another man to take place. This understanding of consent is implicit in Gen. 34:4, 8–12, 16–17, 21, and explicit in 2 Sam. 13:13.
20. See also the literature published in response (often critical) to Lévi-Strauss, especially Rubin (1976), Irigaray (1985, pp. 170–91), Bourdieu (2001, pp. 43–5).
21. On the noun *ḥtn*, variously pointed *ḥōṯēn* and *ḥāṯān* in the Masoretic Text, see Mitchell (1969).
22. On which see further Marcos (2011, pp. 120*–121*) and the literature cited there. Asterisked page numbers refer to the pagination of notes in the English "Commentary on the Critical Apparatus" at the back of this volume.
23. Their abduction is thus an offence not against the virgins themselves, but against the men to whom they belong, legally and morally. Thomas Harrison (1997) makes a similar point in his discussion of Herodotus, that rape is understood in Herodotus as a means by which, through the medium of a woman, a man can cause offence to another man. The woman is not the offended party (see *Hist.* 2.113–15; 4.43; cf. 1.61; 5:18–21).

24. On the importance of maternal kin in the society reflected in Judg. 9:1–57, see Chapman (2016, pp. 183–8).
25. On the role of the "mother's house" (*bēṯ ʾēm*) in this narrative, and the moral obligations between uterine siblings, see Chapman (2016, pp. 64–8, 96–7, 101–2).
26. Renate Jost comments: "Während die Darstellung von Machtlosigkeit auf allen Seiten auf eine extreme Geschlechtsasymmetrie zugunsten der Männer und ihrer Gewalttätigkeit hinausläuft, können die Frauen nur hoffen, das ihnen nach der Aussageintention des Richterbuches ein König ihr Leben garantieren kann" ("While the portrayal of powerlessness on all sides amounts to an extreme gender asymmetry that favours men and their violence, the women can only hope that a king, according to the express intent [cf. Judg 21:25] of the book of Judges, can guarantee their lives") (2006, p. 317; translation my own). One wonders whether, in light of the subsequent narratives of the monarchy, such a hope would have been in vain.
27. See now Pitkänen (2017, pp. 184–9), where Numbers 31 is read as a narrative of genocide, in the context of a work of "settler colonialism" (pp. 40–50).
28. As with many narratives in Numbers, more than one tradition has almost certainly been interwoven here. An older narrative concerned with Israel and the daughters of Moab (Num. 25:15) has apparently been overlaid, or woven together, with a priestly narrative of some sort of liaison between an Israelite man and a Midianite woman that provoked the subsequent war with Midian (see e.g. Levine 1993, pp. 94–5; 2000, pp. 279–303, 445–74). That said, the presence of Midianites in Moabite territory in Num. 22:4 (cf. Gen. 36:35) might suggest that the tension between Num. 25:1–5 and 25:6–18 is more apparent than real (see most recently Pitkänen 2017, pp. 164–7).
29. On this assimilation, see further Niditch (1993, p. 50); Pitkänen (2017, p. 187).
30. His less than charitable interpretation of "let us know him" (*nēḏāʿennú*) as meaning "let us have sex with him" is arguably corroborated by "they knew her" (*wayyēḏeʿû ʾôṯá*) in Judg. 19:25 (cf. Gen. 19:5, 7–8). It is possible that the Ephraimite, as an outsider, has, like Lot, misunderstood the request of the townsmen to "make the acquaintance of" (*yāḏaʿ*) the visitors (Wright 1989, p. 171; cited in Matthews 1992, p. 5), assuming they want to "have sex" (*yāḏaʿ*) with them. Alternatively, the men of Gibeah could have been using a deliberate *double entendre* to trick the Ephraimite into thinking they wanted to take care of the visitor, as part of a ruse to press him into handing over his woman (Jüngling 1981, pp. 209–10, 290–1). Jüngling sees the *pîlegeš* as the real objective of the men of Gibeah (cf. Josephus, *Ant.* 5.2.8 §143), and the notion that they desired

the male guest as an import from Gen. 19:5, based on the unjustified assumption that Judges 19 is dependent on the Sodom narrative (1981, p. 206). Jüngling could well be right about the cynical *double entendre*, but I am not convinced that the threat of male rape is absent.

31. See Carden's response (1999) to Stone (1995).
32. I take this to be a prohibition against a man anally penetrating another man on analogy with the vaginal penetration of a woman, the command originally being addressed only to the insertive partner. The death penalty for both partners in Lev. 20:13 may reflect a subsequent elaboration.
33. What we cannot know, based on the available evidence, is what actual ancient Israelites thought about intimate relationships between men that were not defined by anal penetration. The David and Jonathan narrative is far too ambiguous to offer any real clarity here (see Harding 2013).
34. On the silencing of Leah, see Kelso (2003).
35. This concern with the ethnic boundary between Israel on the one hand and Egypt and Canaan on the other is invested in the term *tôʿēḇâ*, which consistently in the Hebrew Bible denotes the boundary of appropriate behaviour for the in-group, and thus belongs to the language of identity formation (see Crouch 2015, especially pp. 528–31 on the use of *tôʿēḇâ* in the Holiness Code).
36. Landy continues: "But of course, in another sense, it does not cross sexual boundaries. Same sex is illicit precisely because it does not traverse the difference in gender. In this it is homologous to the prohibition of incest. The Benjaminites are refusing the normative sex through which Israel is perpetuated, and whose ideal instantiation is the union of Ephraim and Judah the Levite's liaison promises but does not deliver" (2016, pp. 155–6).
37. For an illuminating attempt to correlate the status of women in the predominantly patriarchal society of Iron Age I Palestine, as reconstructed from a convergence of archaeological and textual evidence, with the status of women in a contemporary patriarchal, tribal society in Somalia, see Kurt Noll's comparison with Ayaan Hirsi Ali's compelling autobiography (Noll 2013, pp. 178–80; Hirsi Ali 2007).
38. On the name Boko Haram, see Smith (2015, pp. 18, 42–3, 271). On the abduction of the schoolgirls in Chibok, prior to events that have unfolded since 2015, see Smith (2015, pp. 49, 224–57, 296–300).
39. Superficial because of the manifold cultural, religious, (geo-)political, and socio-economic differences that do separate Judg. 21:15–24 (for example) from Chibok, as well as the contrasting reasons for the abductions in each case, not to mention the fact that none of the virgins of Shiloh escaped or were ever released.
40. One might consider, *inter alia*, the fate of gay men in Chechnya, on which see, for example, Gessen (2017). Note also Owen Jones's correct linking

of homophobia with the subjugation of women in his recent opinion piece on the persecution of gay people in Chechnya (2017). By homophobic "violence," I am not simply referring to acts of physical, subjective violence, though these are certainly in view. I am referring more deeply to the symbolic violence that makes such subjective violence possible in the first place (see n.2 above). In this connection, one should not ignore the complex role of religious traditions in the process of constructing and maintaining that symbolic violence. Islamic homophobia undoubtedly plays a role in the fate of gay men in Chechnya, as Russian Orthodox homophobia does in the fate of sexual minorities elsewhere in the Russian Federation. But in the West, biblical scholarship is surely also playing a key role in the maintenance of the symbolic violence of Christian homophobia, for it is difficult to deny that works of exegesis by the likes of Donald Wold (2009) and, especially, Robert Gagnon (2001) have added a significant and lamentable veneer of academic respectability to Christian homophobia, with all its deleterious effects.

