

Homophobia and Masculine Domination in Judges 19-21

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Abstract

Judges 19:1-30 has played an important role in the rise of feminist exegesis due to its exceptionally graphic account of the violent death of the Levite's concubine, a victim of sexual violence wholly without voice, and almost wholly without agency (see esp. Tribble 1984). The narrative is also frequently discussed in connection with biblical attitudes to the homoerotic, largely on account of its strong similarity to the better known Gen. 19:1-29, on which it may be dependent. As such, it is not only an example of the kind of gendered subjective violence with which the Hebrew scriptures are replete, but also a key part of the process by which the scripturalization of works such as Judges has helped to shape the later attitudes and prejudices of those who hold it to be Scripture. In this case, it is part of the genesis of the symbolic violence of Jewish and Christian homophobia. Yet to focus on the anal rape threatened against the Levite, and its role in the construction of certain kinds of religious homophobia, would also be to limit the significance of the text for understanding the nexus between religion and violence in all its complexity. For the threatened rape of the Levite, and the actual rape of his concubine, cannot be separated from the subsequent abduction of the virgins of Jabesh-Gilead (Jdg. 21:8-12), and the abduction of the virgins of Shiloh on the day of a religious festival (Jdg. 21:19-24; cf. Pausanias, *Description of Greece* 4.4.1-3; Livy, *Ab Urbe Condita* 1.9-13), both of which are later scenes within the same narrative. All of these elements of the narrative reflect the pervasive influence of what Pierre Bourdieu has called "masculine domination" ([1998] 2001), which is not only at work within and behind the acts of subjective violence in the text itself, but also shapes the symbolic violence that is a key part of the text's effect.

Keywords

Homophobia; rape; masculine domination; Judges.

Being a verry [sic] drunk homofobick [sic] I flipped out and began to pistol whip the fag with my gun.¹

¹ Aaron McKinney, along with Russell Henderson one of the murderers of Matthew Shepard in Laramie, Wyoming, in October 1998, to the wife of a fellow inmate of Albany County Detention Center. McKinney's letter is quoted by JoAnn Wypijewski in her report on Shepard's killers (1999, 63), and Byrne Fone cites Wypijewski's quote in the epilogue to his history of homophobia (2000, 416), in which Shepard's murder functions as a kind of *Leitmotif*. Wypijewski remarks that "It's just possible that Matthew Shepard didn't die because he was gay; he died because Aaron McKinney and Russell Henderson are straight" (1999, 62; cf. pp. 73-4).

*That he had not killed Catherine was an accident. Every blow had been intended to crush her. She was a long time unconscious and a long time half-conscious. She realized her arm was broken and that she must find help if she wanted to live. Wanting to live forced her to drag herself along the dark road, looking for help. She turned in at a gate and almost made the steps of the house before she fainted. The roosters were crowing in the chickenhouse and a gray rim of dawn lay on the east.*²

Introduction

Among the most notoriously violent texts in the Hebrew Bible is the grim story of the rape of the Levite's concubine or *pîlegeš* in Jdg. 19:22-30. The *pîlegeš* is raped in place of the Levite himself, whose own body had been threatened by a gang of men in the Benjaminite town of Gibeah. This ghastly scene is one part of a longer, and almost certainly composite,³ narrative that relates further acts of violence, including a devastating civil war and two scenes in which young women are abducted for the sexual, social, and economic use of the men of the depleted tribe of Benjamin.

I intend to do two things here. First of all, I will explore how the violence that is *threatened* against the Levite, and the violence that is *actually perpetrated* against the Levite's concubine and the virgins of Jabesh-Gilead and Shiloh, together reflect a deeper and more pervasive symbolic violence that Pierre Bourdieu has called "masculine domination" (2001). All of these violent events reflect an underlying pattern of thought, an ideology that forces men and women alike to think and act in ways that justify and reinforce the domination of men over women. The threat to rape the Levite man on the one hand, and the physical rape of the women on the other, are usually assumed by scholars to be different. I contend, on the contrary, that they reflect a single structure of thought, namely masculine domination.

Second, I intend to situate Judges 19-21 in relation to the genealogy of homophobia, as part of a broader concern with the way that Jewish and Christian scriptures have contributed to the symbolic violence of religious homophobia. Homophobia is itself one example of masculine domination, and manifests itself in a number of different ways in relation to Judges 19-21. The threat against the Levite's body is an ancient threat of homophobic violence. But there are two ways in which Judges 19-21 has helped to facilitate modern religious homophobia. First, scholars sometimes call upon this narrative to illustrate ancient Israel's disgust for sex between men as part of a more comprehensive argument against the modern acceptance of same-sex relationships. This interpretive move depends on the fact that this ancient narrative, whatever its origins may have been, now belongs in a canon of authoritative religious texts. This narrative is, for certain communities, "Scripture," and its putative attitudes to sexual relationships continue to matter. Second, the threat to rape the Levite has frequently been called a threat of

² Steinbeck 1952, 100-1.

³ The most recent thorough treatment of the composition of Judges 19-21 is Edenburg 2016, who deals comprehensively with the pertinent scholarly literature. Since I am chiefly concerned with gender and ideology in this article, I do not propose to go into the literary history of Judges 19-21 in detail. My working assumption is that Judges 19-21, especially chapters 20 and 21, are redactionally complex, but that the narrative as a whole is now meant to be read as a unity.

“homosexual” rape by scholars. As Michael Carden (1999) has argued, however, this reflects and helps to perpetuate attitudes that should be regarded as homophobic. By defining the threat as one of *homosexual* rape rather than simply *male* rape,⁴ the implication is that the threat to rape the Levite is motivated by sexual desire rather than, say, the desire to humiliate the man by feminizing him. This definition also suggests that there is some basic connection between homosexuality and rape, and that rape is more representative of homosexuality than is, say, a committed same-sex relationship (how often, by contrast, do biblical scholars write about the “heterosexual rape” of Tamar, or of Dinah?). Yet there is no reason to suppose that the men of Gibeah were motivated by sexual desire, nor should we suppose that the rape of a man by another man or men is an exemplary instance of homosexuality.

It is necessary to begin by clarifying three terms that are essential to framing my argument, but which raise certain methodological problems, especially in relation to the risk of anachronism. These terms are “homophobia,” “violence,” and “rape.” Once these terms are clarified, albeit provisionally, we then need to survey the major scholarly studies that have read Jdg. 19:22-30 in connection with the issue of homosexuality, with a view to discerning where homophobia might be lurking between the lines of the work of the guild. We will then be in a position to revisit Judges 19-21 and read the narrative for evidence of a single structure of thought – masculine domination – of which the homophobia of Jdg. 19:22-30 is but a part.

Setting the scene

The closing chapters of the book of Judges narrate instances of different kinds of sexual violence, which are implicated in various ways with actual and imagined religious practice.

First, there is the threat of the men of Gibeah to violate the Levite sexually, whether this threat is actual, as a straight reading of Jdg. 19:22 would suggest, or merely perceived to be real by the Levite’s Ephraimite host, as Jdg. 19:23 could imply. Religion and sexual violence are interconnected here on more than one level. The guest is a Levite, who, because he belongs to the one tribe whose sole inheritance is not land but YHWH himself, could be taken to symbolize the deity.⁵

⁴ Edenburg (2016, 177) is alert to the terminological problem and refers to “the motif of male rape” in Gen. 19:1-13 and Jdg. 19:15-30.

⁵ I owe this insight to Francis Landy, who graciously shared with me his paper, “Between Centre and Periphery: Space and Gender in the Book of Judges in the Early Second Temple Period” (2016) prior to publication. Landy’s position echoes somewhat that of Gunneweg (1965, 25-6), for whom precisely the fact that the man was a Levite, with a particular relationship to the god of the Israelite amphictyony, explains the extremity of the response to the threat on his life. It is, however, by no means certain that the man was identified as a Levite in the original narrative, though Gunneweg regarded this matter as of only incidental importance, given that even if the identification *were* secondary, the tradition eventually *would* make the man a Levite (23). Karl Budde argues, quite plausibly, that the identification of the man as a Levite is secondary in Jdg. 19:1 and 20:4 (1897, 127; but see the careful discussion in Milstein 2015, 9-13). This raises questions about the literary integrity of Judges 19-21, for as Uwe Becker has argued, even if *lēwī* (“Levite”) is secondary in Jdg. 19:1b (1990, 259-60), *hallēwī* (“the Levite”) may well be *original* in Jdg. 20:4. The reason for this is that while the man’s status as a Levite has no obvious narrative function in Judges 19, it *does* explain the extremity of the action against Benjamin in Jdg. 20, which for this and other reasons is regarded by Becker as a secondary insertion. The author of the original narrative underlying Judges 20-21 could

Furthermore, Jdg. 19:1-30 is frequently discussed in connection with whether the Jewish and Christian scriptures condemn, condone, or ignore sexual relationships between persons of the same sex, both historically and today. In other words, Jdg. 19:1-30 is implicated in the close relationship between the religious practice of scripturalization (that is, treating certain texts as authoritative Scripture; cf. Cantwell Smith 1993) and the symbolic violence of Jewish and (more commonly) Christian homophobia.

Second, there is the sexual violence perpetrated by the men of Gibeah on the Levite's *pīlegeš*,⁶ which sets in motion a catastrophic chain of violence. This violence is inspired by the desire of the other tribes of Israel for vengeance against Benjamin, and leads through the near-decimation of the tribe (Jdg. 20:1-48) to the abduction of young women from Jabesh-Gilead (Jdg. 21:1-14) and Shiloh (Jdg. 21:15-24). This narrative reflects a society in which the status of women is determined by, and in turn helps to determine, the honour of men. The fate of the Levite's *pīlegeš* has inspired important contributions, to which further reference will be made below, from scholars seeking to name and critique the way authoritative scriptures perpetuate highly problematic images of women.

The connection between religion and sexual violence goes beyond the use of Judges 19-21 as Scripture, however, because such violence is directly connected with the God of Israel within the text itself. The abduction of the young women of Shiloh takes place, in accordance with a familiar literary trope, at an annual festival of YHWH at Shiloh (*ḥag yhwh b'ešilô miyyāmîm yāmîmâ*).⁷ The abduction occurs because of a sacred vow the men of Israel have taken not to give their daughters to Benjaminite men (Jdg. 21:18). The God of Israel, then, cannot be separated from the fate of women in the text.

My basic aim is to clarify the connection between the threat against the male Levite in Jdg. 19:22-3 and the fate of the young women of Jabesh-Gilead and Shiloh. This is necessary because the threat against the Levite is frequently discussed by scholars in connection with the question of male homosexuality,⁸ whereas the abduction of the young women of Jabesh-Gilead and Shiloh is discussed in

have secondarily added *lêwî* in Jdg. 19:1b to help explain how the events of Judges 19 led to the horror of Judges 20.

⁶ The precise meaning of the term *pīlegeš* has been disputed in recent scholarship. Mieke Bal has expressed disquiet concerning the common translation "concubine," instead understanding the Hebrew term—along with *zōnâ* and its verbal cognates (Bal 1988a, 86-8)—as referring to a woman in a patrilocal, rather than virilocal, marriage (83-6, 89; 1988b, 2, 28 n. 1). Although Bal's view has not gained wide acceptance, I nonetheless leave the term *pīlegeš* untranslated (cf. n. 77 below).

⁷ The phrase *miyyāmîm yāmîmâ* recalls the notice at the end of the story of Jephthah's daughter (Jdg. 11:40), whose fate (whatever precisely it was) is also the result of a vow (Judg 11:30-1, 35-6, 39). It also looks forward to another reference to the cultic life of Shiloh a few verses later in the MT (1 Sam. 1:3; cf. Exod. 13:10; 1 Sam. 2:19). The phrase *miyyāmîm yāmîmâ* indicates that the observance in question occurred annually (thus Haran 1969, 11; *DCH* 4.167a), but it does not thereby suggest a connection with a particular, known festival (Haran 1969; cf. Sasson 2014, 443). This could, nonetheless, be implied by the phrase *ḥag yhwh*. Which festival it might have been is unclear from the text, though Susan Ackerman has suggested that the annual grape harvest festival is in mind in both Jdg. 21:15-24 and 1 Sam. 1:1-2:10 (1998, 254, 258, 260-1; cf. Milstein 2015, 13).

⁸ See most thoroughly Jost (2006, 306-16), though Jost rightly distances Judges 19 from modern constructions of homosexuality and same-sex relationships in favour of seeing the threatened male rape in terms of the expression of power, in which the Levite is threatened with enforced feminization.

connection with the commodification of, and violence against, women, and ultimately as a consequence of the sexual violence perpetrated on the Levite's *pîlegeš*.⁹ It seems to me that a false distinction is at work here. In fact, both the threat against the Levite, and the abduction of the young women of Jabesh-Gilead and Shiloh, are instances of what Pierre Bourdieu has called masculine domination (2001). In the former case, this takes the form of what we would now call homophobic violence. In the latter two cases, it takes the form of the abduction of women for the sake of the men of a tribe, and in order to perpetuate a tribal structure built on the interests of men.

