Beyond Feminist Biblical Studies

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Deryn Guest

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This book is dedicated to two women
whose writings have challenged, sustained and nourished me

Joan Nestle and J. Cheryl Exum

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Preface

Allegiances. They can be homely, comfortable, sure things, providing a sense of identity that derives from what one believes in, what one fights for, perhaps what one is willing to sacrifice for. Claiming allegiance can help to congeal the complex and contradictory elements of our existence into something that seems more solid and coherent. For several years I owned an allegiance to feminist biblical scholarship. Encountering feminist ways of negotiating biblical texts, late in my education, was a transformative experience. It provided a convincing narrative for why traditional historical-critical methods of biblical interpretation were lacking; a knowledge that I possessed intuitively, but not in the fully worked out, theory-rich way I discovered within feminism. Here was an approach that was academically robust but, perhaps more importantly to me, could also make a difference. It took ethical responsibility for the act of biblical interpretation and demanded that other exegetes consider the effect of their own hermeneutical practices. Getting involved in feminist biblical scholarship was a way of feeling alive, of being fully immersed in work because it demands that you bring yourself into the process of interpretation and see the practical consequences of your arguments for the lives of contemporary men and women. To the extent that one can 'believe in' a methodological approach, feminist biblical scholarship was something to which I thought I could give my wholehearted allegiance.

But allegiances can also be alienating, discomforting, unsure things, particularly when they come into conflict. And this is precisely what has happened over the past ten years. While I owned a strong commitment to feminism, another pivotal force propelled allegiance towards LGBTI/Q communities and in particular, lesbian communities. The pivoting meant that I had to interrogate each with the insights from the other—not always an easy or comfortable task, since allegiances by their very nature seem to demand a lack of ambivalence or counter-challenge.

When I was writing my 2005 book, setting out the principles and strategies of lesbian biblical hermeneutics, queer theory had been taken up widely within academic settings and queer readings of biblical texts were

emerging. Allegiance to feminist biblical scholarship and to lesbian communities was uppermost at that time. My concern was that queer readings ran the risk of obliterating lesbian feminist voices before they had even had time to be defined and heard. I was very aware that feminist biblical scholarship had its blind spots and that lesbian-specific theory was very underdeveloped within that domain, but ultimately it was my hope that feminist, womanist and mujerista interpretations of biblical texts would be enhanced by the development of lesbian-identified angles of vision. An amplified feminist biblical scholarship was in view.

However, skip forward seven years and this 2012 book moves in a different direction. If the 2005 publication looked at the emerging queer landscape from the homeland of feminist and lesbian theory and practice, this publication takes in the opposite vista: what does feminist biblical scholarship look like from a transgender, intersex, queer landscape? If, in 2005, I leaned more into a feminist position, then in 2012 I lean into a queer position. This does not mean that my concerns about queer being a white, male, privileged discourse have abated; the reader will find that I still voice a strong lesbian position and continue to find feminist politics absolutely vital. However, the confidence I had in an amplified feminist biblical scholarship has become far more questionable as transgender, intersex, and queer studies develop.

The intervening years between these two publications have thus been ones of personal reading and journeying, as the question of whether lesbian biblical interpretation really did have its most obvious home within an amplified feminist biblical scholarship continued to trouble me. As time went on, trying to manage both feminist and lesbian allegiances often meant quieting one voice in favour of the other and the problem was that it was the lesbian voice that was the more readily silenced. I discussed this predicament in more detail in Guest (2008) and most recently (2011), when I suggested that the search for 'home', while important, was perhaps going prove futile. The time had come to face the sober fact that while a lesbian approach shares many interests with feminism, it is ultimately not at ease within feminist biblical scholarship. Its site-specific interests, concerns and dialogue partners often put it at odds with existing feminist interpretation. Feminist biblical scholarship, it seemed, could not presently provide a comfortable or spacious enough home.

In the context of this journey, I came across Athalya Brenner's (2008) questioning of a new terminology that was creeping into feminist biblical scholarship: that of gender criticism. I too had been observing this development, wondering whether gender criticism might provide a way forward for my own concerns and interests, since it seemed to offer a broader, more

inclusive way of doing feminist biblical scholarship. Herein lies the raison d'être for this book. It examines what is meant by gender criticism, analyses its remit and strategies, and considers its ideological stance. Driving this investigation is one key question: should feminist biblical criticism and gender criticism co-exist, each pursuing their own research projects and with differing politics, or does the shift to gender criticism move us beyond feminist biblical studies in such a fundamental way that the latter will be entirely superseded?

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However, this book was written during a time of personal upheaval and I thank all those whose support meant I could continue to work and write. Much gratitude goes to my wonderful colleagues in Philosophy, Theology and Religion who gave plentiful slaps on the back and perky smiles to keep me going during a difficult term. I thank Elaine and Deb for their much appreciated travels to Blackheath, their tea-making and long-suffering listening skills, for rescuing me from a motorcycle accident and providing a safe and supportive refuge. Huge appreciation also to Beth, Pam and Nicola for their wise words and their ability to help me think brightly about an unexpected and much-revised future. I continue to be blessed by my now adult children, Jenny and Tom, who bore with on-going disturbance to their lives with their usual fortitude and cheeriness (yes, Jenny, we did indeed 'abide'!) Meeting Frances was as unexpected as it was life-giving. I thank her deeply for her personal support, for her unflagging willingness to hear me drone on about how this book was alternatively, brilliant, crap, tedious, unconvincing, the best thing I had ever written and yet, sometimes, the worst thing I had ever written. I remain in her debt for the unstinting sub-editing work on my grammar and style, and the patient explanations of when to use which or that. My love and gratitude to her for regular mugs of tea, healthy evening meals, discussion about butches, femmes and all things queer, and general all-round support. Any errors that remain in the manuscript are definitely my own. I thank my wider group of friends for bearing with me while this book has taken priority over social contact. You all showed me what friends do best: they are there for you in a crisis. Thank you for being yourselves.

Introduction

> We all know what feminists are. They are shrill, overly aggressive, man-hating, ball-busting, selfish, hairy extremist, deliberately unattractive women with absolutely no sense of humor who see sexism at every turn. They make men's testicles shrivel up to the size of peas, they detest the family and think all children should be deported or drowned. Feminists are relentless, unforgiving, and unwilling to bend or compromise; they are singlehandedly responsible for the high divorce rate, the shortage of decent men, and the unfortunate proliferation of Birkenstocks in America (Douglas, 1994: 7).

Well, Douglas is right; feminists and feminism have rarely had a good press. Accusations of stridency, man-hating and humourless Puritanism, along with the enduring image of bra-burning fanaticism, have dogged feminism's steps in the media-driven world. Such a caricature is far less overt within the academy and yet, here too, feminist practitioners have long been eyed with caution and suspicion: a fact that has had repercussions for the scholars themselves. As Robinson has it: 'to associate with feminism and Women's Studies can … be detrimental to women involved … in terms of careers and academic "respectability"' (1997: 10).

Recent history has been more forgiving, at least within academia, with feminism hailed as 'the single most powerful political discourse of the twentieth century' (Whitehead and Barrett 2001: 3). Such acclamation, however, jars with declarations that feminism is dead and the provocative assertions of its rebellious daughter, postfeminism. Not the poststructuralist-informed third wave feminism which sometimes goes by that name, but the popular 'postfeminism' promoted by the media since the 1980s, which celebrates 'joyous liberation from the ideological shackles of a hopelessly outdated feminist movement' (Gamble 2001: 44).[1] Amid the incongruity

1. Responding to a 1980s western climate where young women tended to take their equality for granted and were alienated from a feminism they no longer deemed relevant, postfeminists such as Naomi Wolf (1991, 1993), Katie Roiphe (1993), Rene Denfeld (1995) disassociate themselves from a movement which, they argue, presents

of a feminism applauded academically for its success while popular culture trumpets its death[2] lies a quiet, more subtle development: a shift from the terminology of 'feminist' to 'gender' studies, described by Wilhelm somewhat sardonically as the 'new rock n' roll in academia … embraceable by both male and female academics and students' (2003: 17).

The field of feminist biblical studies has not been immune to these developments. Here too being associated with the 'F-word' has been potentially damaging to one's career from the start. Credited with 'blazing the trail of feminist biblical scholarship' (Stichele and Penner, 2005: 13), Cady Stanton was faced with a number of declined invitations from those 'distinguished women ... Hebrew and Greek scholars, versed in Biblical criticism' invited to contribute to her ground-breaking *Woman's Bible*. In Stanton's view, they shied away from association with the project, apparently 'afraid that their high reputation and scholarly attainments might be compromised by taking part in an enterprise that for a time may prove very unpopular' (Stanton 1898: 11). Given that feminism was in its infancy, this is not surprising, but as its hermeneutical strategies and research projects within biblical studies gained momentum and recognition during the second wave, feminist approaches continued to have a troubled reception. A century after Cady Stanton's work, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza reported being 'kept off important boards, events and internal leadership positions because as a feminist I am seen as too political and ideological' (1999: 42), adding that 'women scholars and their intellectual work are still marginal in the academy. The label "feminist" still carries the odour of biased bigotry which characterizes someone as not capable of scientific objectivity' (1999: 43). Notwithstanding such difficulties, feminist biblical scholarship eventually appears to have made its mark as a respected, acclaimed and well-

'we feminists' as 'we victims'. In its place they advocate an assertive politics relevant to the twenty-first century: a politics that reclaims the right to be sexual, fashionable and feminine, and to spend money with autonomy in consumer culture. It distances itself from the man-hating stereotype for an agenda that embraces men as lovers, fathers, brothers, allies and friends. For critical discussion of postfeminism, including whether the term should be hyphenated, see Gamble (2001), Tasker and Negra (2007), Gentz and Brabon (2009), McRobbie (2009).

2. For coverage of 'false feminist death syndrome' see the discussion in Genz (2009). Of course, the dissonant clash of plaudits for success versus pronouncements of death is not so odd if set within theories of backlash. The suggestion that feminism has had its day and should quietly surrender its political activism is a potent way of alienating a new generation from picking up its continuing agenda.

established subject area within the broader discipline.[3] Feminist biblical scholarship is here to stay.