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CHAPTER 11

Marriage, Love, or Consensual Sex? Feminist Engagements with Biblical Rape Texts in Light of Title IX

Susanne Scholz

In the last five years, a change has taken place in public discourses on sexual harassment, sexual violence, and rape, especially within institutions of higher education. In April 2011, the Office for Civil Rights issued a "Dear Colleague" letter that explains to schools, colleges, and universities their obligations, under Title IX of the United States Education Amendments 1972, to eliminate sexual harassment, including sexual violence. The letter defines sexual harassment in a broad way, stating:

> Title IX of the Education Amendment of 1972 (Title IX), 20 U.S.C. §§ 1681 et seq., and its implementing regulations, 34 C.F.R. Part 106, prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex in education programs or activities operated by recipients of Federal financial assistance. Sexual harassment of students, which includes acts of sexual violence, is a form of sex discrimination prohibited by Title IX. In order to assist recipients, which include school districts, colleges, and universities (hereinafter "schools" or "recipients") in meeting these obligations, this letter explains that the requirements of Title IX pertaining to sexual harassment also cover sexual violence,

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> and lays out the specific Title IX requirements applicable to sexual violence. Sexual violence, as that term is used in this letter, refers to physical sexual acts perpetrated against a person's will or where a person is incapable of giving consent due to the victim's use of drugs or alcohol. An individual also may be unable to give consent due to an intellectual or other disability. A number of different acts fall into the category of sexual violence, including rape, sexual assault, sexual battery, and sexual coercion. All such acts of sexual violence are forms of sexual harassment covered under Title IX. (Ali 2014, pp. 133–4)

The letter defines sexual violence as a form of sexual harassment, referring to Title IX's prohibition against sexual harassment as a form of sex discrimination. The effort to combat sexual violence on college campuses on the basis of Title IX has been important, especially in light of the fact that Title IX has been on the books since 1972.

It is crucial to understand that this interpretation of Title IX, as it was advanced by the US government and the White House under former US president Barack Obama, is owed to student initiative. In February 2011, sixteen students of Yale University filed a complaint that identified Yale University as a "sexually hostile environment which prevents women from participating in campus life as fully as men" (Gordon 2011; see also Foderaro 2011; Anderson and Svrluga 2015).[1] On 31 March 2011, the Office of Civil Rights announced an investigation of Yale University for possible violation of Title IX. Since then, many other Title IX complaints have been submitted. The documentary film, *The Hunting Ground*,[2] produced by Amy Ziering, investigates the issue of sexual assaults on US campuses; it focuses on a team of alumnae led by Annie E. Clark and Andrea Pino who, as students at the University of Chapel Hill, experienced rape and sexual assault in 2007 and 2012 respectively. In 2013, the team of five former students filed a Title IX complaint against the University of North Carolina. My own university, Southern Methodist University (SMU), also had to deal with Title IX complaints. In December 2014, SMU was found in violation of the federal gender-equity law for its handling of sexual harassment and assault cases (Kingkade 2014b, c). Many other US colleges and universities have also been found to violate Title IX requirements, and the Office of Civil Rights (OCR) has been investigating more than one hundred schools since 2011. Predictably, the agency has been thoroughly overwhelmed by an extensive backlog of Title IX investigations on cases of campus sexual assault (see, for example, Kingkade 2014a, b, 2015; Westerholm 2015).

I have been impressed by what a federal government investigation can do to compel institutions of higher education to deal with the centuries-old problem of sexual violence. When I began researching biblical rape texts in the mid-1990s, nothing like this was happening; during the past twenty years, I have witnessed academia's general reticence to address sexual violence. Yet, I also realize that rules and regulations coming down from the federal government will not eliminate the epidemic of sexual violence on campus and in society. Rape-prone assumptions, theories, and practices are far too deeply ingrained in human history, culture, politics, economics, and religion, although I recognize that we must be historically, culturally, and geopolitically specific in understanding "rape cultures" anywhere. This chapter explores whether the Title IX debate on US campuses ought to shape feminist scholarship on sexual violence and rape in the academic field of biblical studies. I will first survey feminist theories on rape since the 1970s; I will then analyse the contributions of feminist exegesis on biblical rape texts since the 1980s; finally, I will discuss two critical limitations as they exist in current feminist biblical exegesis on sexual violence. In my conclusion, I encourage feminist interpreters to move beyond a "cop-out" hermeneutics.

Forty Years in the Wilderness: A Brief Survey of Feminist Theories on Rape

This, then, is the moment in which US grassroots feminists use the Title IX legislation to end sexual violence in its various manifestations. It is a locally and temporally specific moment that has taken place in the United States since 2011. Other countries have different laws or no laws at all, and so they must find other ways of eliminating sexual violence in their societies. It needs to be emphasized that, since the 1970s, feminists from all over the world have extensively studied sexual violence and contributed to questioning long-standing assumptions and biases about it. Importantly, feminists have theorized the phenomenon of sexual violence from the perspectives of victim-survivors, tracing the origins, causes, and reasons for the contemporary prevalence of rape. They have rejected the age-old traditions of ignoring, obfuscating, and silencing the experiences of victim-survivors.

The cornerstone publication that propelled feminists to openly address the problem of sexual violence was Susan Brownmiller's 1975 book entitled *Against Our Will: Women, Men, and Rape*. For the first time, the

hitherto silenced topic of rape was claimed as a feminist issue, bringing sexual violence to the forefront of feminist analysis around the globe. Brownmiller's volume relies on the foundational premise that biological sex differences between women and men cause rape. She asserts that "we cannot work around the fact that in terms of human anatomy the possibility of forcible intercourse incontrovertibly exists. This single factor may have been sufficient to have caused the creation of male ideology of rape" (1975, p. 4). Brownmiller proposes, and this explanation has raised a lot of red flags in feminist and gender theoretical circles ever since, that in prehistoric times, men discovered that their genitalia were potential "weapons," "along with the use of fire and the first crude stone axe" (p. 5). For Brownmiller, rape must therefore be understood as part of the male biological predisposition. The various chapters in her book present the historical evidence for "man's structural capacity to rape and women's corresponding structural vulnerability … as basic to the physiology of both our sexes" (p. 4). Moreover, "male nature" created rape to keep "all women in a state of fear" at all times (p. 5). In short, biology grounds Brownmiller's analysis about the origins and prevalence of rape. Her work illustrates over and over again that, due to the "accident of biology," human anatomy brought "forcible intercourse incontrovertibly" into existence (p. 4).