Studying Judges 19-21 thus helps us to understand the roots of the connection between religious and sexual violence at several levels. This narrative concerns the genealogy of religious homophobia as much as it does the genealogy of the connections between certain kinds of religion, misogyny, and rape culture, all of which are symptomatic of masculine domination.

Clarifying terms: homophobia, violence, and rape

There are always difficulties when one sets out to analyze ancient texts from a perspective shaped by modern terms and concepts. These difficulties are compounded when one tries to do adequate justice to both the ancient context of the text in question, and its modern use. In the case of the foregoing analysis of Judges 19-21, there are difficulties with three terms in particular: homophobia, violence, and rape. Space does not permit a thorough investigation, but the difficulties need to be flagged and the terms provisionally clarified so that the analysis does not appear too anachronistic or woolly.

First, we have the term “homophobia,” which Michael Carden (1999) uses to reframe the discussion of Genesis 19 and Judges 19. Carden is not referring to homosexuality per se, but rather to male rape that occurs in a culture in which sex and gender are phallocentrically constructed.¹⁰ Carden's argument has decisively shaped my own case that we need to scrutinize the way the biblical texts are implicated in homophobic discourse, rather than what they putatively teach about same-sex relationships. But homophobia is, nevertheless, a problematic term to describe a mindset reflected in an ancient narrative whose author and earliest readers operated with a different set of cultural assumptions about sex than mine.

In respect of the origins of the English noun “homophobia,” the *Oxford English Dictionary* cites two separate uses of the term, with different etymologies, both from the twentieth century. While the second element in both derives from the Greek noun *phobia*, “fear,” the first element, while identical in English, derives ultimately either from the Latin *homō* (“man”), in the case of “homophobia, n.1,” or from the Greek prefix *hom-* or *homo-* (“same”), in the case of “homophobia, n.2.”

⁹ That the abduction of the virgins of Jabesh-Gilead and Shiloh is a consequence of the rape of the *pîlegeš* is clear from the narrative and has been well rehearsed by scholars. The pattern of the rape of a woman leading to excessive male violence and ultimately social disintegration is shared by Genesis 34, Judges 19, and 2 Samuel 13, and has been explored in different ways by Alice Keefe (1993) and Frank Yamada (2008). Yamada, however, criticizes Keefe for not accounting sufficiently for the response of men in these narratives to rape (12-3).

¹⁰ The language of “homophobia” is also invoked by Bal (1988b, 20).

The former (n.1) is defined as either “Fear of men, or aversion towards the male sex,” a usage dating to 1920, or “fear of mankind, anthropophobia,” a usage dating to 1960. The latter (n.2) seems to have originated by 1969,¹¹ and is defined as “Fear or hatred of homosexuals and homosexuality.” The initial element in this case originates from the prefix *homo-* in “homosexual,” which itself likewise derives from the Greek prefix *hom-* or *homo-* (“same”).¹² That is, “homophobia” has an inner-English etymology that derives only secondarily from Greek *hom-/homo-*, via the English “homosexual,” and from Greek *phobia*, by analogy with “arachnophobia,” “agoraphobia,” and so on. Already this opens up a further set of questions, for the term “homosexuality” is itself a modern coinage: it does not admit of a single, commonly accepted definition, nor does it necessarily denote a single phenomenon at all. Is a homosexual a discrete kind of person, and if so, what would this type of person be? Alternatively, is homosexuality an umbrella term for a distinct set of sexual practices, and if so, what are these practices?¹³ Are homosexuals and homosexuality, as superficially but not substantively unitary phenomena, actually figments of the homophobic imagination? If so, then the “fear” or “aversion” of homosexuals and homosexuality would itself exist only as a myth in the homophobic imagination ... and we come full circle.

A further issue in relation to homophobia concerns the disconnect that exists between the etymology of the term and its usage. The words “homophobia” and “homophobic” have come to be used widely to refer to positions that are not, apparently, held in “fear.” They have been used pejoratively, as an insult, against those who object to same-sex eroticism but who do not feel afraid of same-sex attracted people or their relationships.¹⁴ Yet whether a person or group believe that

¹¹ The citation in the *OED* is from one of three articles on homosexuality in the United States in the October 31, 1969 edition of *Time*. “The Homosexual: Newly Visible, Newly Understood”—itself arguably homophobic in its conclusions, especially its final paragraph – links homophobia with the myth that all homosexuals are alike: “Such homophobia is based on understandable instincts among straight people, but it also involves innumerable misconceptions and oversimplifications. The worst of these may well be that all homosexuals are alike. In fact, recent research has uncovered a large variation among homosexual types.” The article also refers to the “homophobic myths” that homosexuals cause crime, and that they are inherently more likely than heterosexuals to molest children. Yet it still concludes that homosexuality is a “serious and sometimes crippling maladjustment,” and that one of the challenges to American society is to “devise civilized ways of discouraging the condition.”

¹² See the many entries in LSJ 1220a-1230a.

¹³ Cf. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s problematization of the way gender of object choice, around the turn of the twentieth century, arbitrarily became the one dimension of sexual desire and expression that would be denoted by the term “sexual orientation” (1990, 8-9, 31, 35, 83). See also David Halperin’s genealogy of the concept “homosexuality,” which he regards as incoherent, reflecting “the historical accumulation of discontinuous notions that shelter within its specious unity” (2002, 107; see also Sedgwick 1990, 47; Parker 2001, 320-1; Harding 2013, 363-4, 401 n. 363).

¹⁴ This has been particularly true in the wearisome debates in many Christian churches about same-sex relationships. J. Daniel Kirk, for example, whose position on the morality of same-sex relationships has shifted significantly, and not without cost, objected to the use of this language in a blogpost “Re: Homophobia” (November 9, 2010; available online <http://www.jrdkirk.com/2010/11/09/re-homophobia/>). More recently, Kirk has revisited the topic, and discerned a rather different locus for the “fear” to which *-phobia* may refer, making the term more appropriate than may earlier have seemed to be the case: “It is a fear of losing a certain kind of Christian identity. It is the fear of losing a certain amount of theological control over what the gospel is. It is the fear of having the Bible taken away from us as a standard that calls us to account and directs our faith and practice. This is the reality of homophobia that perpetuates the status quo

they object to same-sex eroticism for reasons other than fear is not ipso facto a decisive reason for rejecting the term. After all, their objection may itself be little more than the rationalization of a more deep-seated or visceral emotion that more or less corresponds to the term “fear.”¹⁵ In any case, the term homophobia, through its wide usage, seems to have outgrown its etymology. It seems to encompass all sorts of objections to same-sex relationships and those who live them. For Byrne Fone, in his lengthy history of homophobia, homophobia is an umbrella term that covers a variety of different forms of “fear and dislike of homosexuality and those who practice it” (2000, 5). These derive from various sources, and are “invented, fostered, and supported over time by different agencies of society – religion, government, law, and science” (6). This definition would seem to imply a unitary definition of homosexuality, though, and indeed, Fone defines homosexuality simply as “sexual desire or relationships between people of the same sex” (4).¹⁶

On the face of it, such a definition of homophobia would seem to be broad enough to encompass the levitical prohibitions (Lev. 18:22; 20:13) and both Lot’s response to the threat against the angels in Sodom (Gen. 19:7), and the Ephraimite host’s response to the threat against the Levite in Gibeah (Jdg. 19:23). This claim holds regardless of whether “fear” is at the heart of the matter. The question would then be whether the use of the term “homophobia” confuses things that ought to be kept separate. Yet even if the rationale for the objection to sex between men differs between Leviticus on the one hand and Genesis and Judges on the other, these four texts have been and continue to be used to provide a theological rationale for a more visceral objection to the homoerotic. One thing, at least, that each text does share with each of the others is a gender structure in which it is somehow degrading for a man to be treated as a woman. This brings us to two points. First, there is the symbolic significance of sexual difference. One source of the adverse reactions felt against homosexuals and homosexuality is, in Fone’s words, the “fear and dislike of the sexual *difference* that homosexual individuals allegedly embody—

as much as anything else” (November 3, 2015; available online <http://www.jrdkirk.com/2015/11/03/homophobia-revisited/>). I agree with Kirk here, yet what he is describing is no longer a fear of homosexuals or their relationships. The objection to them would seem to be a displacement of a fear of something else entirely.

¹⁵ A recent opinion piece in *The Guardian* makes a similar claim: “There is, among many, a growing suspicion that the arguments used by Christians [against same-sex marriage] are simply a smokescreen to hide the real and underlying prejudice, which is homophobia: the primal fear of variations from the sexual norm” (Keith Mascord, “The Bible is the true prejudice in Christian opposition to marriage equality,” *The Guardian*, March 22, 2016; available online http://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2016/mar/22/the-bible-is-the-true-prejudice-in-christian-opposition-to-marriage-equality?CMP=oth_b-aplnews_d-2).

¹⁶ But cf. n. 12 above, where the works of Sedgwick and Halperin are noted. The difference between their works and that of Fone is the now well-known difference between social constructionist approaches to gender and sexuality, influenced principally by the works of Michel Foucault, and essentialist approaches. My own leaning is towards a broadly social constructionist position, whereby each society’s understanding of sex and performance of gender (cf. Butler 1990) reflects a complex process of construction and re-iteration, rather than a fixed and stable essence. Nonetheless, we need to use language flexibly enough to account for the commonalities as well as the differences between the various constructions of sexuality and performances of gender that are attested cross-culturally. Thus my own use of the term “homophobia” does not entail that there is a precise correspondence between, say, the attitudes of twenty-first century New Zealand and those of the Iron Age Levant, only that there is a family resemblance as well as significant differences between them, all of which need to be most carefully and judiciously discerned.

stereotypically, effeminacy in homosexual men, mannishness in homosexual women” (2000, 5). This leads to a second point, which is to do with stereotypes of gender disruption. Sex between two or more men is perceived to mark at least *one* of the men, symbolically, with the stigma of femininity. Homophobia may then be less a matter of the actual desires, practices, and relationships of those who are the object of the phobia, than a matter of what sex between men is presumed to signify about the status of the men in question. Male homosexuality,¹⁷ in this sense, would be a figment of the homophobic imagination, whereby the idea of male homoerotic desire and sex is imputed to the men who are degraded and presumed to signify femininity, loss of manhood, and dishonour.

These reflections in no way resolve the methodological problem of using the single, modern term “homophobia” to analyze what is going on in an ancient text, but I am going to retain the term, acknowledging its inadequacies, as a way of articulating genuinely interconnected issues pertinent to understanding Jdg. 19:22-30 that have received less than their due by scholars until now. In any case, the term is current in contemporary debate, and, given the ongoing use and effect of the biblical texts, one thing we need to learn is how to read biblical texts in conversation with contemporary responses to what is customarily termed homophobia.¹⁸ So while care needs to be taken not to mislead willfully through the use of an anachronistic and frequently emotive term, I am not aware of a better alternative, so whatever its shortcomings, I am going to stick with it.

The second term that needs to be clarified is *violence*. This term can be used to designate not only physical acts of violence, but the idea of such violent acts, as well as structures of thought that enforce hierarchies of domination and subjection. There has been a great deal of theoretical reflection on matters such as these, but for the sake of economy and clarity I am going to limit myself to a partial engagement with relevant works of Slavoj Žižek and Pierre Bourdieu.

J. Cheryl Exum touched on one aspect of the problem in her 1993 essay on Judges 19, where she distinguished between “real” violence against women and “violence against women as it takes place in biblical narrative” (Exum 1993, 170). For Exum, both biblical accounts of rape (in the case of the Levite’s *pîlegeš*) on the one hand, and rape that takes place by means of a biblical narrative (in the case of the reception of the narrative of David and Bathsheba) on the other, “perpetuate ways of looking at women that encourage objectification and violence” (170). The question is whether these forms of violence in connection with the biblical narrative are any less *real*. We have no trouble identifying the physical assault on the Levite’s *pîlegeš* as an act of violence. But what about the underlying cultural assumptions that imply that the way to avenge such an act of violence is to go to war against the tribe whose members were responsible for it?¹⁹ Or that make such an act of vengeance a

¹⁷ I am not dealing here with female homosexuality, which, even if it is the same sort of thing as male homosexuality (which is not obvious), is nowhere in view in the texts cited from Genesis, Leviticus, and Judges.

¹⁸ I am alluding intentionally here to Susanne Scholz’s aim in her book *Sacred Witness* to invite readers “to engage biblical literature and to learn how to read it in conversation with contemporary debates on rape” (2010, 2), recognizing the problem with applying the modern term “rape” to discrete ancient phenomena.

¹⁹ On war as the principal form of “game,” embodying the *libido dominandi*, to which men are socially assigned, see Bourdieu 2001, 74-5.

manly duty?²⁰ What about the underlying cultural assumptions that make it acceptable for that tribe to be repopulated by means of the abduction of women, or that imply that the assault on the Levite's *pīlegeš* was a lesser wrong than the rape of the Levite himself?