Or is it?

At precisely the time that feminist approaches finally have widespread acknowledgment, here too the terminology is drifting to the vocabulary of 'gender'. It is doing so more slowly than in other disciplines, but the move is happening. This shift is not necessarily a bad thing and in fact might be a very good thing, but such movements in nomenclature require investigation, which is the purpose of this book.

In her introductory essay to Rooke's *A Question of Sex: Gender and Difference in the Hebrew Bible and Beyond*, Deborah Sawyer (2007) poses this question: is gender criticism a new discipline, or feminism in disguise? Her essay, discussed in more detail in Chapter 1, does not directly answer this question in depth, but she does outline briefly some benefits of the shift to gender criticism, suggesting it offers a wider lens able to tackle concepts such as power and patriarchy 'more profoundly' (2007: 5). As we will see, herein lie some of the key promises of gender criticism: it will be inclusive, broader, deeper in its critical approach. However, in an online review of the book, Athalya Brenner is puzzled about this demarcation drawn between feminist biblical criticism and gender criticism. Seeing it largely as a new terminology for signalling the inclusion of masculinity studies, Brenner points out that feminist criticism has always incorporated a critical interest in the representations of masculinities and she therefore queries whether Sawyer's advocacy of a move to 'gender critique' is 'beneficial'. And if it is, then

> to whom and why? Is it justified? Does it offer new avenues for research and understanding as such, as 'gender criticism' to distinguish from—old fashioned?—'feminist criticism'... Does it really matter, this fine semantic distinction of feminist criticism, women's studies, gender studies, and the assigning of the study of femininities and masculinities exclusively or especially to the latter? Or is the change of name a technique for achieving respectability and a wider audience/participation, beyond the stigma of being considered a feminist? Or does it simply represent a certain coming of age? (2008)

At the end of her paragraph, Brenner adds the cautionary note that such questions are not entirely rhetorical. And indeed they are not. If we are not to get lost in a quagmire of muddied terminology, the distinctions

3. It bears noting, however, that feminists are sometimes troubled by the patronising tone in which acclaim has been granted, and wary of any praise if it is an indicator of accommodation into the academy, see Fuchs (2003).

between a feminist and gender critique need to be mapped. Then the more profound question—whether the shift to gender criticism is camouflaging the abandonment of a stigmatized and overtly political 'F-word', in favour of more neutral, 'respectable' and sweeter-sounding 'G-spot'—deserves detailed examination.

This book takes up the challenge of examining reasons for this shift in terminology, analysing its effects and evaluating its usefulness as a new, more inclusive project. Concomitant questions, such as how far the shift of terminology indicates a subtle neutralization of the discomforting F-word, taking with it only certain kinds of feminist-informed theories and approaches while inevitably marginalizing others; or how far feminist criticism should remain a distinct voice alongside gender criticism, will be very significant. Investigation of these and other questions will help us to decide who benefits and why, and whether the move from the F-word to the G-spot is ultimately a Good Thing.

Accordingly, Chapter 1 clarifies what is meant by 'gender criticism' with a view to identifying its remit and its concerns. In so doing it points out that the language of 'Gender *Studies*' is far more prevalent and that understanding the emergence of gender criticism requires knowledge of how and why there was a move from Women's Studies to Gender Studies from the 1980s onwards. Part of the confusion and/or discomfort being felt in biblical studies as 'gender' becomes the more fashionable word relates to the fact that biblical studies was never an integral sub-discipline of Women's Studies and was therefore not party to the several debates that occurred as the shift from Women's to Gender Studies took place. Had it been so, the transition would likely have been explained, discussed, debated. But as it stands, the shift to gender terminology has come about very subtly for biblical scholars and the fact that it has caused some bewilderment is not at all surprising. Having made these observations, the chapter moves on to explore how gender criticism is currently being used within biblical studies and compares its emerging remit and strategies with those of established feminist criticism. It makes some initial observations about the benefits of a wholesale shift to gender criticism, but also points out some problems involved with such a shift. A final decision about the relative merits of the shift is deferred until the subsequent chapters have unravelled the implications in greater depth.

Thus, having noted briefly in Chapter 1 how gender criticism is informed by queer theory, lesbian and gay studies and trans discourses, Chapter 2 unpacks this in more detail. It explains why studies in sexuality split off from a feminism whose primary focus was on gender, elucidates the antagonisms that arose between queer and feminist theorists, and discusses the different questions posed by queer theory and the different hermeneutical

strategies that ensue. It resists the antagonistic way in which the 'queer' vs. 'feminist' debate has been framed, looking rather at the intersections between the two approaches (currently a relatively under-theorized area). Turning to feminist biblical scholarship, possible explanations are given for why it has been undertaken in such a predominantly, almost exclusively, heteronormative framework. The limitations of that framework are noted as, again, the advantages of moving to a queer-informed gender criticism, or indeed genderqueer criticism, are explored.

Chapter 3 puts all this theory to the test in a practical case study. It explores how a genderqueer criticism would operate in practice by taking a renewed look at the pornoprophetic debate. This was a debate that brought out the politics and relevance of a feminist criticism with a force and clarity not always seen in other examples of feminist biblical scholarship. It was, and is, an intense, powerful debate, one that provoked strong responses. Here then is a useful testing ground for analysing how a genderqueer perspective is informed by feminist criticism while also questioning it and carving out a trajectory that feminist scholarship did not take.

The flourishing critical study of masculinities is the topic of Chapter 4. It traces the rise of this interest within biblical studies, analyses its hermeneutical objectives and strategies and evaluates the political agenda envisaged for such work. In a return to the pornoprophetic case study, I consider what masculinity studies has to offer when it comes to assessing the gendered and sexual performance of the Bible's major character. The chapter closes with a discussion as to whether masculinity studies work best as an integral aspect of genderqueer criticism, or by pursuing an independent route as currently seems to be the case.

In the conclusion I consider how existing scholars of masculinities, together with feminist biblical scholars might merge their interests into a genderqueer approach. It turns the spotlight on the hermeneut, considering what is required from them in order to pursue this way of interpreting biblical texts. It closes with a reference to recent legislation in the UK and the compunction to promote a way of teaching biblical studies in a way that recognizes sexual diversity and how lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex voices have something vital to offer to the discipline of biblical studies.

1

Gender Criticism: Remit and Concerns

This chapter traces the emergence of gender criticism in an attempt to discover why this distinctively named approach was deemed necessary and how its remit, strategies, and interests differ from existing feminist approaches. However, what any researcher soon discovers is that although there are one or two papers devoted to the elucidating of gender criticism, discussed below, the wider debate outside biblical studies has actually been about the rise of Gender Studies vis-à-vis Women's Studies. It is necessary, therefore, to unpack what is meant by Gender Studies and, from that, understand the promotion of the 'wider lens' that gender criticism is said to offer.

Accordingly, this chapter's first section deals with the contentious shift from Women's Studies to Gender Studies. The robust debate that took place around this development related in no small part to the threatened closure of many Women's Studies programmes and the overt suspicion that Gender Studies would have neither the political edge of Women's Studies nor its transformative power. It also related to the apprehension that the strong focus on women, their lives and concerns would be lost, and that the autonomy of Women's Studies would be surrendered. A foray into this recent history is a necessary precursor to any discussion on the remit and concerns of gender criticism. This provides a necessary background canvas for the second section which traces the shift to gender criticism within biblical studies. Not every publication that has 'gender', in its title actually contains gender criticism. There seem to be 'weak' and 'strong' understandings of gender criticism and this section analyses the strong version which promises new research strategies and avenues. A third section then raises the crucial question of how this gender criticism relates to existing feminist biblical scholarship. Will these prove to be two distinct (though overlapping) methodological approaches, or might it be that we are on the verge of something virtually unthinkable for those who have been committed to

feminist biblical scholarship—that it is time for it to give way to a new day dawning? Such a proposition inevitably invites a whole range of incredulous responses; indeed I found myself rather shocked to be writing such a sentence. However, the question has to be asked: does the new nomenclature of gender criticism supersede feminist criticism within biblical studies? Responding to that prospect, section four of this chapter revisits some of the issues raised during the controversy over the shift from Women's Studies to Gender Studies, for they anticipate the anxieties that might arise for feminist biblical scholars when faced with a move towards gender criticism. However, not all anxieties are assuaged and this final section also addresses problems that might ensue from any wholesale shift from feminist to gender criticism.

From Women's Studies to Gender Studies: Gender Criticism in Context

Attempting to summarize neatly the remit envisaged for Gender Studies is like trying to herd cats. Gender Studies literature includes an amorphous spectrum of interests and disciplines with far too many topics of interest to list in a single sentence. It is theoretically rich; organically related to feminism but strongly informed also by queer theory, postcolonial theory and critical theory pertaining to 'race' and class. And it is shaped by its interest in themes such as knowledge, power, body, gender, sexuality. However, for the purposes of this chapter attention to the aims and scope of the *Journal of Gender Studies* provides heuristic illustration. Founded in 1991, it is promoted as 'an interdisciplinary journal which publishes articles related to gender from a feminist perspective'. Contributions 'which focus on the experiences of both women and men' are invited, and 'articles written from a feminist perspective, relating to femininity and masculinity and to the social constructions of relationships between men and women' are welcome.[1] From this brief description three points, which will be substantiated by further reference to Gender Studies literature, emerge fairly clearly.