Brownmiller was the first feminist thinker to define sexual violence as a feminist issue, but other feminist thinkers quickly criticized her essentializing and naturalizing explanations. Catherine MacKinnon, for example, challenged this kind of "feminist naturalism," suggesting instead that we should view rape as an expression of sexuality, "the dynamics of control by which male dominance … eroticizes and thus defines man and woman, gender identity and sexual pleasure" (1989, p. 137). More specifically, MacKinnon regards sexuality as an "experience of power in its gendered form" in which "sexuality is violent" and "violence is sexual" (1989, pp. xiii, 179). Most importantly, MacKinnon defines rape as a societal problem, rather than as a "biologically inevitable" phenomenon. To her, it consists of "men's power" over women, and it is only when this power is dismantled that women will be liberated from male oppression.[3]

Numerous other historical, cultural, and philosophical studies on rape appeared from the 1970s into the 1980s.[4] And, from the late 1980s to the early 1990s, feminists of colour and postmodern feminist theorists rose to challenge essentialized, naturalized, and monosectional discourse about the origins and pervasiveness of rape. One of them is historian Jacquelyn

Dowd Hall, who recognizes Brownmiller's work as an "important milestone" but she also criticizes Brownmiller's biological, and thus universalizing and presumably timeless, notions of rape. Like other feminist thinkers, such as Bettina Aptheker, Hall looks for historical intersectionality to explain the collaboration of women with sources of power. For instance, she asserts that rape and lynching need to be studied together to illuminate the practice of rape in ways that biological explanations cannot. In her view, the contemporary prevalence of rape is a kneejerk response to women's increasing societal, political, and economic rights since the 1970s while many women are still economically dependent on men. Historical intersectionality supports her position, as Black Americans, who gained political rights after the Civil Rights War (1865), lacked economic independence in the Jim Crow era (from 1877 to the 1960s) and suffered persecution by lynching. Hall urges feminists to recognize the historical intersectionality of lynching and rape, as it illustrates the socio-political dynamics of the phenomena of racialized murder and gender violence. It also demonstrates that a feminist analysis of rape "must make clear its stand against all uses of violence for the purpose of oppression" (Hall 1983, p. 346). Accordingly, feminist explanations based on biology are utterly insufficient and inadequate.[5]

These and many other studies ground feminist theories within the ever-expanding analytical complexities of sexual violence. They recognize sexual violence as standing within a complex network of structures of domination that causes many forms of violence, including racial, economic, and environmental violence. As feminist writer Susan Griffin put it, rape is an expression of power structures that do not only victimize women but also contribute to "raping Black people and the very earth we live upon" (1971, p. 35). Another well-known feminist thinker, bell hooks, makes a similar point over a decade later: "Feminist efforts to end male violence against women must be expanded into a movement to end all forms of violence" (1984, p. 130). When rape is understood as being part and parcel of general patterns of violence in society, feminists escape essentializing notions about rape. They then recognize that patriarchal oppression is not the only reason for sexual violence but that it intersects with racism, classism, and imperialism. Feminists have to embrace this broader framework to avoid promoting stereotypical ideas about rape, women, and men.

In short, this intersectional approach to thinking about rape has been very important to feminist analysis since the 1970s. In an essay entitled "Rape,

Race, and Culture: Some Speculations in Search of a Theory," Lynn A. Curtis addresses the need to link rape and race in the United States (1976, p. 131). Early radical feminist Angela Y. Davis also stresses that "any attempt to treat it [rape] as an isolated phenomenon is bound to flounder" (1981, p. 201; see also Scholz 2000, pp. 35–40). Feminist theory must connect gender, race, and class to explain the pervasiveness of rape. Davis thus proposes:

> The class structure of capitalism encourages men who wield power in the economic and political realm to become routine agents of sexual exploitation. The present rape epidemic occurs at a time when the capitalist class is furiously reasserting its authority in face of global and internal challenges. Both racism and sexism, central to its domestic strategy of increased economic exploitation, are receiving unprecedented encouragement. It is not a mere coincidence that as the incidence of rape has arisen, the position of women workers has visibly worsened. So severe are women's economic losses that their wages in relationship to men are lower than they were a decade ago. The proliferation of sexual violence is the brutal face of a generalized intensification of the sexism which necessarily accompanies this economic assault. (1981, p. 200)

Davis's argument here, which has not lost its relevance even today, insists on connecting the analysis of rape to other forms of oppression and correlating it to women's ongoing economic vulnerability and relative political powerlessness.

More recent explanations of rape advance postmodern feminist views. An influential position comes from feminist thinker Sharon Marcus, who defines rape as a "gendered grammar of violence" (1992, p. 383). In this grammar, men are the agents of violence and women the subjects of fear. Language constructs reality, and so rape-prone societies are "subject to change" if rape is understood as a "linguistic fact" (p. 388). When rape is understood as a linguistic fact, one has "to ask how the violence of rape is enabled by narratives, complexes and institutions which derive their strength not from outright, immutable, unbeatable force but rather from their power to structure our lives as imposing cultural scripts" (p. 387). In Marcus's postmodern feminist analysis, then, the study of rape turns into an examination of the linguistic grammar of sexual violence as it appears in cultural, artistic, literary, and even religious traditions, conventions, and texts. Clearly, the postmodern feminist approach differs significantly from early feminist views, although, like them, it rejects essentializing and naturalizing notions. It stresses that "cultural scripts" construct our understandings of rape and are complicit in the production of rape.

Rape-prone societies will therefore change only when cultural scripts are changed; they will run out of power because people will not be convinced by them anymore—only then will rape end.[6] In short, postmodern feminist theorists argue that cultural scripts need to be uncovered and deconstructed from feminist perspectives.

Unfortunately, postmodern feminist analysis never took off in full force because, in the mid-to-late 1990s, feminist-scholarly enthusiasm for the investigation of sexual violence declined. The danger of essentializing discourses was so deeply felt that sexual violence almost vanished from feminist scholarship, up to the early 2000s (see e.g. Helliwell 2000). Although sexual violence remained visible and pervasive, especially during the wars in Bosnia and Congo, postmodern feminist theorists were too suspicious of essentializing, naturalizing, and ahistorical latencies in cultural feminist approaches to pursue the investigation of cultural scripts on rape. The feminist theoretical interest in addressing sexual violence was only rekindled in the late 2000s when renewed publicity about rape in the US military and on US college campuses reenergized feminist grassroots movements. The current focus on rape in the United States is thus highly practical in orientation, seeking to end sexual violence through the systematic enforcement of US law. As of 2017, it remains to be seen whether President Donald Trump's administration will support the current Title IX interpretation; it is expected that it will not (New 2016). In fact, on September 22, 2017, U.S. Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos announced the withdrawal of the Dear Colleague Letter on Sexual Violence from April 4, 2011 and the legal expectations for universities and colleges are currently unclear.