I am alluding here to the sort of blind spot to which Žižek refers in the introduction to his "sideways reflections" on violence.²¹

At the forefront of our minds, the obvious signals of violence are acts of crime and terror, civil unrest, international conflict. But we should learn to step back, to disentangle ourselves from the fascinating lure of this directly visible "subjective" violence, violence performed by a clearly identifiable agent. We need to perceive the contours of the background which generates such outbursts. (2008, 1)

The distinction Žižek makes here is between "subjective" violence and two kinds of "objective" violence that lie behind it and make it possible. The first of these two kinds of objective violence is the "symbolic" violence that is mediated and perpetuated by language itself. That is, the way habitual forms of speech reproduce relations of social domination, but also the way language imposes "a certain universe of meaning" (2008, 1). The second kind of objective violence is the "systemic" violence that is produced by the functioning of regnant economic and political systems. These forms of objective violence generally lurk unperceived in the normal state of things, in the *status quo*. In relation to this normal state of things, in which objective forms of violence lie hidden, subjective violence seems to be an abnormal irruption. Yet without the objective violence that the status quo conceals, subjective violence would not be possible (2; cf. pp. 8-10 *et passim*).

I am not so concerned with systemic violence here, nor with the specific examples of the effects of objective violence that Žižek discusses. I am, to be sure, sympathetic to his critique of the "false sense of urgency" that replaces patient attention to profound theoretical analysis of our situation with the self-righteous demand that something must be done *now* (2008, 6): that, indeed, is why I would rather pay careful and sustained critical attention to the way ancient scriptural texts function in ways that promote and sustain problematic attitudes to sex and gender, rather than offering a thoughtless and superficial condemnation. What I am really interested in here is the form of objective violence that Žižek calls "symbolic," and with the way that such symbolic violence is encoded, and frequently goes unnoticed,²² in the language of the book of Judges.

The basic idea of symbolic violence I am working with here owes a great deal to Bourdieu's work on symbolic power (*pouvoir symbolique*). Symbolic power "is, in

²⁰ I am referring not only to the manly duty of restoring the honour of (an) Israel(ite man), but to the way that "the capacity to fight and exercise violence" is itself a duty inherent in a certain socially determined construction of manliness (Bourdieu 2001, 49-53).

²¹ I also have in mind Bourdieu's objection to the way his notion of symbolic violence has sometimes been misunderstood as disconnected from its real effects. In this case, "symbolic" must not be misunderstood as the opposite of "real," but rather as the condition that makes visible, i.e. "real," acts of violence possible (cf. Bourdieu 2001, 34).

²² Symbolic violence does not operate at the level of conscious intentions in any case. Consequently, what was originally unintentional continues to pass without notice, but exerts its power nonetheless. Cf. Bourdieu (2001, 59, 95).

effect, the invisible power that can only be exercised with the complicity of those who do not want to know that they are subjected to it, or even that they are exercising it” (1977, 405).²³ It operates through symbolic systems—such as art, religion, science, myth, and language—which structure the thought of individuals and societies by shaping the way the world of objects is perceived. Social norms and conceptions of morality are founded on a given society sharing a common symbolic system, which serves to reproduce and naturalize the social order. Such symbolic systems can then serve as instruments of ideological domination.²⁴

Bourdieu’s late work *Masculine Domination*, in particular, has much to contribute to our understanding of the gendered symbolic violence lurking between the lines of the book of Judges. In the case of Judges 19-21—this can, of course, be applied mutatis mutandis to other parts of the book—this is because each threat and act of violence assumes an implicit underlying symbolic system that is geared towards the naturalization and reproduction of the social power of men. This social power is exerted both over women, as signifiers of the social status of the men with whom they are connected, and other men, whose subjection can be figured as feminization. This work draws on the ethnological insights of Bourdieu’s fieldwork among the Kabyle in Algeria in the early 1960s to understand the deep structures of masculine domination hidden between the lines of his own society (2001, 5). The relevance of this for the present article is that similar anthropological fieldwork in comparable Mediterranean societies has been used to understand how gender is constructed in Judges 19-21 (see esp. Stone 1995; Carden 1999). It is also relevant because we need a way of understanding how such gendered symbolic domination continues to operate between the lines of contemporary communities for which such texts remain Scripture.

The third problematic term whose use needs to be clarified is *rape*. Following Eve Levavi Feinstein and Sara Milstein, I take “rape” very broadly to denote non-consensual sex (Milstein 2015, 18-19, on 1 Sam 2:22), and “a sexual act perpetrated against the victim’s will” (Feinstein 2014, 69). The Hebrew Bible does not have a single word that corresponds to the English verb and noun “rape.” This raises a number of issues (Scholz 2010, 24-5). First, are we justified in taking a verb like *‘innâ* to mean “rape,” given that this Hebrew word is used outside situations of sexual assault including contexts that may refer to consensual sex, and that some passages for which we might invoke the English word “rape” do not use the verb *‘innâ* at all?²⁵ Second, can we limit the use of the English word “rape” to occasions where a single Hebrew verb, such as *‘innâ*, is used? Third, there is the matter of the cultural distance

²³ The original reads: “le pouvoir symbolique est en effet ce pouvoir invisible qui ne peut s’exercer qu’avec la complicité de ceux qui ne veulent pas savoir qu’ils le subissent ou même qu’ils exercent” (Bourdieu 1977, 405). Cf. p. 410: “le pouvoir symbolique ne réside pas dans les «systèmes symboliques» sous la forme d’une «illocutionary force» mais qu’il se définit dans et par une relation déterminée entre ceux qui exercent le pouvoir et ceux qui le subissent, c’est-à-dire dans le structure même du champ où se produit et se reproduit la *croyance*” [italics original]. See further Bourdieu’s discussion of symbolic violence in his *Masculine Domination* (2001, 33-42), originally published in France in 1998.

²⁴ This rather bald précis, based on Bourdieu 1977 (see esp. the table on p. 406), does scant justice to the theoretical richness of Bourdieu’s work.

²⁵ See Feinstein, 2014, 2, 67-75, 77-81 (on *‘innâ* in Gen 34:2, in the context of other biblical uses), and pp. 70, 71, 74 (specifically in reference to Judges 19), with discussion of the pertinent scholarly literature.

between modern rape cultures and the world of the biblical narratives. This is particularly problematic given that rape may not have been a culturally significant category in ancient Israel at all (Feinstein 2014, 81), particularly if the key issue, as in the deuteronomic “rape” laws (Deut. 22:23-9), is not the sexual integrity of the injured woman but a matter of “the economic and social losses of men” (Yamada 2008, 24). There is a further, more general, problem to do with the term “rape.” Even in modern English usage the term is used, or not used, inconsistently to refer both literally and metaphorically to a range of acts. The consequences of this inconsistency are that it is not always clear what the term precisely denotes, and its actual usage (or non-usage, for that matter) may tell us as much about the assumptions of the speaker or writer in question as about the term itself.

This complex of difficulties is well illustrated by the difficulty many have felt in describing their experience of (what others would term) male rape or acquaintance rape precisely *as rape*.²⁶ It is also illustrated, in the ivory tower of the scholarly guild, by the way certain acts are described. For example, a number of scholars now routinely use the language of rape to describe the abductions in Jdg. 21:1-14 and 21:15-24, neither of which uses the verb *‘innâ* (e.g. Ackerman 1998, 275; Schneider 2000, xv, 282; Edenburg 2016, 2).²⁷ Sometimes the language of rape is used against the background of the rape of women in the context of war (Scholz 2010, 150-5). Yet the very same act has been described by others in decidedly less emotive terms as “a most obscure abduction of desirable maidens” (Boling 1975, 294),²⁸ an “action to procure women” (*Frauenbeschaffungsaktion*) (Becker 1990, 257, 287, 296)²⁹ leading to “the restoration of Benjamin” (*die Wiederherstellung Benjamins*) (287), or (referring to both narratives) “efforts by the Israelites to procure wives for the remaining Benjaminites” (Milstein 2015, 2).

As with homophobia, if we are going to interpret the biblical narratives at all today, we need to use language in a manner that is supple enough to make sense of such family resemblances as exist between the two contexts, but we need to do this carefully enough that we do not elide their manifest differences. I would further argue that to modify the language of rape would entail the added risk of colluding in an approach to the texts that has obscured sexual violence from view altogether. In this regard, the terms homophobia and rape raise a single difficulty – that their avoidance may collude in the perpetuation of morally problematic appropriations of the texts. These appropriations may, on the one hand, obscure the homophobic content and use of the texts, and, on the other hand, conceal their sexually violent

²⁶ Acquaintance rape has very often not been named as such because of the myth that rape is committed by strangers (see Scholz 2010, 27-51).

²⁷ Jdg. 21:21 *does* use the rare verb *hṭp*, “seize” (cf. Ps. 10:9 and perhaps the verb *hṭp* in Job 9:12; Sir 15:14), which the Vulgate renders using the verb *rapere* (*rapite eas singuli uxores singulas*), perhaps under the influence of the kind of language customary for referring to the abduction of virgins (*virgines*) in Latin literature, as we find, for example, in the works of Sallust (*Bellum catalinae* 51.9), Livy (*Ab urbe condita* 1.9.10, 11, 12, 14; 1.10.1; 1.11.2, 4; 1.12.8), and Virgil (*Aeneid* 8.635).

²⁸ Note Scholz’s brief critique (2010, 152-3).

²⁹ Becker’s (1990, 290) description of Jdg. 21:14b-23 as “the abduction of women of Shiloh” (*der Frauenraub von Schilo*) is perhaps less bland, and evokes the usual German term for the rape of the Sabine women (*der Raub der Sabinerinnen*). The “rape” of the Sabine women presumably lies in the background of Moore’s title “the rape of the Shilonites” (1908, 448), given that he explicitly compares the two (1908, 451; cf. Ackerman 1998, 267). The English word “rape” in this sense derives from the Latin *rapere*, “seize” (cf. e.g. Jdg. 21:21; Ps. 10:9; 1 Thess 4:17 [Vulg.]).

content in a way that separates them from the modern realities of sexual violence. For this reason, I will continue to use this language, but with an awareness of its limitations.

Having gone on a lengthy detour through a forest—or perhaps a modest copse—of terminological difficulties, it may be worth revisiting my argument so that the wood is not missed for looking at the trees. My argument is as follows. The gendered subjective violence that appears four times in Judges 19-21 (for the delimitation see below) is only possible because, in the world assumed by the composite narrative,³⁰ there existed forms of symbolic violence that subjugated women and men alike in a phallogentric system of domination. We are accustomed to treating the threat of male rape and the physical rape of women in the narrative as discrete phenomena. This makes it possible for the former to be understood by scholars as reflecting ancient Israel's distaste, even a healthy distaste, for male same-sex eroticism, and for the latter to be understood as reflecting a reprehensible subjugation of women. The profound links between these events, however, are elided and thus not properly understood. Tokunboh Adeyemo, for example, describes Jdg.21:15-24 as a "sordid story," in which women are "treated as objects to be manipulated by men, with no voice in what happens to them" (2006, 318). By contrast, Jdg. 19:22-23 is an example of homosexuality, common among the Canaanites, which Leviticus regards as "detestable" (315). Moreover, by virtue of the way Judges has been treated as Scripture, the text and some of its commentators have secondarily become agents of the ideological violence of religious misogyny and homophobia. This process of scripturalization has helped to effect what Bourdieu calls a "labour of eternalization" (2001, viii). That is, the process of treating such texts as Scripture makes the subjugation of women and male homosexuals appear natural. Where these two forms of subjugation have become conceptually separated, that is, where the putative biblical subjugation of women is rejected but the putative biblical condemnation of homoeroticism is not, scripturalization has made the subjugation of homosexuals alone appear natural. Scripturalization, which involves both the process of treating certain works as normative and theologically authoritative (i.e., Scripture as *norma normans*) and also the process of keeping it that way (e.g. through commentary; cf. Cantwell Smith 1993, 18), is one of the "historical forces of dehistoricization" (Bourdieu 2001, viii, 82-8) that, though entirely subject to the arbitrary vicissitudes of history, makes it seem as though certain forms of symbolic domination are eternal.