First, in terms of theory, Gender Studies' relation to feminist perspectives is emphasized. This is reinforced widely in Gender Studies publications. For example, Jane Pilcher and Imelda Whelehan speak of feminism having 'a central perspective for the study of gender relations' (2004: xii-xiii). Essed, Goldberg and Kobayshi, in their 'Curriculum Vitae for Gender Studies', uphold feminism as the 'mother of Gender Studies' (2005: 8)—entirely apposite terminology given how the relationship between mothers and

1. See http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/cjgs for these descriptive statements.

daughters can often be complex, contentious and antagonistic. Yet while feminist theory and perspectives certainly do inform Gender Studies, they are critically interrogated in the process. Gender Studies is credited with a multi-disciplinary toolbox that means feminism is one of several theoretical tools available. Thus, while Essed, Goldberg and Kobayshi acknowledge that Gender Studies emerges from Women's Studies, they speak of 'the *more extensive and relational* domain of Gender Studies' which 'ranges across a broad array of disciplines—from arts to medicine, from discourse to geography—while shaping interdisciplinary fields, including Cultural Studies, Race Critical Studies, Queer Studies, Area Studies and Postcolonial Studies' (2005: 8, emphasis added). They proclaim its 'ability to assume but then also immediately to reject disciplinary boundaries [which] is beyond the imagination of most other fields' (2005: 8).

It is not surprising, therefore, that Alsop *et al.*'s (2002) *Theorizing Gender* is widely informed by feminist analyses but includes also engagement with work being done, for example, in queer theory, lesbian and gay studies and transgender discourses and theorizing. While studies of sexualities are nothing new to feminists, it is the amount of space given for analysing the constructions of a diverse range of sexualities in varying contexts, often through the analytical lens provided by queer theory that gives Gender Studies a quite different atmosphere. *Theorizing Gender* also engages with the critical study of men and masculinities. The authors rightly remind their readers that feminists have always been involved in the study of masculinities,[2] but in this new climate, where studies of men and masculinities are being vigorously undertaken by a largely male practitioner base, feminist critical theory often takes a different turn and can be called to account, not least for its exclusionary effects or its potential to alienate would-be profeminist men.[3] Or it can be relegated in the search for new theoretical strategies that

2. This point had already been strongly made by Victoria Robinson, who states 'It is historically inaccurate and theoretically simplistic to assert that women's studies and feminist theory have only been concerned with women's experience, femininity and female sexuality, and that the new men's studies and writings on masculinity will complete the portrait of gender, only half drawn, by scrutinizing masculinity' (1996: 111). She cites pre-existing work such as Chesler (1978), Friedman and Sarah (1982), Canaan and Griffin (1990), including references found in the latter that relate to women's work on race, class and the intersections with masculinity, male violence, pornography, hegemonic masculinities and its links with the military, schools, work, and so forth.

3. Victor J. Seidler (1997: 6), for example, argues that there has to be a move beyond feminist discourses that engender feelings of contempt and self-hatred. In using profeminist, rather than the hyphenated form, I follow Harry Brod who argues that

can help map, elucidate and deconstruct the study of masculinities. Attentive to these developments, Gender Studies contains the critical voices of feminists, profeminist men and those who do not own any overt allegiance to feminism as a primary methodological tool, in a ratio very different from that existing within Women's Studies.

So, Gender Studies is largely a feminist enterprise. But while theorists frequently hail feminist critical theory as a, if not the, key tool, significantly it is not the only theoretical tool nor is it necessarily the most privileged. Schor thus speaks of Gender Studies' 'elaboration, questioning, and, ultimately, *reconfiguration* of the insights of feminist criticism' (1992: 262-63, emphasis added).

Second, the *Journal of Gender Studies* makes explicit reference to relevant subject matter: men/women, masculinities/femininities. To this end, the existing work undertaken within feminist studies is already embedded within the field of Gender Studies and it is true also, as noted above, that feminists have often analysed masculinity as part of their work. Feminist studies in pornography, violence, the family, work, schooling, sexualities, patriarchy, on race and class, all included critical analyses of men and masculinities. However, what is different is the renewed examination of such matters by men themselves, men who, to lesser or greater extents, engage with feminist theory to inform their own work. Objections that this new field of studies puts men and men's interests predictably back into centre focus risk missing the point that it does so in a way that presents men and masculinity as problematized categories. It might be the case that 'some men still write as unreconstructed misogynists who sanction the biological inequality of gender roles and violence against women' (Robinson 1996: 113), but scholars involved in the *critical* studies of masculinities strongly disassociate their work from such views. Rather, they provide renewed encounters with these issues, sometimes written from the perspectives of male authors' lived experiences as they analyse the social, economic, and political ways in which a range of masculinities and associated experiences are constructed, policed and reinforced. In the space carved out for the study of masculinities, they are able to respond to the challenges posed by feminism and discuss what *they* need to do to transform society. With

'the hyphen leaves too much space between the "pro" and the "feminism," leaving men's politics too detached from women's. It establishes feminism as a pre-existing entity, needing only the support of men. *Certainly*, men must support and respect the autonomy and leadership of the women's movement, but "pro-feminism" retains too many of the problems generated by the "men can't be feminists" position that …. ends up leaving men without a *position from which* to be either radical or activist' (1998: 207).

justification, the *Polity Reader in Gender Studies* commends the way gender studies includes this self-conscious problematization of masculinity: 'men have not previously confronted themselves as "masculine"; masculinity, and male sexuality, remained largely unproblematized, while it was women who were the "dark continent". The move towards gender studies hence seems in general to be a progressive and fruitful one' (1994: 3).

Although the *Journal of Gender Studies* does not make explicit reference to this, Gender Studies also includes a focus on the construction and deconstruction of sexed categories. It incorporates work on lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, intersex and transgendered identities and experiences in ways that feminist research has not always attended to and with which it has sometimes found itself in an antagonistic, even hostile relationship. Gender Studies provides valuable space where feminist theorizing continues to have a key place but where the voices of those who identify as gay, bisexual or lesbian, those who deal with issues pertaining to intersex conditions, or those engaging with transgender discourses, can pioneer their own complex and nuanced theorizing and interrogate their own experiences. Thus, when describing why they named their Centre as one for Gender Studies in 1986, academics from the Universities of Hull and Humberside refer to their unease concerning a dispute in a local women's centre about the inclusion of transsexual women. A Centre for Gender Studies provided space where categories of 'man' and 'woman' and the spaces inbetween could be thoroughly scrutinized. They also acknowledge how their Centre provided a forum for the voices of a local men's group in Hull. The shift of name from Women's Studies to a Gender Studies Centre was a controversial move ('deemed by some in women's studies as a political sell-out' [Alsop *et al.*2002: 1]) but the Centre's title 'was prompted not by a desire for institutional disguise—but by certain theoretical and practical concerns', the main theoretic one being 'the conviction that it was impossible to theorize women and the construction of femininity without also theorizing men and the construction of masculinity' (2002: 1). So, Gender Studies has this oft-vaunted broader remit that is inclusive of a range of voices (most notably demonstrated in its investigation of masculinities and diverse sexual identities) that have not always been warmly received within feminism.

Third, although reference to the construction of gender relationships is a little blurry in the advertising statements of the *Journal of Gender Studies*, it does draw attention to the impact of post-structuralist theory and social constructionist perspectives. In a theoretical context where categories of sex and gender are held to be discursively produced and performatively reinforced constructions, the very notion of 'women's studies' or 'men's studies' is destabilized. Accordingly, gender theorists are highly critical of certain

kinds of 'men's studies' if they do not interrogate the constructed nature of the categories men/masculinity. Thus, for Cranny-Francis *et al.,* the 'principle contribution' of critical studies of masculinities lies in its exploration of the delimiting effects of compulsory heterosexuality and the ways that it highlights, 'in its very different ways … the constructedness of contemporary gender roles, and so acknowledges gender as a social practice rather than a natural attribute' (2003: 82). The swing to Gender Studies reflects a desire to problematize the notion that 'woman' or 'man' has any concrete essential basis. Its interest in the construction of genders and sexualities (especially the relations *between* sex and gender categories) and the way these are intersected by race, class and various additional factors is not new to feminist theorizing, but its inclusion of voices that speak to those various categories that are not necessarily female, or feminist, gives it a different flavour.

To conclude this brief overview: although the move has not gone uncontested, Gender Studies is positioned as productively interdisciplinary; operating with a roving brief across the full spectrum of subject domains. It queries (and queers) the formation of sexed and gendered identities in a wide range of contexts, alert to the ways in which these identities are differently organized and intersected always by issues of race, class, geographical location. It is informed strongly by feminist theory, but this is not always the privileged mode of enquiry. Gender Studies literature extends into under-researched areas and, more significantly, uses those new areas of research to interrogate existing feminist theory and knowledge. Hence it has a growing reputation as a broader, umbrella home alongside (or for?) Women's Studies, but also for a whole lot more.

The Emergence of Gender Criticism in Biblical Studies

While the move from Women's Studies to Gender Studies was happening and being hotly debated, there was no comparable shift happening in biblical studies. This is not altogether surprising given that feminist biblical scholarship has not been integrated within Women's Studies, despite the obvious benefits that might thereby have been gained. A 1982 issue of *JSOT* contained an introductory essay by Trible on 'The Effects of Women's Studies on Biblical Studies', and a following essay by Bass entitled 'Women's Studies and Biblical Studies: An Historical Perspective'. However, despite their promising titles, these essays, and the volume as a whole, are not at all concerned with Women's Studies in the sense of any cross-over between programmes of study. Rather, the volume is concerned with the presence of women in the discipline of biblical studies and with show-casing feminist-

informed interpretation of texts. In fact, Bass's paper poses questions about the scant presence of women in Biblical Studies societies and departments in the late nineteenth century *despite* the existence of a thriving first-wave feminist movement and points to 'a *history of estrangement* between feminist perspectives and professional biblical scholarship' (1982: 12, emphasis added). So if anything, this volume of papers is significant for the lack of discussion about any interdisciplinary work between Women's Studies programmes and biblical studies.