Coming Out of the Wilderness After Almost Two Millennia: Three Decades of Feminist Scholarship on Biblical Rape Texts

It took until 1984, almost ten years after the publication of *Against Our Will*, for a feminist biblical scholar to produce a scholarly exegetical study on sexual violence in the Bible. Until then, scholarly books in the academic field of biblical studies had basically ignored, silenced, or marginalized biblical rape texts. The exegetical task fell to Phyllis Trible, who, in her pioneering book, *Texts of Terror: Literary-Feminist Readings of Biblical Narratives* (1984), brings to the Bible-reading public's attention four stories that include three sexually violated women: Hagar (Genesis 16 and 21), Tamar, the royal daughter (2 Samuel 13), and the Levite's so-called

concubine (Judges 19); the fourth woman is Jephthah's daughter in Judges 11, who was murdered by her father. The shock value of the feminist-literary exposure cannot be underestimated because this was the first feminist-scholarly book ever published on sexual violence in the Bible. For Trible, it was a book that needed to be written; as she noted, "Ancient tales of terror speak all too frighteningly of the present" (1984, p. xiii).

Other feminist biblical scholars followed Trible's lead, and over the next three decades, produced exegetical studies on sexual violence and rape in journal articles and books. In 1993, J. Cheryl Exum published a book titled *Fragmented Women: Feminist (Sub)versions of Biblical Narratives*. In one chapter, "Raped by the Pen," she analyzes violence against women in biblical narrative, acknowledging that "raped by the pen is not the same as raped by the penis" (2015[1993], p. 135). Quoting feminist theorists such as Andrea Dworkin, Susan Brownmiller, and Ellen Rooney, she maintains that "patriarchal texts can neither fully nor successfully ignore or suppress women's experience" (p. 161). Overall, Exum investigates how "literary rapes perpetuate ways of looking at women that encourage objectification and violence" (ibid.). She exposes the literary mechanisms that silence and marginalize the female characters who are raped in Judges 19 and 2 Samuel 11. More specifically, Exum looks at Judges 19, the gang rape of the so-called concubine, describing it as one of the "most gruesome and violent in the Bible" (p. 136), and juxtaposes this narrative to the Bathsheba and David story in 2 Samuel 11. Her detailed comparative study culminates in a careful evaluation of the male gaze and an inquiry into the exegetical responsibility of reading biblical rape stories by taking biblical "women's word for it" (p. 161). It is a courageous, bold, and forward-looking essay, which explicitly addresses rape as a methodological and hermeneutical concern in feminist biblical exegesis.

After Trible's *Texts of Terror* in 1984, it took eleven years before another monograph appeared that focused on sexual violence in biblical literature. In 1995, Renita J. Weems produced a book-length investigation of sexual violence in prophetic literature, entitled *Battered Love: Marriage, Sex, and Violence in the Hebrew Prophets*. The book presents an analysis of the so-called marriage metaphors in biblical prophecy. Using historical and literary methods, Weems explains how biblical prophets, such as Hosea, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, tried to convince male Israelites to compare their relationship with God to a husband who sexually threatens and violates his wife. She argues that "the Bible's culture takes for granted women's

limited roles and goes out of its way at times to reinforce the notion that women's sexuality poses a dangerous threat to the social order" (1995, p. 119). She also maintains that male Israelites must have felt profoundly insulted being asked to identify with a sexually violated woman, because their androcentric convictions and interpretations told them that the divine husband was justified in punishing his wife, whose behaviour had violated the patriarchal order. Weems is cautious as to what to do about this biblical position because, in her view, the reinterpretation of "marriage as a metaphor in the Bible … does very little to change" the persistent efforts of biblical texts to "rationalize violence against women" (p. 119).

Since 2000, the flood waters have broken in biblical studies, and comprehensive and detailed investigations have consistently appeared on the topic of sexual violence and rape in biblical literature. In 2000, Gerlinde Baumann authored a book in German that was translated three years later into English as *Love and Violence: Marriage as Metaphor for the Relationship between Yahweh and Israel in the Prophetic Books* (Baumann 2000, 2003). Like Weems, Baumann offers a linguistic-historical feminist study of the so-called marriage metaphor in prophetic literature, especially Hosea, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Lamentations, and Isaiah, with a particular focus on the relationship between God as the husband and Israel as his wife. Baumann is keenly aware of the tensions between her historical reconstructions of the biblical use of the marriage metaphor and contemporary feminist views on sexual violence. The detailed and careful linguistic and historical evaluations of vocabulary, grammatical constructs, and historical considerations make this an exegetically rich investigation.

Another volume to appear in the same year was my own monograph, *Rape Plots: A Feminist Cultural Study of Genesis 34* (2000), in which I analyze Genesis 34 as a cultural literary artifact in past and present commentaries. This feminist cultural study contextualizes nineteenth-century and contemporary biblical readings within the cultural context of concurrent literary artifacts, such as nineteenth-century forensic textbooks. Using this cultural literary approach, I uncover the pervasiveness of cultural scripts favouring the rapist and obfuscating the rape. I also propose a solution beyond rape-prone cultural scripts with a feminist reading of Genesis 34 that aligns with feminist views about rape as they have been articulated since the 1970s.

A few years later, in 2003, Cheryl A. Kirk-Duggan produced an anthology entitled *Pregnant Passion: Gender, Sex, and Violence in the Bible* (Kirk-Duggan 2003). The volume features twelve essays that investigate both the

Old and New Testaments in light of gender, sexuality, and violence, although some essays focus on topics unrelated to rape. The book employs intertextual, anthropological, psychological, and gender theoretical approaches to examine biblical texts, such as Genesis 34, the book of Esther, and the poems on "Daughter Zion" (e.g. Amos 5:2; Mic. 1:13; Isa. 1:8), in conjunction with extensive histories of biblical interpretation. As Kirk-Duggan explains, the book unsettles conventional interpretations and the ideologies of sexuality and gender in such interpretations, showing how they perpetuate violence against marginalized people, including women.