Homophobia in Gibeah and the Guild

We turn now to the ways in which homophobia, as provisionally defined above, lurks between the lines of scholarly writing on Judges 19. The narrative of the rape of the Levite's *pîlegeš* is commonly discussed in relation to homosexuality. The

³⁰ Herein resides a key methodological problem. The literary heritage of Israel, due to its tradition-historical complexity, undoubtedly preserves relics of the symbolic system(s) that governed ancient Israelite and Judahite society at different stages in its (their) development. We could compare this to Bourdieu's resistance to analyzing masculine domination in the allusions to myths in the entire corpus of ancient Greek literature (2001, 6), though Bourdieu's concern is with the problems inherent in analyzing such a vast corpus of material. I am seeking to make very modest claims about a single, short, composite narrative, not the heritage of Israel as a whole.

textual warrant for this is to be found in Jdg. 19:22-23. It is based on both the request of the men of Gibeah that the Levite be brought out to them so that they might “know” him, and the host’s consequent assumption that they desire more than merely to make a stranger’s acquaintance. The link between Jdg. 19:22-30 and homosexuality in the work of scholars such as Donald Wold and Robert Gagnon is connected with contemporary ecclesiastical debates about the morality of same-sex relationships, but already in 1817, Jeremy Bentham referred to Judges 19 in an unpublished manuscript, where he described ancient Israel as “a country which could give birth to such [an occasion]³¹ a scene as that which originated in the beauty of the young Levite.” Bentham’s intent differs markedly from that of Wold and Gagnon. He was concerned with relaxing legal prohibitions against sex between men, and used Judges 19 as an illustration, alongside David and Jonathan, of the presence of same-sex desire in ancient Israel. He apparently assumed that the men of Gibeah were sexually attracted to the Levite,³² a notion that has somewhat fallen out of favour, partly due to the recent calcification of the distinction between sexual acts versus sexual orientation and desire, and partly because scholars increasingly see Jdg. 19:22-30 as about rape, not homosexuality (see further below). That is, the men of Gibeah intended to humiliate the Levite, not satisfy their sexual desire.

One reason Jdg. 19:22-30 is discussed in connection with homosexuality is because this narrative strongly echoes the better known story of Sodom (Gen. 19:1-11), whose reception history has decisively shaped attitudes to at least male same-sex eroticism, giving the name to “sodomy” (Latin *sodomia*). The connection between the two narratives goes back at least to Pseudo-Philo (*Liber antiquitatum biblicarum* 45:2; Nissinen 1998, 50; Edenburg 2016, 161 n. 1),³³ but while the similarities between the two narratives are obvious, it has proved more difficult to establish whether there was a direct literary relationship between them. It is not clear whether the two narratives are independent of each other, or whether one narrative is dependent on the other, and, if so, in which direction the influence lies. The weight of current scholarly opinion favours the dependence of Judges 19 on Genesis 19.³⁴ Supportive of this view is the likelihood that the motif of male rape has been

³¹ The words in square brackets are superscript in Bentham’s manuscript, dated December 21, 1817 (fol. 458). I am indebted to Philip Schofield for sharing with me part of his transcript of this manuscript, which is rather difficult to decipher, and to the staff of the Bentham Archive at University College, London, for facilitating access to the manuscript itself. See further Crompton 1985, 275-6; Harding 2013, 303, 377 nn. 102 and 103.

³² Cf. Moore 1908, 417, for whom the men of Gibeah demanded the Levite in order “to gratify their unnatural lust,” comparing not only Gen. 19:9 but Rom. 1:24-7. Josephus is noteworthy here, for in his retelling of the story the men of Gibeah demand that the Ephraimite hand the Levite’s wife over when they have admired her attractiveness (*tēn euprepeian theasamenoi*) (*Judaean Antiquities* 5.2.8 §143).

³³ Edenburg also suggests that Josephus linked the two narratives, based on the apparent use of a detail from Gen. 19:9 in *Judaean Antiquities* 5.2.8 §144.

³⁴ A strong case for dependence of Judges 19 upon Genesis 19 was put by Lasine (1984; see also Yamada 2008, 67-100; Amit 2010, 387; Milstein 2015, 16-17; Edenburg 2016, 174-95). Niditch is suspicious of the idea that a direct relationship can be traced between them (1982, 375-6), though she, unusually, regards Judges 19-20 as probably the earlier of the two (1982, 376-7). Robert Gagnon is also largely agnostic on the question of the direction of literary dependence (2001, 91-2 n. 125, but see below), as is Stone (1995, 87-8; 1996, 70), who asks whether the question of literary dependence is necessarily germane to the interpretation of the two texts, which may instead be independent examples of “type scenes” (following Alter 1981, 47-62) typical of an oral/aural culture, or of a fluid

borrowed from Genesis 19. This motif is central to the Sodom narrative, but is not central to the narrative of the outrage at Gibeah, where the rape and murder of the *pīleḡeš* is instead the axis around which the narrative turns (Edenburg 2016, 177-8).³⁵ The purpose of grafting this motif onto the story of the outrage at Gibeah may have been to create an analogy between the two events (184),³⁶ the story of Sodom presumably already being paradigmatic of moral bankruptcy.

One important effect of treating Jdg. 19:22-30 in connection with Gen. 19:1-11 is to remove it from its broader literary context in Judges 17-21, and thus from its narrative connection with Jdg. 21:1-14 and 21:15-24. This drives a literary wedge between “attempted homosexual rape” (Wold 2009, 78; cf. Gagnon 2001, 91 n. 125, 94, 95)³⁷ on the one hand, and “the traffic in women” (Niditch 2008, 205)³⁸ on the other. This obscures further the conceptual commonalities between them. Thus, in a work that advances an unequivocal case for the biblical condemnation of same-sex eroticism, Donald Wold treats Jdg. 19:22-30 in the context of a discussion about whether Sodom’s destruction in Gen 19:1-29 is due to inhospitality or homosexuality (2009, 80; cf. pp. 210-11).³⁹ The key concern is whether the use of the verb *yd’*, “know” in Jdg. 19:22 can disambiguate the use of the same verb in Gen 19:5, specifically, whether it refers to sexual intercourse.⁴⁰ According to Wold this is unambiguously the case in Gen 19:5 and Jdg. 19:22 (2009, 85; cf. Stone 1995, 91-92; 1996, 74-75; Edenburg 2016, 177 n. 55). While I agree that the sexual connotation of *yd’* is present in both cases, I wonder whether in Gen 19:5 and Jdg. 19:22 *yd’* might actually be ambiguous (“get to know” versus “have sex with”),⁴¹ with both Lot and the Levite’s host assuming the less charitable option (Gen. 19:7-8; Jdg. 19:23-24), thereby divining the real motives of the men, or provoking them to genuine anger at the sojourner’s presumption. In any case, Wold separates Jdg.

form of intertextuality, whereby texts echo one another without a traceable relationship of dependence between them.

³⁵ Josephus, notably, has the men of Gibeah demanding the surrender of the “woman guest” (*xenē*) to them (*Judaean Antiquities* 5.2.8 §143), not the Levite himself.

³⁶ Edenburg’s broader case is that this belongs to a polemic against Gibeah and Benjamin that shaped the primary narrative of Judges 19-21 (her N¹, supplemented by a redactor, R²), datable to the early post-exilic period. If Jdg. 21:15-24 (or part thereof) is the latest layer of a book that acquired its present form(s) in the Persian, or even the Hellenistic periods (cf. e.g. Niditch 2008, 11-13), that might well help to explain the similarities between this pericope and comparable Greek and Roman traditions (on which see further below).

³⁷ I cite Wold here in anticipation of my discussion of Carden’s (1999) response to Stone (1995), below. In rejecting the inhospitality interpretation, Wold makes no moral distinction between threatened male rape and any other, less egregiously violent forms of sex between men (cf. Wold 2009, 89). He cannot, both because the key issue, for him, is that the Bible presents homosexual sex as a contravention of the divine order and thus *ipso facto* to be condemned (2009, 22-3).

³⁸ Niditch is apparently alluding, directly or indirectly, to an important and influential essay by Gayle Rubin (1976).

³⁹ Wold is responding to John Boswell’s defence of the inhospitality interpretation of Genesis 19 and Judges 19, where Boswell defends the view that *yd’* meant simply “to know (who they were)” (Boswell 1980, 92-9; Judges 19 plays only a bit part in his exegesis of Genesis 19). Boswell is influenced by the older works of Derrick Sherwin Bailey (1955) and John J. McNeill ([1976] 1993).

⁴⁰ As it apparently does in Gen. 4:1, 17, 25; 19:8; 38:26; Jdg. 11:39; 19:25; 1 Sam. 1:19; 1 Kgs 1:4. This usage is not, of course, unique to Hebrew. In Akkadian, for example, see the entry for *idû* (*edû*) in CAD I-J 28b.

⁴¹ As suggested by McNeill (1993, 47) for *yd’* in Gen 19:5, in his critique of Bailey (1955).

19:22-30 from its immediate literary context so that it serves a broader biblical case against homosexuality.

Wold then draws on Jdg. 21:1-14 to explain another text to do with sex between men. Because the phrase *lō' yāqē'ā 'iš l^emiškāb zākār* in Jdg. 21:12 unambiguously refers to the fact that the young women have never had sex with a man (cf. Jdg. 21:11), the prohibition of a man lying with another man *mišk^ebē 'iššā* in Lev. 18:22 (cf. 20:13) must be referring to all forms of sex between males (2009, 104-107; cf. pp. 101-120 *passim*).⁴² By treating Jdg. 19:22-30 and 21:1-14 separately in connection with two different texts concerned with same-sex eroticism in the Hebrew Bible (Gen. 19:1-11; Lev. 18:22; 20:13), any connection between them within the narrative context of Judges 17-21 disappears.

Robert Gagnon, likewise, treats Jdg. 19:22-5 in relation to Gen. 19:4-11, cautiously raising the possibility that Jdg. 19:22-5 might be the oldest extant interpretation of the Sodom narrative (2001, 92, n. 125). According to Gagnon, Jdg. 19:22-5, like Gen. 19:4-11, depends on the instinctive repugnance felt by characters and narrator alike at the notion of sex between men (95).⁴³ The motif of male rape may have been added secondarily to an older narrative that did not originally include it (97 n. 137), in order to intensify the negative characterisation of the Benjaminites of Gibeah (95 n. 134).⁴⁴ Gagnon may well be correct that the motif of threatened male rape was intended to intensify the moral turpitude of the Benjaminites of Gibeah, reflecting a revulsion at sex between men on the part of the author (or redactor) and his implied readers. That, however, begs a significant question concerning how we should respond to the values reflected in the narrative: for it is noteworthy that Gagnon uses the supposed repugnance of the narrator as part of a massive biblical case against homosexuality, rather than critiquing the homophobia of both the narrative and the society the narrative assumes.

Gagnon differs from Wold in following his exegesis of Jdg. 19:22-5 with an excursus on the treatment of women in Judges 19-21. Gagnon touches on the abduction of the virgins of Shiloh (Jdg. 21:15-24), highlighting the absence of the consent of the young women to their forced abduction as evidence for the deplorable treatment of women in the corrupt society at the end of the period of the judges (2001, 99). Gagnon sees Judges 19-21 as a coherent unit, albeit with a complex tradition history, but he regards the threat to rape the Levite and the horrendous treatment of all the women in the narrative as entirely separate phenomena. The threat to rape the Levite reflects, for Gagnon, a healthy repugnance against sex between men per se, rather than male rape as a violent, non-consensual example of

⁴² Wold may be correct about the overall import of the command in Lev. 18:22 and 20:13, but his argument is inadequate as a response to Bailey's claim that Lev. 18:22 is ambiguous, clearly prohibiting anal sex between men but not necessarily all sexual contact between men. Presumably, Jdg. 21:11-12 only alludes to the removal of a girl's virginal status through vaginal penetration. If so, then it is difficult to see how the phrase *mišk^ebē 'iššā* in Lev. 18:22 and 20:13, taken by itself, can be extended beyond a simple reference to penile intromission.

⁴³ Thus Gagnon (2001, 95): "how is it possible to reasonably argue that homosexual intercourse per se did not add to the dimension of horror for the old man, for the Levite, and for the narrator of the story? Repugnance for male penetration of males must have been a significant factor in twice designating the demand for sexual intercourse with the Levite as a *nēbālā* much greater than that involving intercourse with the old man's daughter and the Levite's concubine. It was an act that underscored the perversion of the Israelite men of Gibeah."

⁴⁴ This view has since been strongly defended by Edenburg (n. 34 above).

it. The Levite, after all, was hardly going to consent to being mounted by the men of Gibeah, any more than the virgins of Shiloh would have consented to their abduction and sexual (ab)use by the remaining men of Benjamin.