The rapid expansion of Gender Studies in the academy did inevitably begin to infiltrate biblical studies, where there were already several publications that referred to 'gender', in their title. However, this primarily signalled that the book or essay concerned women; they had little to do with gender criticism as it currently known. This is what I refer to as a weak use of the term gender criticism. For example, consider *Gender and Law in the Hebrew Bible and the Ancient Near East.* In the introductory essay Tikva Frymer-Kensky states 'This book provides a perspective that emphasizes how gender can illuminate aspects of biblical texts that would otherwise stay buried or unnoticed' (1998: 17). However, her subsequent summary of the contributions reveals how 'gender' marks only women as the objects of enquiry:

> Brettler presents an important aspect of the lives of *women*: how and what do they pray? Miller, Dempsey and Roth consider the stereotypical images of *women*, Pressler and Westbrook discuss the varying social statuses of *women*, slave and free; Frymer-Kensky and Matthews look at the connection between gender and laws of honor and shame; and Frymer-Kensky, Matthews, Otto and Washington analyse the prescriptive laws about *women's* sexuality (1998: 17, my emphases).

Other examples would include Peggy Day's (1989) *Gender and Difference in Ancient Israel*, Phyllis Bird's (1997) *Missing Persons and Mistaken Identities: Women and Gender in Ancient Israel.* These books did discuss male and female genders but the emphasis, as above, was upon women. However, with the advent of work undertaken in the critical studies of masculinities, the term 'gender' took on a broader connotation. As Jennifer Marchbank and Gayle Leatherby acknowledge in their social science-based *Introduction to Gender*:

> No longer can gender be taken as synonymous for 'woman'. Due to feminist insights and their application by both women and men, men's gendered identity has been claimed within the social sciences. As such, it is time for the integration of feminist work on women and feminist-informed work on men to occur, for up until now much

> of it has taken place in separate domains leaving the reader to make comparisons and links (2007: 5).

It was within this new climate that references to gender criticism began to appear in biblical studies. Given the general absence of any meaningful links between Women's Studies and biblical studies, it is not surprising that the language slipped to gender *criticism* rather than 'studies'; mirroring the existing terminology of feminist *criticism*. An understanding of what it might entail appeared in two books published in King's College London's *Studies in the Bible and Gender* series: *A Question of Sex* (2007) and *Embroidered Garments* (2009), both edited by Deborah Rooke. Subtitled *Priests and Gender in Biblical Israel*, the 2009 volume still largely contains feminist-informed essays by women about women. The exception is Rooke's own contribution, which she describes as being informed by a 'gender-sensitive perspective that over the last few years has insinuated its way into my academic consciousness' (2009: 19). Her essay queries why priests are instructed to wear breeches. Arguing that the worship of a male deity feminizes its devotees, she makes the credible suggestion that the breeches effectively neutralize the presence of the priest's penis in a 'wifely' submissive acknowledgment of the deity's masculine power and authority. This essay has some common ground with Ken Stone's definition and agenda for gender criticism, discussed shortly. For now, it is enough to note that her use of gender criticism bespeaks an interest in the study of male characters, including the deity, and includes attention to matters of sexuality and homoeroticism.

According to its Preface, the former volume, *A Question of Sex,* emerged from a 2006 conference designed 'to explore how an awareness of gender critical issues might impinge upon study of the Hebrew Bible and associated literature' (Rooke, 2007: vii). The broad topic areas were intended to be indicative of the way 'gender criticism is more correctly thought of as an approach to the text rather than a subject area in itself' (2007: vii), (something which seems to run contrary to the way Gender Studies is conceived in the wider HE setting). Gender Studies is more of an umbrella label for a range of interests and several theoretical approaches, while Rooke's statement implies that gender criticism might helpfully be seen as a theory of Gender Studies. The preface talks about how the topic area might 'encourage a broad and inclusive spread of material, thereby demonstrating the exciting range of possibilities for interpretation when gender-critical issues are taken into account' (2007: vii). Note here some familiar watchwords: gender criticism is broader, is inclusive, and exciting. The preface thus sets the reader up for an illustrative tour through this new gender critical approach. However, what one actually finds in this volume is, again, a weak understanding of

gender criticism. Despite the clear objective noted in the preface, individual contributions do not always produce the thoroughgoing gender criticism it led the reader to expect, being seemingly satisfied to look at male and female characters or experiences in the text and draw comparisons.

For example, Amy Kalmanofsky's essay on 'Gender and Prayer in the Book of Lamentations' provides an interesting and productive comparison between the male and female supplicants. She demonstrates how the prayer given to the female character associates her with caring for the sufferings of those around her, while that the male character speaks more autonomously for himself. In my view, this is the point at which the gender critique might *begin*, the data having been usefully assembled; but it does not reach this potential and, in fact, reinforces rather than problematizes the categories of male/female. Likewise, Bernard Jackson's paper on breeding relationships highlights the fates of women who are cast into breeding scenarios by their fathers, masters or captors. It opens up a window for considering what their relationship might have been with the men with whom they have to sleep, or with the primary wives whose husbands they share. His finding, that marriage is not the primary legal institution that perhaps the Christian right would like to find reflected in biblical texts, is certainly of interest. However, while one could certainly use its findings in a paper devoted to gender criticism, the paper itself is more of a precursor to a gender-critical reading. More worrying for those who fear for the loss of feminist concerns within gender criticism is the way this paper analyses the fates of the various women in such a matter-of-fact, unemotional way. It is the kind of coverage that Trible (1984) felt compelled to offset in her 'texts of terror' work; as did Alice Bach in her more recent (1999) work on the captured women of Shiloh. If a gender critical reading pays such scant attention to the resonances of these texts for women who are still the casualties of war, of domestic abuse and violence, who are raped within marriages, then feminist fears that the shift to gender terminology will result in the loss of political awareness would be well justified.

For our purposes, the significant paper in this collection proves to be Deborah Sawyer's introductory 'Gender Criticism: A New Discipline in Biblical Studies or Feminism in Disguise?' It is an engaging essay that provides a new look at the Eve story, and offers an insight into how she understands the remit of gender criticism. She begins by mapping connections between the secular agenda of first wave feminism and the aims of feminist biblical studies as exemplified in Cady Stanton's *Woman's Bible*. Such an opening implies that the answer to the question posed in her title has something to do with the relationship between secular feminism and feminist biblical scholarship. While the former had significant successes, the latter

had fewer. Thus, during the second wave, secular feminists made gains in their push for equality whereas feminist biblical and theological scholars were less successful in provoking change. The reason for this, in her view, was that feminist biblical scholarship did not always go far enough with its questions and scrutiny. So, while Trible (1973) was able to create a 'depatriarchalized' Bible for herself and those who shared her standpoint, Sawyer identifies another group of interpreters who stood 'outside that community of reformist feminist believers' and who arrived at different conclusions (2007: 5). Texts that Trible was able to redeem by arguing that they challenged patriarchy and revealed a deity on the side of the marginalized, were read by other scholars as contrarily indicating 'the ultimate finesse of a very patriarchal god' (2007: 5). From this discussion, Sawyer concludes that 'To understand the concepts of power and patriarchy in the Bible *more profoundly* a wider lens is needed' (2007: 5, emphasis added).

Gender criticism is thus associated with a wider lens and a more profound approach. But what is meant by her reference to 'more profoundly'?—more deeply, weightily, astutely, significantly? And more profoundly *than what*?—the context implies it is to do with the extent to which those who stand outside 'the community of reformist feminist believers' are prepared to go. So the suggestion appears to be that gender criticism moves us beyond a reformist confessional perspective, specifically insofar as it puts the masculinity, power and patriarchy of the deity under the spotlight. Sawyer continues on this theme, arguing that it is gender criticism, with its focus on successful, or compromised, or failed gender performativity, which is able to grasp how instances of female empowerment and male powerlessness/emasculation are, nonetheless, ways in which biblical writers reinforce a dominant ideology i.e. the reinforcement of patriarchy and the omnipotence of the deity as patriarch *par excellence*. In her words: 'The supreme manifestation of patriarchy, that is, the power of the male God, is triumphant and remains assumed. Mere male mortals can be ridiculed in this scheme in the service of this higher purpose' (2007: 6). Again, the implication is that second wave reformist confessional perspectives, discomforted, would not have been able to follow down this analytical road.

But *is* this how gender criticism differs from feminist criticism? It must be more than a matter of thoroughgoing-ness, for there are feminist approaches that are thoroughgoing in the way that Sawyer describes, but go by the name of feminist rather than gender criticism.[4] Is the difference then

4. For example, Pamela Milne (1997), argued that secular feminist scholars did not engage with the work of biblical feminists owing to the allegiances such 'loyalists' had to the material they were trying to critique. In her view, 'Feminist biblical scholars

a matter of inclusion? That it is a thoroughgoing critique which is prepared to examine the deity as perhaps the most disturbing character of all within a more determined inclusion of male characters as an *integral* part of the project?

To investigate these questions more fully, we have to turn to Ken Stone's more detailed and programmatic essay on the remit and concerns of gender criticism. He provides an illustrative set of questions worth citing in full, as they are agenda-setting for its application within biblical studies:

> What norms or conventions of gender seem to be presupposed by this text? How might attention to the interdisciplinary study of gender allow readers of the Bible to tease out such presuppositions? How are assumptions about gender used in the structure of a particular plot, or manipulated for purposes of characterization? How is gender symbolism related to other types of symbolism in the text? How does the manipulation of gender assumptions in a text relate to other textual dynamics, including not only literary but also theological and ideological dynamics? Which characters embody cultural gender norms successfully, and which characters fall short of such norms or embody them in unexpected ways? Might a character's success or failure at embodying gender norms result from a strategy to cast that character in a particular light, whether positive or negative? Is the text itself always successful at manipulating gender assumptions? Do biblical texts, like persons, sometimes fail to 'cite' gender conventions in expected ways or according to dominant norms? How does our attention to these and other questions contribute to our understanding of both gender and the Bible? (2007: 192).