In 2004, Cheryl Anderson published her study on the construction of gender and violence in legal biblical texts. Entitled *Women, Ideology, and Violence: The Construction of Gender in the Book of the Covenant and Deuteronomic Law* (Anderson 2004), the five chapters present biblical and ancient Near Eastern legislation on gendered violence in light of critical theory. Anderson maintains that there are two different categories of biblical legislation. Some laws treat both women and men in the same way, which Anderson classifies as "inclusive." Other laws treat women differently from men, which she categorizes as "exclusive." Anderson then shows that the latter body of laws construct gender within the paradigm of male dominance/female subordination; informed by critical theory, the study demonstrates that those laws do not merely describe but also *constitute* violence against women.

In 2006, Mary Anna Bader offered a multi-methodological study of two biblical narratives, Genesis 34 and 2 Samuel 13. Entitled *Sexual Violation in the Hebrew Bible: A Multi-Methodological Study of Genesis 34 and 2 Samuel 13* (Bader 2006), the volume argues for sexual violence as a complex methodological issue in the Hebrew Bible. The work employs intertextuality and narrative criticism for investigating the two biblical stories within the web of themes and vocabulary as defined in ancient Israel and as heard by contemporary readers. In the same year, Hilary B. Lipka delivered her study entitled *Sexual Transgression in the Hebrew Bible* (2006), which examines many biblical texts on sexual violence as part of what Lipka classifies as sexual transgression. A more detailed analysis of her work follows below.

The following year, Joy A. Schroeder's work, *Dinah's Lament: The Biblical Legacy of Sexual Violence in Christian Interpretation* (2007), explored how (predominantly male) Christian commentators of the early church and the mediaeval period interpreted the biblical rape stories of Dinah (Genesis 34), the Levite's so-called concubine (Judges 19), Tamar (2 Samuel 13), Potiphar's wife (Genesis 39), and Susannah (Daniel 13). A wealth of references to primary sources and ancient biblical commentaries

enriches Schroeder's portrayal of the consistent androcentric bias in the history of Christian interpretation. This bias blames women for sexual violence, reinforces the notion that women should stay at home to protect their virginity, and characterizes women as enjoying rape or as having brought upon themselves male "desire." The study thus demonstrates abundantly the mostly androcentric ways in which socio-cultural assumptions shape the interpretation history of the biblical narratives under consideration.

Another study that appeared in 2007 is Carleen Mandolfo's monograph, *Daughter Zion Talks Back to the Prophets: A Dialogical Theology of the Book of Lamentations*. This literary interpretation of sexual violence centres on the female voice in Lamentations 1–2 and the (male) divine voice in prophetic speech. Informed by the dialogical linguistics of Mikhail Bakhtin and Martin Buber's dialogic philosophy, the study tracks the prophetic marriage metaphor through several biblical texts and brings them into dialogical conversation with the book of Lamentations, especially its female figure, Daughter Zion. Using a dialogical hermeneutic, Mandolfo addresses issues of power, subjectivity, and alterity, always mindful of the historical contexts from which the various biblical poems emerged. Her study aims "to contribute to the dethroning of biblical authority as it is now construed" (2007, p. 5), and in this sense, the volume is more about imperial power politics in general than about sexual violence. At the same time, Mandolfo hopes that her work will ensure an end to "monologic" justifications of divine justice.

In 2008, Frank M. Yamada examined three rape narratives (Genesis 34; Judges 19; 2 Samuel 13) with literary methods in his monograph, *Configurations of Rape in the Hebrew Bible* (Yamada 2008). He suggests that each narrative belongs to a similar category of texts in which the plot describes a clear pattern of escalating violence. The increasing violence begins with the rape of a woman by one or more men and thereafter escalates into male-on-male violence and major socio-political upheavals. Yamada's well-structured and reasoned argumentation assumes a strictly formalistic understanding of literary criticism that centres on the narrator in selected biblical rape narratives.

Two years later, in 2010, Caroline Blyth published her monograph, *The Narrative of Rape in Genesis 34: Interpreting Dinah's Silence* (Blyth 2010), which explores similarities and connections between past and present notions of sexual violence as they appear in interpretations of Genesis 34. The study makes an important plea to read from the perspective of rape victim-survivors. For this purpose, Blyth employs testimonies from

contemporary women who experienced sexual assault, using their stories to expose the variously articulated rape "myths" and prejudices about sexual violence in biblical readings.

Another book to appear in 2010 was my work entitled *Sacred Witness: Rape in the Hebrew Bible*. The book assumes that rape texts are common, if not ubiquitous, throughout biblical prose and poetry. Firmly placed within feminist theories on rape, the study recovers the Hebrew Bible from its current marginalization as an intellectual and cultural resource for the feminist study of rape. Honouring the perspectives of rape victim-survivors, it presents biblical literature as a sacred witness about rape.

Never before in biblical research has the topic of rape featured as prominently as in this growing list of books. Moreover, a considerable number of scholarly journal articles supplement these monographs.[7] Nevertheless, it is also important to realize that feminist Bible scholars have turned their attention to sexual violence and rape only *after* feminist theorists have begun focusing on other issues. Certainly, biblical scholarship, including feminist biblical scholarship, is not a trendsetter but consistently in the position of catching up with socio-cultural, political, and intellectual developments.

Two Limitations in Feminist Biblical Exegesis on Sexual Violence

In light of the growing scholarly discussion on sexual violence in biblical literature, I wish to highlight two limitations that I identify in feminist scholarship on biblical rape texts. In my view, these limitations help explain the reticence of feminist biblical scholars to locate biblical interpretation within feminist insights so prominently articulated in the contemporary Title IX debate. A first limitation consists of the fact that many feminist biblical scholars adhere to the principles of a scientific-empiricist epistemology. This tendency is surprising, especially since feminist exegete, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, has written so abundantly on the considerable shortcomings of this epistemological paradigm. As she explains in her 2009 work, *Democratizing Biblical Studies*:

> Although the scientific-positivist paradigm demands objectivity, disinterestedness, and value-neutrality in order to control what constitutes the legitimate, scientifically established, true meaning of a text, it is patently *kyriocentric* and *Eurocentric*. (2009, p. 68, original italics; see also Fiorenza 1999, 2007)

Thus, at stake here is the exegetical relationship to structures of power. Moreover, the adherence to positivism is a particularly *white* feminist hermeneutical preference because many minority-positioned exegetes—feminist, womanist, and otherwise—talk openly about the disciplinary pressures that make them avoid, downplay, or even reject socially located readings of the Bible (e.g. Byron and Lovelace 2016). Is the adherence of (white feminist) biblical exegetes to the empiricist-scientific epistemology related to the need to please "the fathers" and to keep tenure-track or adjunct teaching positions? Why are white feminist and non-feminist scholars so reluctant to venture into epistemologically and hermeneutically more adventurous territories when the topic is sexual violence? Please note that I am observing a tendency here, not an absolute condition.