This conceptual separation of Jdg. 19:22-5 from 21:15-24 is highlighted by Gagnon's partial rejection of Ken Stone's case that the horror residing in the men of Gibeah's demand to have sex with the Levite was due to the shame of a man being treated as if he were a woman. For Gagnon, this over-emphasizes the misogynistic dimension of the threatened act, focusing too much on the implied gender hierarchy (2001, 96 n. 135). But is this a fair objection? Stone's engagement with Judges 19 belongs to his broader analysis of the interconnection between gender, honour, and power in the narratives of the Deuteronomistic History (1995; 1996).⁴⁵ His exegetical concern is with the role of the sexual act—in this case the sexual assault on the Levite's *pīlegeš*⁴⁶—in the plot, and with the underlying “cultural assumptions about sexual activity and its symbolic significance” (Stone 1996, 68). Stone places Judges 19 in the wider narrative context of Judges 17-21, noting the war against Benjamin (69-70), and by extension the abduction of the virgins of Jabesh-Gilead and Shiloh (83), as consequences of the sexual assault. He strongly highlights the way in which, in the cultural matrix out of which Judges 19 emerged, a married man's honour was to a significant degree contingent upon the actions taken by, or towards, the woman or women whose sexuality was under his control (73; also 1995, 95).⁴⁷ For the *pīlegeš* to leave his house, for whatever reason,⁴⁸ would call the Levite's honour into question, as, much more strongly, would her rape by the men of Gibeah (Stone 1996, 81-2). The rape of *his* woman is the means by which *his* honour is desecrated by the men (84; also 1995, 100-1). Into the same category falls the “threat of homosexual rape” (Stone 1996, 73; cf. p. 75),⁴⁹ in which the Levite is threatened with symbolic emasculation by a combination of the men's demand for sexual access to his body, and his enforced subjection to them. Importantly, and in contrast to Gagnon, the implied revulsion against sex between men is not about

⁴⁵ In his 1996 monograph, Stone treats Judges 19 alongside 2 Sam. 3:6-11; 11-12; 13; 16:20-3; 1 Kings 2.

⁴⁶ Following Exum (1993, 177 n. 13), Stone rejects Bal's view that *pīlegeš* refers not to a concubine but to a married woman in a patrilocal marriage, on the grounds that this could not account for the use of this noun to refer to the women belonging to David in 2 Sam. 16:20-22 (1995, 90 n. 5; 1996, 71). Why, though, could this noun not have denoted different female social roles at different times in its history of usage?

⁴⁷ Cf. his survey of pertinent anthropological literature (1996, 27-49), which accounts for the major methodological difficulties in adapting the insights of cultural anthropology to the task of reconstructing the cultural assumptions of the authors and earliest readers of the biblical texts.

⁴⁸ The fact of the *pīlegeš* abandoning the Levite's house could in itself cast doubt on his performance as a man in terms of the gender role expectations of the society implied by the text (assuming virilocal, not patrilocal marriage). This would *a fortiori* be the case if her abandonment entailed sexual infidelity. Compare Anton Blok's study of the cultural matrix of the derision in which cuckolded husbands are held in certain Mediterranean societies (1981, 431, 434). On the idiom *znh 'al* in Judg 19:2 (MT), see nn. 79-80 below.

⁴⁹ This is an extreme example of an “agonistic vision of male sexuality,” in which every assertion of virility (not just the threat of anal rape) implies “the indirect challenge to the masculinity of other men” (Bourdieu 2001, 19).

distaste for male same-sex eroticism per se, but with the gender hierarchy implied by the rigid differentiation between male and female gender roles (75-9, 83-4).⁵⁰

Stone's case is not helped by his use of "homosexuality" as an umbrella term to incorporate even male rape,⁵¹ but it is subject, on different grounds, to a rather misleading critique on the part of Gagnon. Gagnon takes insufficient account of the nuances in Stone's discussion of the way repugnance against same-sex eroticism is implicated in deeper cultural assumptions about gender and power, especially when we are dealing with the symbolic significance of male rape. Gagnon responds, "All men, at one time or other in their lives, exist in subordinate relationships to other classes of men. The mere fact of being put in a position of social submission to others does not constitute an inherent form of demasculinization" (2001, 96 n. 135).⁵² In relation to Stone's argument, this is seriously misleading. Stone's claim is not that the *mere fact* of being put in a position of social submission constitutes demasculinization. Rather, the *threat of male rape* and the *rape of the man's woman* constitute the Levite's demasculinization. Further, by connecting the threat of male rape with revulsion against same-sex eroticism per se rather than against enforced sexual submission as a means of desecrating a man's honour, Gagnon both disconnects the threat of male rape from the cultural matrix that gave it meaning, and exonerates disgust at same-sex eroticism as if male rape were a paradigmatic example of it.

Yet Stone's own argument is not as strong as it could be. His attachment to the language of "homosexual" and "homosexuality" risks obscuring any moral distinction between different kinds of same-sex eroticism.⁵³ Moreover, his study of the use of women in transactions between men does not extend to Jdg. 21:1-14, 21:15-24. These two pericopae, especially the second, illustrate underlying cultural assumptions about the way the protection of female chastity reflects the honour of men (cf. Stone 1996, 41-6), which is another facet of male honour that is besmirched by the threat to rape the Levite. These pericopae also clearly illustrate what Gayle Rubin has called the "traffic" in women (1976; cited in Stone 1996, 46-8), the

⁵⁰ Stone finds the same nexus of gender and power in Lev. 18:22 and 20:13, by virtue of the contrast of sex between men and sex between women implied by the phrase *mišk'be 'iššā* (1995, 98; 1996, 77-8).

⁵¹ Stone (1995, 92; 1996, 75). Male rape is taken to be a "particular form" of "homosexual contact." In Stone's defence, he is not making a claim about homosexuality at all times and in all places, but about the symbolic significance of male rape within the original cultural matrix of Jdg. 19:22-30. In that context, perhaps no phenomenological or moral distinction between different forms of same-sex eroticism would have been thinkable (on what may have been "thinkable" in the world assumed by the biblical texts, see Bal 1988a, 33; Stone 1996, 35).

⁵² Gagnon's reference to Deborah's leadership in Judges 4-5 (loc. cit.) as an example of an acceptable form of female headship over men that reverses the cultural norm in Judges is entirely irrelevant to the threat of enforced sexual submission to which Jdg. 19:22-3 refers.

⁵³ Compare the way Bishop John M. D'Arcy questioned the wisdom of assigning the now notorious child-abusing priest John Geoghan to a new parish in Boston in a letter to Cardinal Bernard Law dated December 7, 1984, citing his "history of *homosexual involvement* with young boys" (cited by Michael Rezendes in his article "Church allowed abuse by priest for years," *Boston Globe*, January 6, 2002; available online <http://www.bostonglobe.com/news/special-reports/2002/01/06/church-allowed-abuse-priest-for-years/cSHfGkTlrAT25qKGvBuDNM/story.html>; italics mine). To write "homosexual involvement with" rather than, say, "abuse of" or "rape of" young boys seems to place the gravity of the problem in entirely the wrong place.

commodification of women for the sake of economic and political relationships between men.

Stone's studies of Judges 19 share with the works of Wold and Gagnon (*inter alios*) the language of "homosexual rape." For Stone, this describes a threat of violent emasculation, whereas for Gagnon, it illustrates an ancient disgust at the idea of male same-sex eroticism. Wold allows that we may be dealing with the threat of enforced emasculation, but this does not mitigate his broader moral conclusions about the text.⁵⁴ In each case, the language used helps to foster the assumption that male rape is exemplary of homosexuality per se.

In his 1999 response to Stone, Michael Carden drew attention to the way scholars have used the adjective "homosexual" to describe what the men of Gibeah threaten upon the visiting Levite. A key concern, for Carden, is with how the use of such language serves "to maintain Christian homophobic discourse" (83). By defining the threatened rape as "homosexual" rather than "male" rape, the accent is shifted to the supposed sexual desires of the intending perpetrators,⁵⁵ rather than the symbolic valence of the physical bodies of perpetrators and victim within their particular cultural context. In addition, it implies that all possibilities for same-sex eroticism can be gathered under the same umbrella, and that no moral distinction can or need be made between them. Carden responds by foregrounding homosexuality as an issue in the modern reader's experience, rather than as an issue to be problematized and explained in the biblical narrative (85). He argues that the key issue is not homosexuality, but *homophobia*: "patriarchal compulsory heterosexuality associated with misogyny, phallocentrism and homosexual panic leading to sexual violence, is the point that needs to be addressed in both stories [viz. of Sodom and Gibeah] ... inhospitality is signified by male rape as an act of homophobic violence" (85).⁵⁶ Modern Western constructions of homosexuality, which are largely based on the idea of sexual orientation, can act as a distorting lens through which to view narratives about sex in an ancient Levantine culture. By contrast, as has been argued to be the case in other Mediterranean societies, in the Israel of Judges 19-21, sexuality is phallocentrically constructed, that is, in terms of the sexually mediated power of men, both over women and over other men. A penetrated man is thus marked with the stigma of having been treated as if he were a woman. The fact that the narratives of both Sodom and Gibeah are concerned with community boundaries—the angels are guests of Lot, who is a sojourner in Sodom, and the Levite is lodging at the house of an Ephraimite, who is a sojourner

⁵⁴ In relation to Genesis 19, and by implication Judges 19, Wold remarks, "The men of Sodom appeal to Lot to release the strangers for the purpose of *homosexual relations—if not rape*. It is possible that they do this for sociological reasons as a demonstration of their dominance and power over strangers, *but there is no mention of this in the biblical account*. According to this view, by raping the men they would effectively turn them into 'women' who were powerless in that society" (2009, 89, italics mine). Arguably the reason there is no explicit mention of this in the biblical account is because it was simply a matter of assumed cultural knowledge (cf. Stone 1996, 31-3).

⁵⁵ Gagnon does not exclude the possibility of sexual desire, on the grounds that "Homosexual rape would appear to require some degree of sexual stimulation, if for no other reason than sexual stimulation is usually required for erection, and erection for penetration" (2001, 97; in stark contrast, see Bal 1988b, 20; Exum 1993, 182). He does note (*loc. cit.*), however, that the biblical text makes no explicit mention of the motivation of the men of Gibeah. This, again, would seem to be a matter of the cultural knowledge assumed in the telling and writing of the narrative (see n. 54 above).

⁵⁶ Compare the slightly different argument of Bal (1988b, 20).

in Gibeah of Benjamin—is also most significant; for, in both cases, it is a male outsider who is threatened with the stigma of having been penetrated,⁵⁷ raising the spectre of xenophobia.

Carden's response to Stone highlights how the symbolic violence of homophobia has shaped contemporary homophobic discourse not only at the level of deliberate attempts to construct a biblical case against homosexuality (thus Wold and Gagnon), but also unconsciously between the lines of scholarly exegesis of the gendering of power in narratives such as Gen. 19:1-11 and Jdg. 19:22-30 (thus Stone). It is in the insidious way that language bears unintended connotations and provokes unforeseen effects that symbolic violence persists.⁵⁸

Misleading assumptions accompany the use of the language of "homosexuality" to analyse Jdg. 19:22-30, concerning the nature of same-sex eroticism, and concerning rape. If it is the case that among the rape myths prevalent in modern, Western societies are notions such as that "only men sexually assault women" and that "women are the only victims" (Ayala, Kotary, and Hertz 2015, 2),⁵⁹ then it is not difficult to see how, while the Levite's *pīlegeš* is generally accepted to have been a victim of rape, the threat to the Levite himself is understood to illustrate attitudes to homosexuality, rather than to rape. Because *men* are threatening to assault another man sexually, this event is ipso facto an instance of homosexuality, not rape. For rape is assumed to be an act of a man against a woman, with a woman the only conceivable victim. When such myths and assumptions are allowed to pass without critique, biblical exegesis can become a vehicle not only for reiterating homophobia but for perpetuating rape myths,⁶⁰ and

⁵⁷ Thus Carden (1999, 90): "There would appear ... to be a Mediterranean tradition of associating receptive anal intercourse with male foreigners." Carden is drawing here on both modern accounts of male-male sex in the Middle East, and ancient Greek evidence, both of the acceptability of passive anal intercourse for slaves, who were customarily foreigners, and representations of male rape as signifying military victory over a foreign enemy (following Dover 1989, 104-5).

⁵⁸ The key words here are *unintended* and *unforeseen*, for Stone is hardly trying to reinforce homophobic attitudes in his exegesis—quite the reverse. I wonder, then, whether Yamada is being entirely fair in his criticism of Carden when he writes that "Carden mistakenly assumes that Stone's textual analysis is informed by a concealed ideological readerly bias—a bias that Stone is consciously trying to make clear through his methodology" (Yamada 2008, 85 n. 31). For the issue is the ideological freight still carried by loaded terms *in spite of* the intentions, and perhaps even the method, of the author.

⁵⁹ Ayala et al. comment that "Due to rape myths, there is a strong stigma surrounding men who are sexually assaulted. Men who disclose information about being sexually assaulted may be labeled *weak* or *homosexual* if sexually assaulted by a male, and if assaulted by a female, men are likely to receive criticism from peers for not wanting to give consent, not wanting to participate in sexual activities in the first place, or not being able to defend themselves" (2015, 6; cf. pp. 18-19; on the inherent limitations of an investigation restricted to data drawn from female undergraduates studying Psychology and Women's Studies at an all-women's Liberal Arts college, see pp. 15-16). On the link between male rape myth acceptance and negative attitudes towards homosexual men, see Davies, Gilston, and Rogers (2012; see p. 2820 on the methodological limitations of this study). Davies et al. develop their study and analysis against the background of research done since Struckman-Johnson and Struckman-Johnson 1992 (see the overview of research in Davies, Gilston, and Rogers 2012, 2810-12).