These questions characterize an approach that boasts its own hermeneutical name, gender criticism, but like feminism, is not a stand-alone hermeneutical tool. Rather, it is an envelope in which a range of interdisciplinary tools are put to a specific purpose. Gender criticism might therefore, like feminism, be defined more in terms of the distinctive political endeavours it espouses, the topics of interest that arise from those purposes,

have often undertaken their work without raising the question of what made their analyses feminist or for what purposes their analyses are undertaken' (1997: 44). Milne did not, however, think that all feminist biblical scholars were loyalists. Some (I would suggest Exum, Fuchs, Bal, Brenner as examples) are thoroughgoing in the ways that Sawyer describes. Milne's position is echoed more recently by Brayford, whose paper on feminist criticism argues that it is vital to see how biblical texts continue to have an influence in the contemporary world and thereby make valued contributions to secular feminism. 'Feminist interpretation', she writes, 'should address issues important in secular academic contexts' (2009: 317).

its objectives, and its choice of theoretical partners, than by any specific methodology. It is evident from Stone's essay that one of its key theoretical partners is Judith Butler (1990, 1994) whose work explores, among other things, how categories of sex and gender are produced and sustained by a range of social processes, institutions, cultural ideologies and textual strategies. Butler does not privilege 'sex' as a biological reality to which socially constructed gender ideologies are pinned. Rather, both 'sex' and 'gender' are the effects of a *prior* commitment to compulsory heterosexuality and a series of compelled acts that solidify to give an *effect* of gender identity and sexual identity, but which is actually constructed by those repeated acts, or 'citations'. Informed by the broad trends of her work, though not always necessarily in agreement with it, the gender critic does not take sexed categories as givens, but interrogates the ways in which sex, gender and sexualities are constructed, naturalized and policed. Crucially, gender criticism also explores ways in which the regularizing and naturalizing compunctions can be subverted, for herein lies its capacity for a transforming politics.

As for the topics of interest, these include the significance that gets attached to sex and gender in various texts, and the positive, negative or ambiguous valuing of those performativities. Gender criticism is interested in the differentiation *within* those categories (the many and various ways of doing 'man', for instance) and the indeterminate spaces between them (places where male/female, masculinity/femininity/ hetero-erotic/ homoerotic are fluid and therefore call into question those very binaries). It explores cases of gender performances where one does 'woman' particularly badly, or well, or with unexpected flair, or fails to convince entirely. Accordingly, especially interesting are instances where 'gender takes unexpected forms or fails to conform to dominant assumptions' (Stone 2007: 184). Of key interest are cases of disruption. Butler's hope for any kind of breakout from compulsory norms lies the in-built intervals between the compulsory, repetitive, re-enactments that create and maintain the illusions of identity, for herein lie potential sites of subversion. For Butler, insofar as there are possibilities for change and liberation, these are caught up in the individual's opportunities for creating alternative significations in the course of the compelled performativity. As Stone explains, the repeated acts, the 'citations', 'frequently produce occasions in which sex, gender, sexual desire, and sexual practice are not, according to the dominant norms, aligned consistently'—occasions that 'expose the contingency of norms of sex and gender and offer possible openings for the destabilization and transformation of such norms' (2007: 191).

One has to work hard to spot these fault lines and to see their potential significance. It is worth staying for a moment with Judith Butler, not

least because her work has been criticized for a lack of overt strategies for transformation, informed as it is by poststructural theorizing. But Butler, in my view, is right to resist ideas that we can stand outside of ourselves and the symbolic realm and take matters fully into our own hands. Caught up in compulsory performativity, in a context already linguistically permeated with signification, all our actions and thoughts are always already embedded. Finding cracks in the system, the moments of destabilization, is possible via alternative signification[5], but even this will not necessarily be subversive in and of itself. However, if regimes and categories can be denaturalized; especially if the hegemonic heterosexist imaginary can be contested and opened up to other ways of looking, then it is possible that subversive results can accrue from those opportunities. It is in these possibilities, interests, questions, methodological partners, and political ends that gender criticism becomes a distinct approach.

So, it is not a case, as is sometimes thought, of simply 'add men and mix', of modifying the agenda of feminism and broadening the discussion to include both male and female characters. This would be to miss the point entirely. Gender Studies might well provide an umbrella home for such work, but it is not the case that a shift to gender terminology means we juxtapose men's and women's studies in some kind of false symmetry.[6] Gender criticism, rather, explores the processes whereby sexed categories are constructed and made discrete, including interstitial places where gender blending, reversals and transformations take place. It actively explores intersex and transgender bodies and the myriad ways of doing sex and gender that do not map onto any existing categories; those that flit between categories as well as the abject category that falls through the cracks i.e. the

5. Ways of doing woman, for example, can be filled with alternative signification when lesbian femmes inhabit that category. Thus, when raising the question 'If it is true that femmes dress for each other and that we vie with each other for the butch's attention then how are we any different from straight women?', Weaver's reply is 'because we are resistant … a resistant femme can embrace traditional images of femininity and resist them at the same time … we can play the part and comment on it at the same time … we can put on femmeness in a way that signals the fact that we know we are being femme. There is a space between the photographic image and the real thing. It's in that misfit or crack that I like to think you can see the resistance' (1998: 71-72). For further discussion on femme differences see Carolin with Bewley (1998).

6. Sedgwick observes that any figuring of 'gender studies as a mere sum of women's plus something called "men's studies" ... reduces both women's studies and the supposedly symmetrical men's studies to static denominations of subject matter and reduces any understanding of relations between gender to something equally static and additive' (1992: 272).

non-category, those for which we have no adequate language.[7] In so doing, gender criticism, ideally, utterly destabilizes notions of 'women's studies' and 'men's studies' and runs entirely counter to any parallelizing. Any work on, say men and masculinities, which does not adequately unhinge the connection between the two terms, which does not open its exploration to what can be learned about masculinity by listening to the voices of those who variously identify as female-toward-males, male-toward females, transmen, transsexuals, and by studying women, femininity, female masculinity as an integral part such studies, is not, in my view, doing gender criticism.[8]

Gender criticism is interested in how the author of the text, consciously or unconsciously, constructs sex, gender and sexualities (legitimized and ostracized) for the characters and in so doing grants them a solidity of sorts. The reader is thus lulled into a compliance that it is 'men' or 'women' one is reading about, even when those 'men' or 'women' do not maintain gender expectations terribly well. Gender criticism's interest in citations, gaps, sites of disruption, has the tools to open those fissures to greater examination than the original authors ever imagined, and to re-set our eyes to see sexual politics at work. This is quite different from a textbook that has 'gender', in the title, and contains essays pertaining to the representation of both men and women in biblical texts. It goes beyond that. Thus, if we return for a moment to the essays in Rooke (2007), here is another example of how contributors to that volume did not always grasp the full potential of gender criticism. Nicola Ruane's paper on priestly bathing looks across the genders at the different experiences of men and women. While a woman must wash after having ejaculatory sexual intercourse, a man does not have to bathe if he has sex with a menstruant. These cases 'show that intercourse affects the cultic status of one's partner' (2007: 78). The woman has to deal with the impurity in the same way as its source (male semen); she must wash. The man who comes into contact with the menstrual impurity has to deal with it in the same way she does; not washing, but unclean for seven days with his bedding deemed contaminated. Ruane thus comments: 'In this

7. On the language of 'flitting' and the abject see the informative essay by Hale (1998).

8. The language of female-toward-males or male-toward-females, as opposed to the widely capitalized FTM or MTF is also adopted from Hale. Hale sometimes uses this terminology to signal that ftm is not necessarily an abbreviation but can be used adjectivally, and in order 'to disrupt the assumption that I am striving for "complete" male embodiment' (1998: 123. n.1). I use it here to give the sense of transgender as a liminal zone rather than indicating any clear transition from one sex to another. In Chapter 2 there is further discussion of transgendering as something deliberately neither male nor female.

way he becomes, cultically speaking, like a woman ... In inverse fashion, a woman who has intercourse with a man that results in ejaculation is ritually and textually treated like a man in terms of her short period of impurity and the requirement to bathe' (2007: 79). So 'ritually speaking, intercourse has the power to change a sexual partner into a person of the opposite gender' and in terms of the ritual antidotes, it gives the woman a temporarily higher cultic status 'she is now treated like a man who bathes … Conversely, a man who engages in intercourse with a menstruant is cultically degraded by being treated like a woman' (2007: 79). This intriguing essay thus takes the reader to the place where gender criticism might start to be applied in earnest; but its effect is to solidify those gender categories, despite the recognition of gender reversals. As I have argued elsewhere (Guest 2011), the terminology of gender reversal reinforces the two-sex, two-gender binary of male/female and masculine/feminine, merely shifting the ground from one to the other. Genderfuck[9], however, is the language and business of queer theory and its confrontational, uncompromising stance is one of resistance to such binaries; subverting, undoing, deconstructing the normalcy of sex/gender regimes, cracking them open, focusing on the fissures that expose their constructedness. Informed by queer theory, gender criticism needs to incorporate these strategies.

Seen in this light, gender criticism may well be the thoroughgoing critical approach that Sawyer describes. But it is more than that. It is also about putting the institution of (compulsory) heterosexuality under the spotlight, rather than it hovering as an assumed, shared frame of reference between the critic and their readers. Adrienne Rich encouraged feminists to think seriously about this in a paper originally written back in 1978, arguing that the 'issue feminists have to address is not simple "gender inequality", not the domination of culture by males, nor more "taboos against homosexuality," but the enforcement of heterosexuality for women as a means of assuring male right of physical, economical and emotional access' (1987: 49-50). However, she also knew that the assumed heterosexual frame of reference was a theoretical and political stumbling block for feminism; for being willing to see heterosexuality as 'something that has had to be imposed, managed, organized, propagandized, and maintained by force' is

9. According to Bergman (1993: 7) 'genderfuck' made an early appearance in a 1974 article for Gay Sunshine by Christopher Lonc, entitled 'Genderfuck and Its Delights'. Reich's paper, originally published in 1992, defines genderfuck as structuring 'meaning in a symbol-performance matrix that crosses through sex and gender and destabilizes the boundaries of our recognition of sex, gender, and sexual practice' (1999: 255). Within biblical studies the term was taken up by Runions in her innovative (1998) paper on the transgression of gender codes in Micah.

an immense step to take if you consider yourself freely and 'innately' heterosexual. (1987: 50). It is, happily, a stumbling block that has since been confronted. In the aftermath of Rich's paper, there was an intense debate about how far feminists were hampered by their heterosexual allegiances, which threw the issue into stark visibility. Since then, heterosexuality has been a topic of considerable feminist scrutiny, not least with the work of Ingraham (1994) who suggests we speak not of 'gender' but of '*heterogender',* in order to make the complictness of gender in the institution of heterosexuality abundantly clear.[10] Such studies share their ground with the terrain of the gender theorist, who is defined by Cranny-Francis *et al.* as being willing to 'explore the ways in which we think about gender—how binaristic understandings of femininity and masculinity shape the ways we perceive gender, and *how the assumption of heterosexuality determines the ways we constitute that femininity and masculinity*' (2003: ix, emphasis added).