Yet the effects of this tendency are considerable. I want to mention only one example to illustrate the limitations of the scientific-empiricist epistemology in biblical interpretation on rape. It comes from a comprehensive study by Hilary Lipka, entitled *Sexual Transgression in the Hebrew Bible* (2006). Lipka articulates the chosen hermeneutical position in the following three sentences, which make her study such a valuable example:

> I argued that we can only talk about a concept of rape in a biblical text if two elements are present. First, there must be evidence of some belief on the author's part that the sexual act is forced upon an individual against his or her will. Second, there must be evidence of a conception that this forced act violates the victim on a personal level. (2006, p. 220)

Lipka establishes two requirements in her hermeneutical analysis of sexual violence in biblical literature. The first requirement relates to the preference of authorial meaning. This highly modern preference assumes that it is possible, desirable, and relatively obvious to know what the original authors thought about sexual violence. The second requirement prioritizes the individualism of the victim-survivor, yet another assumption of modernism, which stresses the priority of the individual over the collective. Using these two requirements, Lipka thus treats biblical rape texts with a historical-literary approach that tries to decipher what the text meant to the Israelite writers. Importantly, however, she does not explain why she makes the two requirements so central to her analysis or even how she came up with them in the first place.

Obviously, then, Lipka privileges intentional meaning to a socially located hermeneutic. But why? Confusion and silence about the rationale prevail. While Lipka acknowledges the existence of rape in biblical literature,

she does not consistently use the vocabulary of rape. The inconsistency is already obvious in the choice of the book's title that classifies sexual violence as "sexual transgression" (Lipka 2006, p. 22). Why sexual transgression and not rape? Lipka argues that her study is broader than rape, as it also includes texts about incest, adultery, and other sexual activities. But does the terminological choice of "sexual transgression" not ultimately minimize and obfuscate the violent and coercive nature of rape? In my view, the phrase "sexual transgression" contributes to the silencing effect we still encounter today when it comes to rape and sexual violence in the Bible and elsewhere. "Transgression" also implies "wrongdoing" without clarifying who is doing wrong, and so the term leaves open the possibility that both the victim-survivor and the perpetrator "transgressed." Furthermore, Lipka's claim to present the views of the original authors relies on terminology that suggests objectivity, universality, and value-neutrality. She believes the phrase "sexual transgression" avoids anachronism, and repeatedly states that she wishes to avoid "imposing our own cultural meanings upon ancient texts" (p. 247). Yet this very empiricist-scientific goal is, of course, unattainable because an escape from particularity, locatedness, and partiality is impossible (see Nealon 2012). Moreover, it affirms the prevailing structures of domination because it does not side explicitly with the victim-survivor and does not question existing power structures. Predictably, then, Lipka's study leaves unaddressed questions of power, intersectionality, and issues of social location. Certainly, her work is not unique in this regard, as this epistemological manoeuvre appears in many other publications (see Rey 2016; Nolte 2016). The widespread reluctance to disrupt the enduring dominance of the empiricist-scientific paradigm characterizes many studies of biblical rape texts to this very day.

A second limitation stands out in feminist exegesis of sexual violence in the Bible. It pertains to the dearth of substantive feminist-exegetical discourse on method and methodology. Esther Fuchs (2016) has long observed this lack in feminist biblical studies, and I concur with her assessment. To date, there are no in-depth discussions on method and methodology among feminist exegetes in general and feminist exegetes reading biblical rape texts in particular. More often than not, feminist exegetes employ this or that method in service of this or that biblical rape text, but they do not explain what makes this or that reading feminist or not (Milne and Scholz 2016). We are in dire need of meta-level considerations as they have taken place in other fields of feminist inquiry such as sociology, anthropology, or feminist studies in general.

Much more remains to be said about the absence of feminist-exegetical discourse on method and methodology (Scholz 2016a), but I want to highlight only one important point made by feminist theorists. Often, they explain that feminist knowledge aims to contribute to social change and that methods and methodologies ought to be selected accordingly. Feminist practice ought to shape the choice of method, and the range of methods in feminist scholarship is astounding. Among the methods are participatory research, ethnography, discourse analysis, comparative case study, cross-culture analysis, conversation analysis, oral history, participant observation, and personal narrative. I wonder why feminist biblical exegetes have not usually followed this feminist principle that feminist practice shapes the choice of method. Instead, we have tended to limit ourselves to text-based methods that have remained dominant in biblical studies for so long. Why have we not developed more participatory research methods in the feminist interpretation of the Bible?[8] Why have we not relied more on comparative case studies or cross-cultural analysis? Asked differently, why have we too often adhered to the existing spectrum of methods as they are traditionally defined in the field of biblical studies and not attempted to boldly go where few Bible exegetes have gone before? In light of the current Title IX debate, it seems timely to remember anew that feminist exegesis is always implicated in "processes of politicization, diversity and continuity in political struggles over time" (Naples 2007, p. 1705). This insight may help reduce the tendency in feminist biblical scholarship to assimilate to the status quo of the field. It might also assist feminist exegetes to contest the viability of kyriarchal ideologies in biblical interpretation, especially when we read biblical rape texts. In short, it is high time that we recognize biblical rape texts as sites of struggle over meaning-making, authorization, and power, thus leaning on Schüssler Fiorenza's feminist-exegetical framework (Schüssler Fiorenza 1999, 2007, 2009).

Beyond a "Cop-Out" Hermeneutics: Concluding Comments

The question I address in this chapter is whether the Title IX debate on US campuses ought to shape feminist scholarship on sexual violence and rape in the academic field of biblical studies. My own position is clear: I endorse an explicit connection between biblical interpretation on the one hand and feminist theories and practices on the other hand. Consequently, I consider so-called historical-empiricist explanations that reject the

existence of sexual violence in the ancient worlds of biblical texts as a "cop-out" hermeneutic, which attempts to accommodate and perhaps even to please the fathers and lords in the field and, probably also, in religious organizations. Could such epistemological and methodological hedging help explain why feminist biblical interpretations of sexual violence are still relatively uncommon, not only in the field but also and, especially, beyond it? I wonder what would need to happen for alternative biblical meanings to be taken for granted as much as the heteronormative, androcentric, and kyriarchal readings that are published with such abiding and abundant regularity?