⁶⁰ Susanne Scholz's work has helped to challenge the way male rape has been both misunderstood and overlooked in the reception of the Hebrew Bible, not so much through her exegesis of Jdg. 19:22-30, but through her provocative suggestion that the story of Ehud, and that of Samson and Delilah, in the latter case partly through the ambiguity of the verb *'innâ*, may contain hints at the possibility of male rape (Jdg. 3:12-30; 16:4-22; Scholz 2010, 3-4, 160-4, 173-5).

indirectly for fostering rape myth acceptance. It then becomes incumbent upon the ethically engaged biblical scholar to analyze and challenge the ways in which biblical texts contribute to the perpetuation of these two sets of myths: homophobic myths about the nature of same-sex eroticism, and androcentric myths about rape.

There are still problems with Carden's essay. Most obviously, there are problems with using the term "homophobia" in connection with this ancient text, but these do not have quite the same moral consequences as inaccurate and anachronistic use of the language of homosexuality, which misaligns all forms of same-sex desire and practice with male rape. Such (mis)use of language colludes in the perpetuation of Christian homophobic discourse in religious contexts in which the biblical texts are held to be authoritative Scripture. One problem with Carden's use of the language of homophobia, though, is that to focus on male homophobia in connection with Jdg. 19:22-30 outside the context of Judges 19-21 as a whole risks reinscribing male interests into scholarly discourse on the narrative. This might have the effect of excluding the subjective violence perpetrated against the Levite's *pīlegeš*, but it could also exclude both the subjective violence perpetrated against the virgins of Jabesh-Gilead and Shiloh, and the objective (symbolic) violence that makes all these instances of subjective violence possible in the first place.

This echoes some of Cheryl Exum's criticisms of scholarship on Judges 19 that focuses on how the threat of sexual assault against the Levite violates cultural norms of hospitality. For Exum, the appeal to conventions of hospitality displaces what is most disturbing about this story, namely the egregious violence against the *pīlegeš*, together with its coded message to women about the dangers of sexual independence from the men who hold authority over them (1993, 182-3).⁶¹ I agree, but it could be further argued that much of the scholarship on Jdg. 19:22-30, inasmuch as it takes both hospitality and homosexuality as key categories for interpreting the text, engages in a yet further act of displacement, the displacement of the role of the text in the genealogy of homophobia and the perpetuation of myths about male rape.

There are signs that this act of displacement is not entirely universal among scholars. Susanne Scholz (2010), for example, sets her exegesis of Judges 19-21 in the context of discussions about rape during war, in light of the works of Joshua Goldstein and Catherine MacKinnon. Scholz's powerful treatment connects the gendered violence of Judges 21 with the horror of rape in more recent theatres of conflict. Goldstein, for example, has argued that the way masculine domination is expressed in war is an intensification of the functions of masculine domination in peacetime, military homophobia being a key example.⁶² Scholz's exegesis thus links the rape of the *pīlegeš* with the abduction of the virgins of Jabesh-Gilead and Shiloh by distinguishing between the former as an instance of gang rape in peacetime (2010, 139-50), and the latter as an instance of gang rape in time of war (151-5). Following her exegesis of Judges 19-21, Scholz retrieves four narratives that may, with careful

⁶¹ See also Keefe 1993, 86 n. 5.

⁶² For Goldstein, "gendered war roles are nearly universal because men's domination of women is nearly universal" (2001, 332; cf. Scholz 2010, 135-9).

attention to their respective linguistic subtleties, be read as suggestive of male rape (157-77), either male-on-male,⁶³ or female-on-male.⁶⁴

While I am in broad agreement with Scholz, two queries seem necessary. First, while Scholz notes Goldstein's linkage between military homophobia and violence against women (2010, 137), and while she recognizes that Carden has highlighted "the relationship among misogyny, rape, and homophobia" (146), the threat of male rape plays only a minor role in her overall exegesis of Judges 19-21. Second, Jdg. 19:22-23 plays no role in her discussion of male rape in the Hebrew Bible. It seems to me that accounts of *the threatened and actual male rape of both women and men* in the biblical texts need to be read together, because they are all instances of some form of rape (subjective violence), and they all evoke the outworking of masculine domination (symbolic violence). These connections can surely be made without compounding the problem, highlighted by Exum, of ignoring, or at least downplaying, the violence (both subjective and objective) against women in Judges 19-21. We need to scrutinize Judges 19-21 anew with an eye to the interconnections between the threat of male rape in Jdg. 19:22 and the abduction of virgins in Jdg. 21:1-24. We need to attend to these interconnections, not only at the level of the narrative itself, but at the deeper level of their symbolic significance within the cultural matrix in which this narrative took shape.

The symbolic violence of masculine domination in Judges 19-21

I am not going to deal in detail here with Judges 17-18, although in the final form of the book, Judges 17-21 is certainly meant to be read as a single narrative whole. Among the discrete narratives of Judges 17-21 there are significant commonalities,⁶⁵ as well as distinct points of difference (Auld 1976, 44-5; Milstein 2015, 1-2). The discrete narratives of Judges 17-21 are held together by four chiastically structured summaries.⁶⁶ In the longer summaries of Jdg. 17:6 (A) and 21:25 (A'), the phrase 'š

⁶³ Jdg. 3:12-30; perhaps 16:4-22 (if the Philistines are threatening to rape Samson).

⁶⁴ Gen. 19:30-8; 39:1-23; perhaps Jdg. 16:4-22 (if Delilah, in some sense, rapes Samson).

⁶⁵ Note especially the presence of a Levite sojourning in the territory of Ephraim, the settlement of Israelite tribes (Dan and Benjamin respectively), and the repeated refrain about the absence of a king in Israel (Jost 2006, 286). Auld would add the importance of Bethlehem and Judah, otherwise tangential to the book of Judges as a whole (Auld 1976, 45).

⁶⁶ There is also a case for seeing the second set of concluding narratives (Jdg. 19:1-21:25) as themselves chiastically structured (Lawson Younger 2001, 384):

A: the rape of the concubine (Jdg. 19:1-30)

B: the *hērem* of Benjamin (Jdg. 20:1-48)

C: the oaths: Benjamin threatened with extinction (Jdg. 21:1-5)

B': the *hērem* of Jabesh-Gilead (Jdg. 21:6-14)

A': the rape of the daughters of Shiloh (Jdg. 21:15-24)

Thus "[t]he rape of the daughters of Shiloh" may be read as "an ironic counterpoint to the rape of the Levite's concubine" (Lawson Younger 2001, 389-390; cf. Webb 2012, 505). Lawson Younger further suggests that the cyclical narratives of Jdg. 3:7-16:31 are bookended by a double introduction and conclusion, so that the whole of the book of Judges, in its finally redacted form, is also chiastically structured (Lawson Younger 2001, 353):

A: foreign wars applying the *hērem* (Jdg. 1:1-2:5)

B: difficulties in Israel with foreign gods (Jdg. 2:6-3:6)

C: cyclical narratives of the "judges" (Jdg. 3:7-16:31)

B': difficulties in Israel with proscribed worship (Jdg. 17:1-18:31)

A': domestic wars applying the *hērem* (Jdg. 19:1-21:25).

hayyāšār b'ēnāw ya'āseh (“every man would do what was pleasing in his eyes”) occurs, whereas in the shorter summaries in Jdg. 18:1 (B) and 19:1 (B') it does not.⁶⁷ The chiasmic structure of Judges 17-21 has probably been imposed on a group of older, originally separate narratives, and presumably reflects a single redactor's intentions. The content of these summaries indicates that they must date sometime after the rise of the monarchy. They have a point of reference outside the narratives themselves (Edenburg 2016, 12-13), explicitly re-reading the narratives of Judges 17-21 in light of the monarchy. Whether the monarchy still exists, or whether that too is long in the past (e.g. Niditch 2008, 13),⁶⁸ is uncertain.

So at the level of the literary-critical analysis of Judges 17-21, the constituent narratives may originally have been separate, but are now redacted together within a chiasmic framework that urges the reader to interpret them in light of a period later than the events to which the narratives themselves refer, and thus to read them as a coherent and cohesive whole. How, though, does the threat to rape the Levite reflect the same kind of gendered symbolic violence as the physical rape of the virgins of Jabesh Gilead and Shiloh?

The threat to rape the Levite is a threat to humiliate him by forcing him to play the part of a woman in a sexual act (presumably anal sex). The men of Gibeah wish to feminize the Levite (e.g. Jost 2006, 317). Their threat bears this significance within the symbolic world of a society in which the meaning of sex is constructed phallogocentrically. This may be deduced both from analogies drawn from anthropological studies of Mediterranean societies, such as those cited by Stone and Carden (alongside the work of Bourdieu),⁶⁹ and from a linguistic comparison with the only two texts in the Hebrew Bible that otherwise hint at such a meaning, namely Lev. 18:22 and 20:13. It does not necessarily follow that these texts were themselves known to the author of Judges 19, nor that Lev. 18:22 and 20:13 themselves refer to male rape, rather than to sex between men in general. What is important is that the language of Lev. 18:22 and 20:13 hints at what might be implicit in Jdg. 19:22-23. By forbidding a man to lie with a woman *miškēbē 'iššā*, the language of Lev. 18:22 and 20:13 is marked with that particular characteristic of sex between men that was perceived to be distinctive within the symbolic world in which the phrase itself was first coined. One or other of the men is marked with the status, and hence with the stigma, of being treated as a woman.

By comparison, in Jdg. 21:11, the Israelites are commanded to put to the ban (*ḥrm* hiphil) any woman who has previously had sex with a man. The idea of a woman having previously had sex with a man is expressed in Jdg. 21:11 by means

⁶⁷ In contrast to the other three occurrences, the refrain in Jdg. 19:1a is introduced by *way'hî* (*bayyāmîm hāhēm*), as is the second introduction in Jdg. 19:1b. The odd repetition of *way'hî* has suggested to a number of scholars that Jdg. 19:1a is an editorial addition (thus e.g. Becker 1990, 258-259; cf. Moore 1908, 369, 408). As it stands, *ûmelek 'ên b'yiśrā'el* is a subordinate clause: “In those days, *there being no king in Israel*” (cf. e.g. 1 Sam. 18:1aβ).

⁶⁸ The issue is whether *'ên melek b'yiśrā'el* means “there was no(t yet a) king in Israel (as there is now)” or “there was no(t yet a) king in Israel (as there soon would be, but is no longer).” An issue that cannot be dealt with here is whether either or both of these possibilities reflects a pro-monarchic, anti-monarchic, or non-partisan position.

⁶⁹ On sexual penetration of a man as symbolic feminization, esp. in the context of acts of torture, see Bourdieu (2001, 21-2), in the context of his broader discussion of the social construction of bodies (2001, 7-22).

of an idiom very similar to what we find in Lev. 18:22 and 20:13: *kōl 'iššā yōda'at miškab zākār*. The women who remain are “four hundred girls, virgins, that is, who have never had sex with a man” (*'arba' mē'ōt na'ārā ḥēṭûlâ 'āšer lō' yāḏe'â 'iš l'miškab zākār*). This way of distinguishing women is shared with the account of the plundering of Midian in Numbers 31, where the Israelites are to slay every male child and every woman who has previously had sex with a man (*kōl zākār baṭṭaph wēkōl 'iššā yōda'at 'iš l'miškab zākār*), but allow every female child who has not had sex with a man (*wēkōl haṭṭaph bannāšîm 'āšer lō' yāḏe'û miškab zākār*) to live (Num. 31:17-18; cf. v. 35). There is no stigma attached, because there is no suggestion of a man playing the part of a woman. Incidentally, the use of *yāḏe'* in Num. 31:17-18, 35 and Jdg. 21:11 to refer unambiguously to sex could help partially to disambiguate the use of the same verb in Jdg. 19:22 and Gen. 9:5. Jdg. 19:22 and Gen. 9:5, however, technically still remain open to more than one sense, for unlike Num. 31:17-18, 35 and Jdg. 21:11 they do not include a phrase such as *miškab 'iššā* or *l'miškab 'iššā* that would remove the ambiguity entirely. This reinforces my suspicion that in Gen. 19:5 and Jdg. 19:22, the verb is ambiguous and only made clear by Lot and the Ephraimite host, both of whom choose the less charitable of the available options.

The response of the Levite and his host to the threat posed by the men of Gibeah is to substitute women as a means of limiting the insult to male honour. I say limiting, because although the Levite himself will not now be forcibly feminized through the sexual subjection of his body, his own honour nonetheless is besmirched by the treatment of “his” woman, whose sexuality is supposedly under his control. His honour has been disgraced because her sexuality belonged to him, and was a signifier of her man’s honour or shame (Stone 1995, 100; Nissinen 1998, 51; Reis 2006, 139). Thus the Ephraimite host offers his virgin daughter and his guest’s *pīlegeš* (*bittî habbēṭûlâ ûphīlagšēhû*) to the men.⁷⁰ They refuse his offer, and in response the Levite himself throws his *pīlegeš* out to them.