Returning to biblical studies, this may well be prickly territory for a discipline that is inevitably closely linked with theology, Jewish and Christian faith traditions and the contemporary use and interpretation of biblical texts in today's world. Scriptures are routinely deployed across the globe to bolster religious and political positions that displace certain sexual minorities from full citizenship. Insofar as gender criticism is an approach that, like feminism, espouses a political vision—liberation from the tyranny of sex/gender norms—then, also like feminism, it will inevitably come face to face with the thorny issue of biblical authority. Not all biblical scholars will be comfortable with its strategies when they are put to work for such a political vision. And it is to this end that I would concur with Sawyer's analysis. As she implies, a gender critique, with its opening of the categories of gender, sex and sexuality to radical deconstruction, including the character of the deity who is gendered and queered just as much as the other characters of biblical literature, takes us to a very different place than Trible's depatriarchalized scripture. This does not necessarily mean that scholars who are also reformist feminist believers cannot venture down this path; faith commitment does not necessarily bridle scholars' ability to be thoroughgoing or to be critical of the institution of heterosexuality. However, if Sawyer has in mind conservative reformists whose allegiance to biblical literature leads them to uphold religious statements that discriminate against lesbian and gay-identified people, bisexuals, transsexuals and transgendered outlaws, or to lobby against the introduction of civil partnerships or gay marriages, or

10. Ingraham's work, and references to feminist studies of heterosexuality are discussed in more detail in Chapter 2.

against the ordination of all genders, then gender criticism might pose very difficult terrain.

And yet, biblical literature has much to offer in this area and the work needs to be done. Our texts are incredibly rich for the questions posed by gender criticism given the strange and wonderful characters that are portrayed therein. As Sawyer recognizes, biblical literature provides rich pickings for a Butler-informed approach given how its 'central characters *can* defy and escape constructed realities. This is obviously true of the main character, God, but it can be detected in female and male characters who behave counter-culturally in the narratives' (2007: 7). And for Sawyer, gender criticism has a 'wider lens' precisely because it does not pose its questions from an assumption of stable categories. Butler's interest in examples of destabilized norms and ways in which occasional glitches reveal the artifice of gender norms can be followed up in analyses of biblical texts that focus upon parodies of gender and destabilized genders. The Bible contains 'jokers in the pack' i.e. stories that contain 'subversions of normative power paradigm' that 'provide the clues for deconstruction, or, more positively, the tools for a myriad reconstructions' (Sawyer 2007: 15)

The second reason why biblical literature has much to offer relates to the cultural importance the Bible continues to have for contemporary politics. For a document that is often used to uphold conservative views, its stories actually upset that deployment with refreshingly regular energy. Sawyer again helpfully argues that is important to do this work since one may 'discover ways of both deconstructing and reconstructing the archetypes that lie at the core of Western and Colonial culture' (2007: 9).

Gender Criticism and Feminist Criticism: A Comparison

Having discussed the above issues, the question that naturally arises is how gender and feminist criticism relate. Are these separate but related enquiries, with their own remit and with a deserved continued existence in dialogue with each other? Or would it be beneficial for feminist biblical scholars to accept the limitations of their previous work and embrace whole-heartedly the agenda and strategies of a gender critical approach, where feminist theory is still a driving political force but alongside new tools, theories and topics of interest?

In the interests of assessing how far there might be a distinctive remit for both gender criticism and feminist criticism, this section offers a comparison between two essays, published in the same collection (Yee 2007): Stone's account of gender criticism, referred to above, and the essay on feminist criticism by J. Cheryl Exum. The fact both Exum's and Stone's papers

appear in this edited collection may have been a happy accident. It was only in its second edition that three new chapters were added to Yee's book, one of which was Stone's essay. Had there not already existed a first edition containing Exum's essay it would be interesting to know whether the editor would have chosen to include both feminist and gender criticism, or might an essay on gender criticism have been considered sufficient to cover both areas? At present they generally seem to be considered two different approaches meriting chapters of their own in edited collections. Thus in *Method Matters,* Brayford provides an essay on feminist criticism while Beatrice Lawrence contributes an piece on 'Gender Analysis: Gender and Method in Biblical Studies'. However, wondering whether one essay might have doubled up for both is not an idle muse. When Naomi Schor was invited to provide an introduction to gender studies for the second edition of Gibaldi's *Introduction to Scholarship in Modern Languages and Literatures* she was aware that the first edition did not contain an essay on feminist criticism. Her contribution to this second edition was meant to 'encompass feminist criticism and theory but also to account for more recent studies of the effects of gender on literary analysis (studies of masculinity, sexuality, and lesbian and gay issues)'—studies which, she acknowledges, are 'political' but 'less closely linked to women's liberation, the political movement with which feminist criticism in its most vital form has been identified and intertwined from the outset' (1992: 262). She had to negotiate quite robustly to include 'feminist' within the title of her contribution.

So the important question for this section relates to the co-existence of something called 'gender criticism' together with 'feminist criticism' within biblical studies. If there is scope for gender criticism to exist as something tangibly different to feminist criticism, as the two papers in *Method Matters* and the two essays in Yee's book suggest, what is the nature of the difference between the two approaches and on what basis is a continued path for both justified? Would such approaches be more or less the same thing under different nomenclature, or would they produce tangibly different readings?

To help answer that, let us move to the comparison of the two essays in Yee (2007).[11] Exum opens her essay with reference to the ideological start-

11. These are chosen rather than the two essays in Method Matters because Stone's essay has already been described in detail and is arguably more programmatic than the essay by Lawrence. However, it is worth noting that there is not much differentiation made between 'gender analysis' and feminist criticism in the latter. Lawrence sees feminist biblical studies as a pre-existing form of gender analysis and remains part of it. There is no question of one critical method superseding the other and no contrasting of feminist criticism with more recent work on gender that focuses on male characters or by male scholars. For me, this glide from one to the other is problematic as it doesn't

ing point of feminist criticism 'as a worldview and as a political enterprise' (2007: 65). The elaboration that follows links feminism firmly, and understandably, with women:

> Recognizing that in the history of civilization women have been marginalized by men and denied access to positions of authority and influence, feminist criticism seeks to expose the strategies by which men have justified their control over women. And because women's cooperation in this state of affairs is necessary, to varying degrees, feminist criticism also seeks to understand women's complicity in their own subordination (2007: 62).

This is reinforced in her survey discussion of the feminist projects undertaken within biblical studies:

> Anthropological and sociological models can help us in reconstructing the lives of ordinary women in ancient times, or in investigating sources of power available to women and factors that influenced the status of women in Israelite society, such as class or urbanization. Much can be learned about women's lives in biblical times by examining kinship patterns and the role played by women in the family, or by inquiring into the particularities of women's religious experience. Various literary approaches have been adopted to expose the strategies by which women's subordination is inscribed in and justified by texts ... A feminist critic may choose to focus on women as characters, on women as readers, or on gender bias in interpretation (2007: 67-68).

The connection with women is strengthened further in her outline of the questions posed by feminist critique which are all directed at women, whether this be to ascertain whether women's viewpoints are represented, or to question the representations of 'uniquely female experiences, such as childbearing or traditionally female experiences such as child rearing', or to analyse the 'hidden gender assumptions' (2007: 69), and so on.

So, the first major difference that can immediately be construed from this comparison, which will surprise no one, is that while feminist criticism of the Bible comes in various forms and utilizes different approaches, it maintains a clear focus on women: as characters in texts, as readers and interpreters, as the category of people likely to benefit from such readings. However, *gender criticism, while it shares many of the questions that feminism poses and is informed by it, broadens the lens so that the gender of all the characters is included in the remit*. Thus although Stone's essay takes 'the

place enough onus on feminist critics to think more broadly about their excluding strategies. The contrast between Stone and Exum's essay provides a better insight into the differences between the two approaches.

un-manning of Abimelech' as its illustrative case study it does not focus exclusively on that character: there is proportionate space give to Abimelech's mother and the woman who throws the mill stone. However, insofar as the study of men and masculinities within biblical studies comes under the general remit of gender criticism, then we should expect to see an explosion of work on male characters, since data collection and surveys need to be undertaken before work in this new area can begin in earnest.

Objections may quickly be raised that feminist criticism has always considered male characters. In her 2000 paper, Exum reminds readers that 'Until recently it has been left to feminists to analyse masculinity as a construct, and most feminist analyses address the subject at least indirectly, since it is inseparable from discussion of femininity as a construct' (2000: 105).[12] Yes, this is the case, but the analysis of masculinities within feminist biblical scholarship has been undertaken in the service of a prioritized focus upon women, and this is *not* on a par with the critical study of masculinities that is such an important element within gender criticism.

So, for example, while the representations of Elkanah and/or Eli are certainly scrutinized in studies on Hannah, and while Adam comes under inspection in Eve studies, they remain primarily Eve studies or Hannah studies; that is where the spotlight shines. What Eve studies illuminate about the character of Adam is not exactly a by-product but neither is it a deep analytical account of why a biblical narrator chooses to construct his male character in such passive terms. Yes, feminist biblical scholarship has been quick to assess how the depiction of a passive male may serve the ideological purpose of portraying a disliked female character as aggressive and punishing her haughty assertiveness (Trible's [1995] reading of Jezebel and Elijah would be a good example), but a feminist critique keeps the attention fixed on what this means for the female character in the text *and* upon its pernicious effect on the female reader in the contemporary world. The intriguing question of how and why the presumed male biblical narrator chooses to undermine members of his own gender has been much less of an issue. Yet this is precisely the issue taken up in Stone's essay, where the case study of Abimelech allows him to explore the feminization of Abimelech, the masculinized and potentially eroticized image of the women who throws the mill-stone, and, importantly, the ways in which this story destabilizes gender performativity as a whole. And herein, arguably, lies the second difference: *gender criticism exposes the norms that create, sustain and police the idea of sex and gender across the rich gender spectrum and the role of compulsory heterosexuality in that process*.