In the meantime, I take my clues from the current Title IX movement. I read biblical texts from the perspectives of victim-survivors and deconstruct kyriarchal conventions, habits, and argumentation structures as they have been produced in the extensive interpretation histories of the Hebrew Bible. For the past twenty years, I have contributed to reading biblical rape texts within the context of feminist theoretical and practical concerns (see for example Scholz 2000, 2010, 2016b). It has not always been easy, but what else is new? For instance, I encountered active administrative resistance from male performing deans in two different institutions of higher education. Fortunately, I never encountered any difficulties in getting my written word out into the world, thanks to forward-looking acquisition editors. Meanwhile, national and international reports on rape in the world remain pervasive. Feminist biblical scholars cannot give up; we must continuously develop counter-narratives because exegetical resistance to the classification of biblical rape stories as tales about marriage, love, or even consensual sex is urgent. As feminist biblical scholars, we need to move beyond a cop-out hermeneutics and produce biblical readings that align with the legal efforts to take seriously the Title IX debate, so that one day soon, biblical rape texts will no longer be read in ways that support the silencing, obfuscating, and marginalizing patterns of violence, including gendered violence, so pervasive in the world today.

Notes

1. The report on a survey, conducted by the Association of American Universities that was released on 21 September 2015, included 150,000 students from twenty-seven universities, including Yale University. According to the survey, 27 per cent of undergraduate women said they were victims of non-consensual sexual contact through force or in situations

when they were incapacitated and unable to consent; among undergraduate men, the rate was 8 per cent; 13 per cent of undergraduate women said they suffered incidents involving non-consensual sexual penetration or attempted penetration; 23 per cent of students said sexual assault is very or extremely problematic at the school. The survey response rate was 52 per cent. For details on this and the other twenty-six universities where the survey was conducted, see Anderson and Svrluga (2015).

2. For more information, see http://thehuntinggroundfilm.com/. Accessed on 21 September 2017.
3. For a succinct discussion and critique of MacKinnon's feminist position, see, for example, Bartlett (1987).
4. For a survey of feminist studies on rape, see Scholz (2000, pp. 19–44).
5. Other early feminist thinkers argued similarly. See, for example, Griffin (1971), hooks (1984, p. 130), Curtis (1976, p. 131), Davis (1981), Scholz (2000, pp. 35–50).
6. For a powerful critique of Marcus's argumentation, see Malinen (2013).
7. See, for example, Nolte (2016), Blyth (2014), Kruger (2014), Casey (2010), Shemesh (2007), Nadar (2006), Gravett (2004), van Wolde (2002), Crisp (2001), Dobbs-Allsopp and Linafelt (2001).
8. A notable exception is Ipsen (2009), who draws on liberation and a feminist materialist hermeneutics to engage sex workers in the process of reading and interpreting biblical texts.

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CHAPTER 12

Tough Conversations: Teaching Biblical Gender Violence in Aotearoa New Zealand

Emily Colgan and Caroline Blyth

As the chapters in this volume attest, the Bible contains troubling texts that depict various forms of gender violence. While we can personally testify to the emotional toll felt by biblical scholars who wrestle with these texts, we are also keenly aware that our engagement typically takes place within the relatively safe confines of conference panels, academic publications, and our own research environments. It is quite another matter, however, to take this conversation into more public spaces, particularly those that lie at the heart of our roles as educators: our classrooms. Within such spaces, we must be careful where we tread, for we enter a minefield scattered with contesting perspectives, resistant voices, and the potential to engage with others in ways that can be either healing *or* harmful. What follows is a personal reflection about our attempts to navigate these spaces, specifically within our own context of Aotearoa New Zealand.[1]

First, though, let us outline in more detail the specifics of our location. We are both practitioners employed within the New Zealand tertiary

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education system. One of us (Caroline) works in a religious studies department at a secular university, while the other (Emily) teaches in a theological college. Both of these institutions are located in Auckland, the largest and most multicultural city in Aotearoa New Zealand. This is reflected in our student cohorts, who identify as Pākehā,[2] Māori, Pasifika, and Asian; we also host a significant number of international exchange students (predominantly from the United States and Europe). In terms of religious affiliation, the university students who take biblical studies courses come from a range of faith backgrounds or none. They enrol in these courses for a number of reasons, although the majority are simply interested in learning more about these ancient texts and their literary, historical, and cultural contexts. The students who attend the theological college, on the other hand, are all Christian; some of them are training for ministry, while others are seeking to enrich their faith journey through academic engagement. Regardless of these demographic differences in our student populations, however, we both share a common goal in our teaching: to encourage our students to engage critically with the biblical texts, whatever their faith background. Neither of us approach biblical studies from a particular faith perspective; rather, we come to the text with a hermeneutic of suspicion, keenly aware of the role the Bible plays in shaping contemporary discourses and worldviews, both locally and globally. While we are both respectful of the fact that this ancient book holds great authority as a sacred text for many of the students we encounter in class, this does not detract from our commitment to teaching biblical interpretation that is rooted in a framework of critical thinking. Nevertheless, as we will discuss below, this teaching pedagogy comes with its own challenges.

Within a number of our courses, we intentionally invite students to engage with biblical texts that depict various forms of gender violence.[3] We do not take this step lightly; it is not our intention to shock or antagonize our students or to provide them with the classroom equivalent of clickbait. We make this decision because, like it or not, these texts are *in* the Bible. It is therefore imperative to draw students' attention to this fact if we are serious about improving their biblical literacy. For a number of Christian students, these biblical "texts of terror" come as a surprise, as they are typically omitted from church lectionaries and are thus rarely the focus of sermons or Bible study groups. For non-Christian students, there is also often a sense of disbelief that a book they acknowledge as carrying huge religious and cultural weight contains such problematic portrayals of gendered violence. To exclude these texts from our course syllabi and lecture schedules would therefore be doing

our students a huge disservice; for, to properly understand the Bible, we must have the integrity to confront it in its entirety, regardless of how tough the ensuing conversations might prove (Day 1999, p. 176).

With this in mind, how do our contexts, which we described above, inform the ways we teach these troubling texts in our classrooms? Particularly, how do we create a space where we can talk about these texts responsibly, given that Aotearoa New Zealand has one of the highest rates of gender violence among developed countries in the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD 2017; see also New Zealand Family Violence Clearing House 2014)?[4] According to the Ministry of Justice statistics (2016), 24 per cent of women and 6 per cent of men in Aotearoa New Zealand report having experienced at least one incident of sexual violence during their lifetime; equally as disturbing, it is estimated that less than 10 per cent of rape cases are reported to the police, suggesting that the actual rates of sexual violence are considerably higher than those commonly reported.

Of course, by drawing attention to these statistics within the context of our work as biblical scholars and educators, we are not claiming that the Bible (or religion more broadly) is the sole source of the incredibly high rates of gender violence in Aotearoa New Zealand; we do contend, however, that it must be interrogated as a text that both supports and perpetuates such violence. We therefore believe that we cannot afford to ignore the potential for biblical traditions to contribute to the harm experienced by countless victims of gender violence. This conviction informs our classroom engagement with the Bible in three ways.