Had the Levite himself been the victim of rape, his male honour would, in all likelihood, have been so damaged that he would no longer have had any means of appearing as a man (cf. Bourdieu 2001, 53).⁷¹ Following Carden (1999), we might say that he would have been “queered.” He could not, then, have related what had happened to him to all Israel, calling them to revenge,⁷² because in the eyes of other men, he would have become an object of ridicule. This perhaps explains why the

⁷⁰ The Ephraimite host had no rights over his guest’s *pīlegeš*. Rather than following scholars who emend the Hebrew text at this point (see the references in Edenburg 2016, 179 n. 60), Edenburg suggests that the motif of offering two women is derived from Lot’s offer to the men of Sodom in Gen 19:8. Offering a woman over whom his guest had rights casts a further shadow over the host’s already ambivalent character (Edenburg 2016, 178-9).

⁷¹ “Manliness ... is an eminently *relational* notion, constructed in front of and for other men, and against femininity, in a kind of *fear* of the female, firstly in oneself.”

⁷² Alice Bach comments that, “in the minds of the male formulators of the story and their ideal audience, the horror of homosexual rape is far greater than that of a male violating a female” (1998, 12; cf. Niditch 1982, 369; Jones-Warsaw 1993, 177). The use of “homosexual” here—together with Bach’s reference to “the homosexual attack in Genesis [19]” (loc. cit.)—should be read in light of Carden’s critique of Stone, and my response above to them both, albeit that Bach, no less than Stone, would surely not err in defining the men of Gibeah as “homosexual” per se.

Levite apparently dissimulates when he summons the rest of Israel,⁷³ for he says nothing explicitly about the threat to rape him. Instead, the men of Gibeah “intended to kill *me*” (*’ôṭî dimmû lahārôg*), “but my *pîlegeš* they raped, and she died” (*we’et pîlagšî ‘innû wattāmôt*). Most significantly, the Levite conceals the fact that it was *he* who threw her out to the mob. Had he told the full truth about the threat against his body, his humiliation would presumably have provoked derision from the other men of Israel.⁷⁴ This, of course, does little to mitigate either the Levite’s cowardice, or his focus on himself. Even if we were to follow Katharina von Kellenbach (2000) in regarding the Levite as confronted with a choiceless choice,⁷⁵ his choice remains wicked, albeit one made under circumstances in which the only alternative appears to him even worse. Not only does he dispense with the *pîlegeš* to save his own skin, he fails to mention this when the tribes are called to vengeance at Mizpah, just as he fails to mention that he was safe behind the doors of his host’s house even as his concubine was falling lifeless at the threshold (cf. Reis 2006, 145). Had he told the full truth about how his *pîlegeš* ended up in the hands of the men of Gibeah, he may have been met not so much with derision, but with disgust, and perhaps no-one would have joined him in seeking vengeance.

The matter of the Levite’s male honour may not be limited to Jdg. 19:22-30 and its qualified reprise in Jdg. 20:4-7, for the narrative may even begin with this theme. The MT, which begins by recounting that “his *pîlegeš* had been sexually unfaithful [?]”⁷⁶ against him” (*wattizneh ‘ālāw pîlagšô*) (Jdg. 19:2), could well be alluding to the Levite having already been emasculated by other men by proxy,⁷⁷ for

⁷³ The most charitable interpretation of the Levite’s speech in Jdg 20:4-7 is that he did, in fact, believe that the men ultimately intended to murder him. The fact remains, though, that the emphasis in 20:4 is on the Levite himself. Although he describes the rape, murder, and butchering of his *pîlegeš*, he says the men rose up against *me* (*wayyāqûmû ‘ālay*), they surrounded *me* (*wayyāsōbbû ‘ālay*), and *me* they intended to kill (*’ôṭî dimmû lahārôg*) (Jdg 20:5). Even if we identify the rape and murder of the *pîlegeš* as the *zimmâ ûn’bālâ* (Jdg 20:6) that needs to be avenged, the Levite implicitly claims that her fate is inseparable from the original intentions of the men of Gibeah against the Levite himself.

⁷⁴ Niditch (1982, 371) attributes the sense of humiliation not simply to the Levite as a character, but to the narrator: “There may be some uncomfortableness in the tradition about re-emphasizing the homosexual nature of the attack. Could the narrator be so sensitive as to have his main character uncomfortable about disclosing the true nature of the event—the fact that he substituted her for himself and so on? I believe so.”

⁷⁵ I do not intend to belittle or dismiss Kellenbach’s important work, nor that of Koala Jones-Warsaw (1993, a key influence on Kellenbach’s essay), which, critiquing the narrow focus on the Levite’s *pîlegeš* as a victim of male violence against women in Phyllis Tribble’s essay on Judges 19 (1984, 65-91), rightly highlights the need to recognize multiple forms of victimization and suffering in Judges 19-21 (1993, 179-82), and thus does not present an unequivocally condemnatory account of the Levite (178, 185).

⁷⁶ Bal relates *√znh* to the custom of patrilocal marriage, and apparently takes Jdg. 19:2aa to mean that the *pîlegeš* left her father to go to her husband (1988, 86-8). I find it difficult to reconcile this with the context. Although the suffix of *‘ālāw* is unspecified, in context it can only refer to the *’iš lēwî* of 19:1b. It is just possible (cf. Bal 1988a, 87) that *wattizneh ‘ālāw* is further clarified by *wattēlek mē’ittô ‘el bêt ‘ābîhā* in 19:2aβ, and means that she had acted somehow against the customs of patrilocal marriage and had gone to(ward) (*‘al*) her husband, instead of the other way round, later returning alone to her father’s house, but this seems to stretch the Hebrew to breaking-point (though note the Ketiv of Jdg. 19:3, *lahāšîbô*, “to bring *him* back,” which is generally regarded as less preferable than the Qere (e.g. Marcos 2011, 105; Webb 2012, 455 n. 5)).

⁷⁷ This assumes the concubine returned to her father’s house after having betrayed her man with other (unspecified) men. The verb *znh*, however, is not normally followed by *‘al* (but see Ezek. 16:15, where *‘al* may, however, mean “because of”). BHK suggested an original *wattiz‘aph*, “be angry with” (also

if his *pīlegeš* had been with other men, then presumably his nakedness would have been uncovered, to his shame. This differs markedly from the Greek of Codex Alexandrinus, in which the *pallakē* “was angry with him” (*kai ōrgisthē autō*).⁷⁸ This raises the question of the way the *pīlegeš* may, in the MT, have been “raped by the pen” (Exum 1993, 170-201), cast by the narrator in the stereotype of a loose woman who deserved what she got. Theodor Gaster, for example, ignoring the Greek tradition, writes, “She deceives him by consorting with other men,” and gets her just reward: “Thus the concubine pays in the end for her infidelity to him” (1969, 443).⁷⁹ Gaster is thus arguably raping her yet again by taking the MT as read. But there is a further possibility, raised by Pamela Tamarkin Reis, that the Hebrew idiom *znh l* could mean to “whore on behalf of” (2006, 129). In other words, the woman was being pimped out by the Levite, which explains why she not only went back to her father, but why she was able to return him at all.⁸⁰ The effect Reis’s argument is to highlight further the moral collapse of the society of Judges 19-21, but it would also serve to stress the extent to which women in this society were at the mercy of the games of men. Unusually among commentators, Reis then sees the narrator as exhibiting empathy for the pitiable predicament of the *pīlegeš*, rather than colluding in her subjection (2006, 125, 136, 142, 143, 144).

Whichever option we take, the fact that the Levite was unable to prevent his woman from leaving itself calls his masculine honour into question, setting “the stage for a more radical attack upon his culturally defined masculinity” (Stone 1995, 96). It was his sexuality the men of Gibeah wanted to impugn, not that of his host, which explains why they would not accept the host’s virgin daughter (*b’tûlâ*) (Jdg. 19:25a). As Carden suggests, they wished to queer the outsider (1999, 91-2), which suggests that a form of xenophobia is inseparable from sexualized humiliation in

Boling 1975, 274; cf. Prov. 19:3b), perhaps reflected in the Greek of Codex Alexandrinus. For Boling (1975, 274), the MT is interpretive: “As Israelite law did not allow for divorce by the wife, she became an adulteress by walking out on him” (cf. Exum 1993, 179).

⁷⁸ This may reflect an otherwise unattested Hebrew verb *znh* II, “be angry” (e.g. Edenburg 2016, 16-17), analogous to Akkadian *zenû* II, where *itti x zenû* would mean “be angry with x” (*CAD* Z 85-6). Codex Vaticanus states instead that “she went away from him” (*eporeuthē ap’ autou*), which is either interpretive (Webb 2012, 455 n. 6), or a corruption of *eporneuthē ap’ autou* (Marcos 2011, 105; Marcos includes a full discussion of the problems with this verse). If there really were two roots *znh* in Hebrew, there is no reason the ambiguity could not have been deliberate, though it is worth pointing out that Jdg. 19:2 would be the only example of one of them. Alternatively, it could reflect an original Hebrew *wattiznah* ‘*ālāw*, from *znh*, “be angry,” though this would be the only occurrence in classical Hebrew of ‘*al* indicating the object of this verb (*DCH* 3:124b).

⁷⁹ This is very close to the interpretation of Pseudo-Philo (*Liber antiquitatum biblicarum* 45:3), where God delivers the concubine into the hands of sinners because she has sinned with the Amalekites. Her fate is thus divine retribution, but Pseudo-Philo not only implies here the reading *znh* I, “commit fornication” in Jdg. 19:2, he links it with the idea of having sex across ethnic boundaries, a connection made most clearly in Num. 25:1, where Israelite men fornicate (*znh*) with Moabite women. It thus illustrates Pseudo-Philo’s revulsion at sex between Israelites and foreigners (cf. *Liber antiquitatum biblicarum* 9:1, 5; 18:13-14; 21:1; 31:1; 44:7) (Harrington 1985, 315, 359). Exum sees the rape of the Levite’s “secondary wife” (1993, 177) in Judges 19 as her punishment for acting autonomously in leaving her man, thus disrupting the patriarchal social order: “The men who ordinarily would be expected to protect her—her husband and their host—participate in her punishment because her act is an offense against the social order; that is, against the patriarchal system itself” (179-81; cf. p. 200).

⁸⁰ See Ezek. 16:15-16, where *znh* ‘*al* can hardly mean “whore against.” The phrase *wattiznî* ‘*al šēmēk* (Ezek. 16:15) presumably means “and you played the whore on account of your reputation,” and the phrase *wattiznî* ‘*alēhem* presumably means “and you played the whore upon them [viz. the high places]” (cf. *DCH* 3.121b).

this text (cf. Harding 2015, 82-3). It is not necessary to assume dependence of Judges 19 on Genesis 19 to agree with the general import of Reis's conclusion that "[t]he sin of Gibeah, like the sin of Sodom which the biblical author pointedly recalls to our notice, is not homosexuality but xenophobic hatred – worse still than Sodom since the men of Gibeah and the Levite are brother Israelites" (2006, 146). The dimension of xenophobic hatred is perhaps also implicit in the fact that the host, who is himself a sojourner, will be disgraced by the sexual humiliation of his guest.

So much for the threat against the Levite's body and the physical violence done to the body of his *pîlegeš*. Two facets of the symbolic violence of masculine domination are reflected in Jdg. 19:22-30: a woman as a sign of her man's honour (or shame), and the integrity of a man's body as a sign of his honour (or shame). The next question is how the symbolic violence of masculine domination serves to link the threat of male rape with the abduction of virgins. The answer is that both Jdg. 19:22-30 and 21:1-24 assume that the male control of female sexuality is a means of exerting power over both women and other men, and of securing male interests.

In my view, we would not be wrong, then, to use the single term "rape" to refer to *four* distinct moments in the narrative (six if we were to include the rape of the *pîlegeš* by the pen, and the silencing of her witness by the Levite himself):

- (1) the threat of male rape in Jdg. 19:22-3;
- (2) the physical rape of a woman in Jdg. 19:25b (in which the Levite is complicit in Jdg. 19:24a, as is his host in Jdg. 19:24 when he offers their two women explicitly for the men of Gibeah to rape [*'annû*] them);
- (3) the seizure of women for the surviving Benjaminite men from Jabesh-Gilead in Jdg. 21:1-14 (which accompanies the genocide of the other inhabitants); and
- (4) the seizure of the virgins of Shiloh in Jdg. 21:15-24, which, as Alice Bach notes, is both the sexual rape of the women, and the economic rape of their fathers and brothers (cf. Judg. 21:22), "who are by ancient standards the offended parties" (1998, 3).