12. She directs the reader to Glancy's (1994) essay as an example.

Stone gives far more space to queer theory than is apparent in the paper on feminist biblical scholarship. A caveat is, however, immediately required. As already mentioned, Exum's essay appeared in the first edition of Yee's book, published in 1995. It was modified for the second edition but it was not extensively altered. Had she been writing a brand new paper at the same time as Stone, she might well have articulated the position of feminist criticism differently.

However, if we digress for a very brief look at the broader picture, it can be seen that while queer theory is mentioned in some recent publications, it is still not applied to full-going effect within feminist biblical scholarship generally. For example, Ellens's (2008) *Women in the Sex Texts of Leviticus and Deuteronomy* notes poststructuralist discussions concerning the construction of sexed and gendered bodies, with two footnotes indicating knowledge of Judith Butler's work. However, while acknowledging that biblical texts construct, rather than describe, sexed and gendered bodies, the discussion does not extend into any thoroughgoing queer critique. Feminist biblical scholars have long recognized that the women we meet in the Bible are male constructs, but there has not been sufficient critical attention paid to the constructedness of the category *per se*. There has been plenty of criticism relating to the roles women are given, the representations of women, and so forth, but the assumption that 'woman' is a stable category for readers who inhabit it has been less problematized than it might have been. The way in which compulsory heterosexuality necessitates these sex and gender categories is barely touched upon.

A third point of difference relates to *the ideological purposes served by gender criticism and feminist criticism*. However, this remains a potential and generalized point of difference because the ideological commitments of gender criticism have not been adequately stated. As a political enterprise, feminist biblical scholars attend to the contemporary application of their work. Feminists such as Fontaine, Exum and Fuchs remind their readers that the Bible is a 'foundational cultural script' and that it continues to operate as a live, document in today's world and, accordingly, 'continues to define our own perception of gender and sexual politics' (Fuchs, 2000: 24). Politically engaged, Fuchs insists that feminist biblical scholars undertake their work on the text to offset its appropriation by conservative theologians. For Exum, 'no other document has been so instrumental as the Bible in shaping Western culture and in influencing ideas about the place of women and about the relationships of the sexes' (2007: 66). Fontaine (1997), whose article on the abusive Bible does much to alienate any right-thinking women from reading, let alone owing any allegiance to the texts,

says feminists are compelled to write when the US Senate uses the Bible to vindicate its own homophobic and other policies.

In the two essays under consideration here, Exum is very clear about the political enterprise of feminist biblical scholarship whereas the transforming edge of Stone's paper has to be teased out. He claims that when biblical texts

> refer to or presuppose social assumptions about sex, gender, sexual practice, and kinship, both biblical texts and interpretations of them 'cite' norms of sex and gender. As a result of such citations, these norms are continually (re)installed as norms, and they come to seem quite solid and substantial. Yet there are differences, gaps, moments of confusion, and multiple possibilities for meaning among these citations … By highlighting such ambiguities, tensions and failures, gender critics call attention to the contingency of supposed biblical contributions to sex/gender systems, suggesting that recognition of this contingency may well provide *openings for the destabilization and transformation of those systems* (2007: 191-92 emphasis added).

The significance of the italicized sentence is not lost on those who often experience Biblical texts wielded against them for their sex/gender choices in contemporary debates, but it might not be immediately obvious to a general audience. Gender criticism is, in my view, just as engaged as feminist criticism, and for similar reasons, not least because it problematizes facile attempts to use the Bible as some kind of universal moral guardian of behaviour and identities. But if gender criticism is fully informed by feminism then it is not just a matter of sharing hermeneutical strategies, but of being willing to embrace political visions, and not shy away from making the contemporary relevance of the work clear, even when, or *especially* when, that involves a necessary critique of scriptural texts. Currently, its practitioners need to offer more detail about the import of their work rather than leaving it for interested readers to make the connections.

The need for such engagement became very clear when reading some of the claims made in Rooke's (2007) collection of essays mentioned earlier. In the preface, Rooke hails gender criticism as a vital project which will include heightening 'awareness of how culturally-determined understandings of gender have shaped ... textual artefacts such as the Hebrew Bible and associated literature' (2007: vii). It will help biblical scholars 'begin to appreciate the multi-layered complexities and fathom some of the depths of meaning inherent in those artefacts' (2007: vii). I don't doubt it; gender criticism carves open a new space for understanding the text and its contexts. But outside the field of biblical studies, gender criticism has a more practical connection with live issues to do with, say, the experiences of

those identified as transgender, intersex; with the ways in which such identities are defined by institutional discourses and counter-defined by those who inhabit such identities.[13] What I want to emphasize is that it is not just about looking at how gender norms might have shaped the construction of characters in biblical texts: it is about seeing what import that might have for actual situations in the present world where the Bible remains a significant, vital text. What is not currently being grasped is that those who work in biblical studies have much to offer in this regard, because the Bible is one of those regulating discourses, a cultural artefact of considerable significance and influence, which is regularly deployed politically to bolster statements on such matters as transsexuality, civil partnerships, anti-discrimination law, gay adoption and parenting and so on. Gender criticism can certainly highlight how gendered and sexed categories are produced and reinforced, how sexualities are produced and regularized, but the contemporary effects of such work needs to made clear. Gender criticism, in other words, could be a vital adjunct to something we might call 'biblical politics': the critical interrogation of the ways in which the Bible is deployed in the contemporary world to support ideological positions.

However, for gender criticism to do this, it needs to go further than it currently does. For example, in her essay on 'Gender and Nakedness in Leviticus 18' Rooke uses the tools of gender criticism to articulate clearly what is there in the text *and* to highlight its significance. She explains how the narratorial decision to use bodily terminology rebounds on him, for by using gendered terminology to proscribe inappropriate male/female relations that cause such anxiety, he (unwittingly?) creates a gender category of the 'female male'. Exegetically, Rooke can use this to explain the violence of the punishment and to see how the mechanics of gender construction happens in a textual artefact. It is enlightening. She documents how recent history in western society has demonstrated an inability to cope with intersex—using surgery to make such bodies conform to male or female categories (2007: 31 n. 27). The implication is that the biblical legislator is using a similar category to intersex (physical females who are spoken of in male terms) as a prospect of horror. They should daunt any self-respecting Israelite male from desiring sexual contact with them. The extra step I would like this paper to take is one that moves the discussion from the biblical text to its import for contemporary life. Rooke makes good use of intersex studies for the purposes of a rich textual analysis, but does not go on to consider the impact of her work for contemporary intersex readers. Her findings

13. For examples of how theorizing about intersex conditions can inform contemporary religious debate see Susannah Cornwall (2010, 2012)

could have led to the observation that such texts are not very liberating for intersex readers or those who support their cause; rather she has unearthed an intersex text of terror (unless of course such readers wish to wear their 'threat' to the social order as a wickedly humorous badge of merit).

So; to do gender criticism within biblical studies involves engagement with feminist theory, queer theory and critical studies in masculinities, not in the least ignoring the fact that its findings will differ according to the specific context in which research is done. Accordingly, it will engage with a wide range of disciplines in order to unpack answers to the questions it poses. It is a rich, thick hermeneutic that calls upon the practitioner to be conversant with a wide range of studies and contemporary theory. It troubles boundaries in the process; creating new, unexpected and perhaps uncomfortable dialogue partners for scholars as disciplinary boundaries between conventional biblical studies and other types of scholarship are rendered permeable.[14] Its practitioners are those who are willing to analyse the ways in which sex/gender constructions create monstrous bodies, normative bodies and a full range in between those poles, and see how such constructions have been used to reinforce heteronormative discourses and practices in the contemporary world. And finally, but most importantly, gender criticism, at its best, would take ethical responsibility for its hermeneutical results. It would not be a matter of being simply intrigued by 'what might happen if we looked at a biblical text in this way'; it would be about an active consideration of the fact that LGBTI-Q readers are going to be reading this essay and considering oneself accountable to that audience, just as much as one is accountable to an audience that is presumed to be heterosexual.[15]

These things, I argue, take us beyond the current brief of feminist biblical scholarship and merit a shifting of the ground. As subsequent chapters demonstrate, leaving feminist biblical scholarship to continue on its own path is no longer sufficient to the task before us. This claim will, I know, provoke much dissent. But the next section details how that dissent and controversy was handled outside biblical studies, for it will be instructive

14. The ways in which it troubles disciplinary boundaries are discussed in Guest (2011).

15. There are variations on how this acronym is represented, but LGBTI-Q is used heuristically in this publication to refer to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer. It thus identifies what is a very loose grouping and it is important to recognize that it can never do justice to the separate concerns of each. In fact it does little to acknowledge the antagonisms within and between them or the insensitive expulsions that can occur as a form of border policing. The hyphen indicates that queer is a signifier that breaks with identity labels and often calls them into question.

to note how the move from Women's Studies to Gender Studies prompted debate and partial resolutions in non-biblical studies domains.

Gender Criticism and the Future for Feminism

The controversy provoked by the emergence of Gender Studies programmes and Centres was hotly debated. The embers are still there, but over the past decade the fierceness of the debate has died down and worst fears have been assuaged as Women's Studies and Gender Studies Centres worked out their common ground. This is evident in the differences of tone and content as one of the staple texts of Women's Studies moved through three editions.[16] Concerns about the move to Gender Studies are still evident in the introductory essay, but to a far lesser extent. The introduction to the third edition simply documents that 'an important change since the 1990s has been the increasing use of the term "gender studies" ... Though this shift has caused much debate, without doubt it can be argued that gender has now fundamentally informed many disciplines in the social sciences and humanities' (Richardson and Robinson 2008: xviii). This third edition accordingly reflects 'innovative work ... on gender as a concept, queer theory and critical theorizing on masculinity' (2008: xviii), speaks of the 'changing theoretical landscape' and incorporates 'new chapters on masculinity, sexuality and queer theory, cyber technologies, gender and politics, and the concept of gender' (2008: xix). Nonetheless, among the range of issues provoked by the shift to Gender Studies, three concerns become very clear: The potential dilution/taming of feminism, the erasure of women, and the loss of autonomy for Women's Studies.