First, when addressing biblical texts of terror, we must always be sensitive to the very real possibility that some of the students in our classrooms may be affected personally by gender violence. With this in mind, we always ensure some basic steps are taken to minimize our own potential to further the harm they may already have experienced (or be experiencing). We both take time at the start of class to alert students that we will be dealing with the subject of gender violence, acknowledging to them our awareness that this topic of conversation might be difficult or confronting for some of those present. We also invite students who do feel disturbed or distressed by the lecture content to speak to us directly, or to contact appropriate support services (the details of which we provide during the lecture and add to our course web pages). Equally important, we remind all our students of the need to ensure that the classroom remains a safe space for *everyone*; discussions must therefore be carried out with a

sensitivity to classmates' diverse perspectives and experiences, and a commitment to hold each other's words and testimonies in confidence. What we say in the classroom stays in the classroom.

Second, we acknowledge that within our lecture rooms, there may also be those who participate in the social structures that sustain gender violence. This can be incredibly challenging, particularly when our students voice rape-supportive opinions or downplay the seriousness of gender violence within both the biblical texts and their own contemporary cultures. We have heard students tell us that biblical rape victims must have "deserved" their assault, or that the perpetrator of gendered violence was somehow "justified" in their actions. This is particularly common when the perpetrator is a biblical "hero" (like David) or even the biblical God himself. Trying to retain a level of professionalism while maintaining the safe space of our classroom is a fine line to walk. We are committed to calling out rape-enabling discourses expressed by our students—surely this is our responsibility as academic role models. We feel compelled to remind students that language has enormous power to sustain these violent discourses and to negatively impact the lives of sexual violence survivors. As a lecturer, these situations can be difficult, but they are also a teaching opportunity, where we remind our students that the gendered violence evoked in these ancient biblical texts extends beyond the words on the page to have consequences within their own contemporary contexts and communities.

Third, the practices we outlined in our last two points reflect our commitment to our role as critic and conscience in the classroom. We need to stress to students that the issue of biblical gender violence *matters*, particularly because ancient sacred texts continue to have power in contemporary communities to sustain rape-supportive discourses. We live in a global rape culture and read the Bible within this culture. We want to remind students of this fact and invite them to stand alongside us as critic and conscience within their own communities, both inside and outside academia. Some of our students will take what they learn in the classroom back to others—congregants, Bible study groups, youth groups, or simply family and friends. We remind them that their own engagement with biblical texts of terror have the potential to impact other people's views of gender and gender violence. As Linda Day notes, "They will be responsible to a wider public, and hence must learn to be aware of how they are either serving or harming others through their methods and results when interpreting the Bible" (1999, p. 174).

Yet within the university and seminary classrooms of Aotearoa New Zealand, conversations about the Bible and gender violence are not always easy to negotiate. We live and teach in a bicultural country, and in one of the most ethnically diverse cities within that country. As mentioned above, our classrooms reflect this diversity, containing students who identify as Māori, Pākehā, Pasifika, and Asian. Some of our students belong to cultures that embrace traditional gender roles and hierarchies, which normalize and sustain various forms of gender violence. How do we critique rape culture and gender violence, when these are recognized by some of our students as being so closely aligned with their own cultural identities? How do we challenge the unacceptable violence of patriarchy and misogyny while still being sensitive to our students' investment in their cultural traditions? To what extent can we invite students to critique the traditional underpinnings of their own cultures, particularly when we ourselves do not belong to these cultures? These are thorny questions, which highlight that issues of colonization and marginalization constantly intersect with discourses of rape culture and gender violence. We are conscious of the fact that we always run the risk of "colonizing" our students' own cultural contexts; at the same time, however, we try to empower them with the courage to *join us* in our quest to scrutinize our own cultural traditions with integrity, and to acknowledge that *all* of our cultures and communities are, to some extent at least, complicit in sustaining the discourses that enable rape culture and gender violence to flourish.

Another thorny issue we are often confronted with is not unique to Aotearoa New Zealand, but is likely encountered by biblical scholars teaching biblical texts of terror throughout the world. For many of our students, the Bible is not only their course "textbook"; it is also their sacred scripture. When we invite the class to interrogate its texts and identify the problematic ideologies around gender violence voiced within them, we often encounter resistance, or even a refusal to do so. Some students find it too threatening to engage with any reading of a biblical text that (in their eyes) challenges its authority, or appears to undermine its message of "Good News." The potential for biblical texts of terror to convey "Bad News" to people who have themselves been impacted by gender violence is something that they refuse to discuss or even consider. Instead, they suspend their critical faculties, unwilling to recognize the violence within the text, despite the fact that they would likely acknowledge the same violence were it to appear in other literary (non-biblical) forms (see Day 1999, p. 176). Moreover, they often

perform an impressive array of interpretive gymnastics to sanitize the text and preserve its sacred reputation in which they are so heavily invested.

Yet such an exegetical exercise only serves to sustain a vicious cycle of interpretation and affirmation that protects the destructive power of rape-supportive biblical texts. As critic and conscience of our classrooms, we therefore have to equip students to consider the capacity of the text to perpetuate rape culture and gender violence. While affirming our respect for *everyone's* faith traditions, we nevertheless reiterate to students their responsibilities to ask searching questions about biblical texts of terror. We remind them of the power that language—particularly sacred language—has to impact the lives of real people and their experiences of violence. And, most importantly, we offer them the academic resources with which they can interrogate their sacred texts in a safe and non-judgmental environment. In all honesty, sometimes this works, and sometimes it doesn't. We still encounter students who disengage in the classroom, or become frustrated with the subject matter. Some even project their frustrations against *us*—the bearers of "Bad News"—articulating their hostility in classroom discussions, emails, and their written assignments. Such encounters can be demoralizing, distressing, and exhausting; at the end of the day, though, they only serve to reinforce for us the importance of persisting—and persisting and persisting—with these tough conversations.

Notes

1. Aotearoa is the most widely-used Māori name for New Zealand, and often precedes its English counterpart when the country is written or spoken about. The precise origins and meaning of Aotearoa are uncertain, but it is often translated as "land of the long white cloud."
2. Pākehā generally refers to a white New Zealander of European descent but is often used in a broader sense to mean "foreigner," or anyone who is not Māori.
3. Some of our courses focus on a biblical text that happens to contain narratives of gender violence (e.g. Genesis, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel). Other courses consider the Bible more thematically, and our explorations of biblical "texts of terror" form part of wider discussions around the Bible in relation to contemporary understandings of gender, sexuality, violence, post-colonialism, and popular culture.
4. This was also confirmed in a report by UN Women, *Progess of the World's Women: In Pursuit of Justice* (2011). See a summary of the report on the New Zealand Family Clearinghouse website, https://nzfvc.org.nz/news/united-nations-report-status-women-released. Accessed on 21 September 2017.

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