Bach also notes that the narrative does not characterize the fate of the women of Shiloh as "rape" (1998, 4, 7, 9),⁸¹ though this judgement depends on the connotations we attach to *√hṭp* in Jdg. 21:21, *√lqh* in Jdg. 21:22, and *√nś'* and *√gzl* in Jdg. 21:23. It could be argued that the Hebrew obscures the commonalities between these four instances of rape by representing them using different verbs. Even this point is mitigated when we read Jdg. 21:15-24 in the Vulgate, where the verb "seize" (*hăṭaphtem*) is rendered *rapite*, from the verb that ultimately lies behind the English verb "rape." Arguably the use of five different verbs in the Hebrew text of Judges 19-21 is a matter of stylistic variation, all five ultimately referring to slightly different facets of what might appear to a modern reader as essentially a single reality, rape.

⁸¹ The abduction of the women of Shiloh is represented in the narrative as a political necessity, rather than as a sexual crime (Bach 1998, 7), but so is the "rape" of the Sabine women in Livy (*Ab urbe condita* 1.9-13) and Plutarch (*Romulus* 14.1-2, 6). Livy uses the verb *rapere* and Plutarch the verb *harpazein* to denote what was done.

Where, then, do we find masculine domination in Jdg. 21:1-14 and 21:15-24? That the women are commodities in a form of trade between men is obvious, and is reflected in the way the text uses the familiar language of “taking” (\sqrt{lqh})⁸² women or “giving” (\sqrt{ntn}) women to other men. Thus at the very beginning of the narrative, the Levite “took for himself a woman, a *pīlegeš*” (*wayyiqqah lô ’iššâ pīlegeš*) (Jdg. 19:1). The Israelite oath at Mizpah in Jdg. 21:1 is that “no-one among us will give his daughter to Benjamin for a wife” (*’iš mimmennû lô’ yittēn bittô l’binyāmîn l’iššâ*) (cf. Judg. 21:7, 18). Similarly, after the slaughter of Jabesh Gilead, the Israelites “gave them [the Benjaminites] the women of Jabesh Gilead they had allowed to live” (*wayyittēnû lāhem hannāšim ’āšer ḥiyyû minnēšê yābeš gil’ad*) (Jdg. 21:14). When the Israelites foresee objections to the Benjaminites abducting the virgins of Shiloh on the part of their fathers and brothers, they propose to say “each man among us did not take his wife in the war” (*lô’ lāqahnu ’iš ’išṭô bammilḥāmā*), “nor did you give [them] to them” (*lô’ ’attem nētattem lāhem*) (Jdg. 21:22).

All this is to do with the transfer of female persons who are, to all intents and purposes, items of property owned by men. This is yet more deeply encoded in the Hebrew of the narrative, for the primary relationship in the society implied by the text is precisely between men. This relationship is denoted using the cognate terms “father-in-law” (*ḥōtēn*)⁸³ and “son-in-law” (*ḥātān*).⁸⁴ The first scene in the narrative takes place in the house of the Levite’s father-in-law, in which the *pīlegeš* is an item of property that has effectively been, and apparently continues to be, negotiated between the two men, with the woman acting by returning from one man’s house to that of the other, but saying nothing. It may be easy to pass over the way masculine domination is encoded in such language, and reiterated by it, but there is

⁸² In Jdg. 21:21, we also have the verb *ḥtp*, “seize,” and in Jdg. 21:23 the verbs *ns’*, “take away” and *gzl*, “seize” or “steal,” but my point here is to do with the fact that the regular idioms in classical Hebrew for what we might term (opposite sex) marriage are that men “give” and “take” women.

⁸³ Jdg. 19:4, 7, 9. Cf. Num. 10:29 (with Exod. 2:15-22; see Mitchell 1969, 95), but this noun seems to be able to encompass other potential or actual male relatives of other men by marriage (Mitchell 1969, 103-105), including what in English would be called “brother-in-law” (thus Jdg. 1:16; 4:11; Mitchell 1969, 95-6) and “bridegroom” (Isa. 61:10; 62:5; Jer. 7:34; 16:9; 25:10; 33:11; Joel 2:16; perhaps Exod 4:25-6; Ps. 19:6; Mitchell 1969, 98-103), as well as “sister’s son” (i.e., the heir of the man to whom one’s sister has been married, as appar. 2 Kings 8:27; Mitchell 1969, 97-8), in each case denoting a relationship between two men, whether directly or indirectly (e.g. where *ḥātān* is in parallel with *kallā*, “bride/daughter-in-law”). Note the use of the feminine form *ḥōtenet* in Deut. 27:23, meaning “mother-in-law.” The key relationship remains between the two men, for Deut. 27:23 prohibits a man from lying with his *ḥōtenet*, presumably because it would be to uncover the nakedness of one’s father-in-law (if the logic of Lev. 18:8 can be taken as operative). The related verbal forms bear the same connotations of relations between men (cf. Mitchell 1969, 107). Perhaps cf. the use of *gener*, “son in law” and *socer*, “father in law” in Ovid’s poetic retelling of the war between Rome and the Sabines (*Metamorphoses* 14.801-2), and note that in Plutarch’s account, the Romans “snatched the daughters of the Sabines” (*hērpadzōn tas thugateras tōn sabinōn*) (*Romulus* 14.5; cf. 15.2; 17.1; 19.1, 3), and the women themselves speak in reference to Sabine “fathers-in-law” (*pentheroi*) and Roman “sons-in-law” (*gambroi*) (*Romulus* 19.4-5), thus focusing on the relationship between men (Gk. *pentheros* and *gambros* present similar problems of definition to Heb. *ḥōtēn* and *ḥātān*). Unlike in Jdg. 21:15-24, the women in Plutarch, *Romulus* 14-19 speak ... albeit in the interests, ultimately, of men. In further contrast with Jdg. 21:15-24, the rape of the Sabine women depends on a form of exogamy, the means, via the bodies of women, of cementing alliances between men of different groups. A comprehensive study of Jdg. 21:15-24 in relation to comparable Greek and Roman traditions has yet to be done, though Susan Ackerman has offered a helpful and suggestive survey (1998, 267-6), the concern of which is with the motif of women making music in the context of a sacred festival.

⁸⁴ Jdg. 19:5. Cf. Gen. 19:14; 1 Sam. 18:18; 22:14 (Mitchell 1969, 96-7).

a clear illustration here of Hélène Cixous' comment that "Language conceals an invincible adversary because it is the language of men and their grammar," a comment that continues with what Alice Bach calls Cixous' "call to arms": "We must not leave them a single place that's any more theirs alone than we are" (Bach 1998, 11; see Cixous 1976, 887). The very language in which the narrative is told is marked with the structures of masculine domination. We might indeed go one step further with Cixous and see not only the sex and gender structure of the society within and behind the text, but its very mode of written expression as instantiations of man's "glorious phallic monosexuality" (Cixous 1976, 884).⁸⁵ For Jdg. 19:22-3 and 21:15-24 are not distinguished by homosexuality on the one hand and heterosexuality on the other. They both participate in a phallic monosexuality, which the written word perpetuates.

There are additional dimensions of subjective and objective violence when the Israelites are seeking prospective women for the remaining Benjaminite men. First of all, the inhabitants of Jabesh-Gilead are put to the ban (\sqrt{hrm}), with the exception of "every woman who has previously had sex with a man" (*kōl 'iššā yōda'at miškab zākār*). The repopulation of Benjamin depends on an explicit, subjective act of male violence in the context of the aftermath of a brutal civil war. But the fact that it is geared towards tribal repopulation draws attention to the underlying symbolic violence of masculine domination, in which women serve "the material and symbolic interests of the lineage, that is, of the men" (Bourdieu 2001, 97).⁸⁶ they are necessary to perpetuate a male tribal line, which perpetuates the dominance of male interests. Second, the language that is used for the available women focuses on their sexual availability to men. Men have not previously possessed the bodies of these women as their sexual property, and, as virgins, they signify purely the possibility of use by, and exchange between, men.⁸⁷ Virginal women are the means by which symbolic and social capital are accumulated by, or

⁸⁵ Cf. also Luce Irigaray's idea of the "hom(m)o-sexual monopoly" (1985, 171, and next note), and her dismantling of the category of heterosexuality: "heterosexuality has been up to now just an alibi for the smooth workings of man's relations with himself, of relations among men" (1985, 172).

⁸⁶ Cf. Keefe (1993, 84), and Julie Kelso's reading of Genesis 34, in which the exchange of women, whether endogamously or exogamously, is determined by "the subordination of (re)productive nature to its socially inscribed function for men" (2003, 87, cf. esp. pp. 92-6). Kelso shapes her approach to Genesis 34 in conversation with Irigaray's response (1985, 170-91), via Marx, to Lévi-Strauss's classic account of the way kinship systems function by means of the exchange of women between, and in the interests of, men (Lévi-Strauss 1969, 98-118, esp. pp. 115-16). The particular (symbolic) violence on which Genesis 34 is based is, for Kelso, "the murder/silencing of woman/mother and the mother-daughter relationship," that is, the way that the predominant interests of men enable the elision of the maternal body of Leah, Dinah's mother (cf. Gen. 30:21; 34:1) (2003, 101). This is effected in Genesis 34 by the abrupt narrative shift that takes place when Shechem appears (Gen 34:2a), both ending the possibility of women among themselves, without reference to men (cf. Gen 34:1b), and facilitating the rupture of the mother-daughter bond between Leah and Dinah (cf. Gen 34:1a) (Kelso 2003, 108). Mutatis mutandis, we might well ask where the voices (and bodies) of the mothers of the abducted virgins of Shiloh are to be found (those of Jabesh-Gilead are dead).

⁸⁷ Cf. Irigaray (1985, 186): "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." See also Kelso (2003, 102-3). On women as items of exchange in an economy of symbolic goods, who thereby become instruments of their own symbolic domination, see Bourdieu (2001, 42-49, 96-102).

restored to, the men of Benjamin. As noted above, the phrase *miškab zākār* is shared with the account of the war of vengeance against the Midianites in Numbers 31, where the Israelites are to slaughter “every woman who has previously had sex with a man” (*kol ’iššā yōda‘at ’iš l’miškab zākār*) (Num. 31:17), but spare every “child among the women who has not had sex with a man before” (*kōl haṭṭaph bannāšîm ’āšer lō’ yāqē‘û miškab zākār*) (Num. 31:18, 35). In taking these women, the men took control not only of their bodies, but also the ethnicity of their descendants, who henceforth would be Israelite.

The language used in Numbers and Judges for a woman having sex with a man uses almost precisely the idiom used in Leviticus for sex between men,⁸⁸ where what is forbidden (Lev. 18:22; 20:13) is a man having sex with another man as if he were that man’s woman (a loose gloss on *wē’et zākār lō’ tiškab miškēbē ’iššā*). This is presumably what the Ephraimite host thinks the men of Gibeah have in mind when they demand to “know” (*vyd’*) the visiting Levite, the very verb used in connection not only with the rape of the Levite’s concubine (Jdg. 19:25) but also with the virgins of Jabesh-Gilead to refer to the sex they have never had. In both cases—Lev. 18:22/20:13 and Jdg. 19:22—the issue is that one man takes the part of a woman in relation to another man, or other men. In both cases, issues of tribal or ethnic boundaries are also at work, for in Lev. 18:3, illicit sex is associated with the practices of Canaan and Egypt; in Jdg. 19:22, the Levite is a sojourner in a Benjaminite town; and in Jdg. 21:1-14 and 21:15-24, the virgins, having been abducted from outside, must be made a seamless part of the tribe of Benjamin.

The Bible and homophobic practice

The key contribution of this article has been to situate an ancient form of homophobia in the context of a broader symbolic system of masculine domination. This has been unhelpfully obscured in the scholarly literature by associating the threat to rape the Levite in Jdg. 19:22-23 with the wider question of biblical attitudes to, and supposed teaching in respect of, homosexuality rather than with broader patterns of masculine domination in the interconnected narratives of Judges 17-21. In fact, the threat to the Levite’s body and the abduction of virgins for Benjamin are deeply interconnected, not simply at the level of the narrative itself but at the level of the symbolic world the narrative implies. Both reflect the symbolic violence of masculine domination. Failure to recognize the interconnection leads to an atomization of the narrative that fosters the idea that the threat to the Levite is an entirely different kind of thing from the abduction of the virgins of Jabesh-Gilead and Shiloh. One is “homosexual rape,” the other is the “commodification of women.” I am suggesting, however, that they are both different expressions of a single kind of symbolic violence, namely masculine domination. Recognizing their connection with each other is of vital importance when one considers the way these

⁸⁸ The two references in Leviticus differ from the references in Numbers and Judges because they use the plural of *miškab*. According to Jacob Milgrom (2000, 1569), the plural is used for illicit sex (cf. the analogous phrase *miškēbē ’ābīkā*, lit. “the lyings-down of your [viz. Reuben’s] father” in Gen 49:4), whereas licit sex is referred to by the singular. Whether this was the reality in the living language behind the text, or whether it is solely an inference based on the very occasional contexts in which the word now appears, is not entirely clear. It would require a rather larger body of evidence for Milgrom’s claim to be adequately tested.

ancient scriptures continue to be deployed in contemporary debates about same-sex relationships, which sometimes seem doomed endlessly to reproduce structures of thought that imprison women and men behind bars of symbolic violence.

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