First: the dilution/taming of feminism. The concern here is that Gender Studies would still be informed by feminist theory, but not as we know it—it would be a de-clawed feminism with certain kinds of feminism pushed to the periphery in the new framework. Writing from the context of Women's Studies, Victoria Robinson (1997: 10) thus noted the general unease that ensues from having political feminism in the academy (deemed to be 'too radical' for it) and she justifiably wondered how far the shift to the nomenclature of 'gender' was a way of taming feminist analysis for a more politically expedient, safer referent, deemed more inclusive by its encompassing name and remit. She notes those who welcome this new inclusive

16. I refer here to excellent landmark text *Introducing Women's Studies: Feminist Theory and Practice* co-edited by Robinson and Richardson in 1993, fully revised and re-written in 1997, and which was further revised and significantly re-titled as *Introducing Gender and Women's Studies* for its third edition in 2008.

terminology of 'gender' (Bem, 1995, Walter 1994) and comments 'it is more likely to be accepted in the establishments than Women's Studies as it is seen both as less threatening and as a less restricted field of study' (1997: 23). But she also refers her reader to those who 'have voiced concerns, amongst others, that the move to gender studies is worrying because the notion of gender is theoretically inadequate' (1997: 23-24) such as Evans (1990), and Richardson and Robinson (1994).

This concern was fuelled by the emergence of early studies of men and masculinities. Some of these proclaimed feminist credentials in the opening pages only to largely ignore it in the remainder of the work. Some were not feminist in the least. Some were familiar with certain feminists and their work but neglected the full breadth and variety of the feminisms that have been developed over the past decades. Could this new field of men and masculinities be trusted to take account of the substantial amount of feminist theorizing that has been undertaken, to recognize and appreciate its significance for the study of men and masculinities? Could it see how female masculinity would need to be part of such studies? Would it have the practical, political focus that characterizes feminist work and, indeed, makes it 'feminist'?

For Canaan and Griffin (1990) it was the alertness of feminist scholars in reading and reviewing this material, challenging its oversights, resisting any patronizing gestures, and rearticulating the importance of addressing social inequalities that meant practitioners of masculinity studies remained challenged. The feminist edge was maintained through such interventions. And herein lies a strong point in favour of retaining a distinctive subject area of feminist studies, even though it does create an uncomfortable image of the feminist scholar as the disciplining (and nagging?) mother who is just as likely to irritate as encourage. Perhaps a more productive image than the 'nagging mother' is Elizabeth Freeman's reference to temporal drag. Picking up the focus on drag in queer theory, Freedman suggests that (lesbian) feminism might offer a 'gravitational pull' upon fast-moving developments. Arguing that there is no uncomplicated linear development from feminist to queer, she speaks of co-existence, conflict, complex commitments. She does not want to use the image in the more popularist way, where lesbian feminism is 'cast as the big drag, drawing politics inexorably back to essentialized bodies, normative visions of women's sexuality, and single-issue identity politics' (2000: 728). Rather, her concept of temporal drag has a positive role to play in bringing pressures to bear on the present, of making some lessons previously learned are not forgotten, and of resisting temptations to present the past in monochrome ways that do not do justice to its complexities. If we could see feminist interventions as providing a

useful drag, on prompting newer movements to slow down and account for themselves, this might be a helpful way forward. Until then, the continuing intervention of feminist scholars in this rapidly growing field of masculinity studies ensures feminism's continued relevance as a highly significant dialogue partner and that its issues are not sidelined or misrepresented.

The second issue concerns the erasure of women, or, as Robinson puts it, fear that 'concentration on gender as opposed to placing women as the main category of analysis means that we see both women and men as equally oppressed, and the power imbalance is obscured, thus depoliticizing the relationship between the sexes' (1997: 23). Several feminists were vocal about this matter. De Groot and Maynard (1993:6) queried how far the change of paradigm might render women invisible yet again as studies in masculinity or male/female relations no longer focus specifically on women as the primary category of analysis. It was not just a fear that a focus on women *per se* would be lost, but that it would not *confront and challenge* the inequalities and social subordination of women. Mary Evans's paper repeatedly brings attention back to the material conditions in which women live and work with such statements as: 'However much individual women may be endlessly constructing or regulating their personal identity, they are still paid about three-quarters of the wages of men and are still largely excluded from political power (1990: 458); or: 'increasing numbers of women attempt to raise children on inadequate incomes and/or are forced into relationships with men in order to maintain their material survival or that of their children' (1990: 461). So despite an acknowledgement of the difficulties of using the category 'woman/en' due to its easy entrapment into false universalizing, she championed its continued strategic usage, objecting that

> It is all too socially convenient to abandon the uncompromising polarity of woman/man in favour of a more neutral term, a term which seems to suggest that the interests of the sexes have now converged and that the differences in life changes (not to mention economic rewards) that exist between women and men are matters of choice (1990: 461).

These accusations have to be seen in the context where the shift to Centres for Gender Studies would inevitably turn attention to more diffuse projects thereby dispersing the focus on women and their material conditions. Insofar as poststructuralist theorizing informs gender criticism, which has been widely criticized for its lack of attention to material factors, the fear was realistic.

A third matter of concern related to the autonomy of feminist space. This entire debate has to be in understood in the context of a changing scenario

that saw men's studies snowballing while Women's Studies, as a distinctive space of feminist theorizing and political action, was under threat. Canaan and Griffin did not want to see women's posts in Women's Studies lost while men's studies offered new avenues for 'research, publishing deals, and (even more) jobs for the already-well-paid boys holding prestigious positions' (1990: 208). When the economic context demands cuts (and over a decade later such cuts are worse than they envisaged), would academic institutions 'be all too eager to fund less potentially controversial work in the name of "doing something on gender"' (1990: 211)? Robinson and Richardson (1994) thus cautioned that it was not simply a matter of what happens to 'women' but to relatively young programmes of women's studies that were not yet securely established. The threat of closure hung over several programmes and Centres for Women's Studies during the 1990s and a shift to Gender Studies, while offering a lifeline, was resented because of the loss of dedicated space, budget and freedom to appoint staff and design a curriculum centred entirely on Women's Studies. Notwithstanding, if continued funding could be secured for programmes and staff by virtue of new nomenclature, then the shift to Gender Studies would be, at least, a pragmatic strategy. Thus, as Wilhelm (2003) observes, in an economic climate where schools and departments vie against each other for funding and continued existence, it makes sense to utilize the language of gender rather than 'women' or 'feminism' for the purposes of survival. Sedgwick said as much back in 1992. Alert to the ways 'gender criticism' could operate as a euphemism for 'another, equally appropriate way of designating "feminist studies"' she suggested that shifting to the more '*emollient* name' could be a shrewd tactical move (1992: 272, emphasis added).

However, if Gender Studies was to be established more integrally within HE, then the cost of that move from the periphery needed to be carefully weighed. Evans thought that Women's Studies' location on the periphery represented an autonomous place from which to disrupt market-driven and government-led interventions that lead to educational refocusing based on false assumptions. For example, prioritizing of subjects that supposedly guarantee employment or attempts to reorganize of the curriculum 'to educate people in what is agreed as relevant' (1990: 459) can be based on assumptions that 'the interests of women and men as similar' (1990: 457). It is 'a short step from this to the uncritical acceptance of the idea that we are all bound by the same values and the same perceptions' (1990: 459). The autonomy of Women's Studies provides robust antidote to such assumptions and introduces a highly critical response to university curricula. Such work, in her view, 'is alarmingly absent from many aspects of the curriculum; it is acceptable to study such things as gender and sexuality

because they do not pose inherent questions about power and can take the form of descriptive accounts of aspects of social life' (1990: 460). But, as she goes on to say, 'to plant a subversive debating forum into something as central to the interests of the dominant culture as the university curriculum' (1990: 460) provides an ongoing raison d'être for Women's Studies.

Evans was not alone in this concern about the institutionalizing of women's programmes within newly defined Centres for Gender Studies and the effect this would have on priorities. Robinson expressed concern that the grounding of feminist theorizing in the women's movement would be lost in the institutionalization of Gender Studies, where the focus on 'research publications, rather than on the use of such research for political and social change' (1996: 111) might characterize this new domain.

Ultimately, the tone that comes through in all these discussions is that contributors to the discussion were feeling under intense pressure. Accusations of political sell-out flew around in the heat of the debate, and some feminists were asking keen questions about the cost of moving from the periphery toward the centre and from Women's Studies to Gender Studies:

> Would a Centre for Gender Studies be merely based on an *implicit* understanding that the research carried out there will be conducted with feminist principles in mind? In that case, would our reluctance to name what we do adequately and truthfully, namely 'Feminist Studies', be merely strategic? Are we the dutiful daughters who only tool up after we've left our father's house? (Wilhelm 2003: 21).

Such questions resonate strongly with Brenner's (2008) review cited in this book's introduction. Why do we need a shift from 'feminist' to 'gender'? what will such a move mean in practice? who wins, who loses? The debate cited above has demonstrated that some of these important questions have already been aired outside of biblical studies. However, it is to that latter domain that we must now turn in order to give an indication of how similar concerns might be addressed. At this point, I do not offer any definitive response, for the successive chapters continue the discussion of what a shift to gender criticism means, who wins/loses, and what is at stake, in much greater depth. The debate does, however supply some indicative introductory thoughts as prompts for that subsequent discussion as we pick up the three major concerns mentioned above.

First, the threat of diluting/taming feminist biblical scholarship. Fears that only some kinds of feminist theorizing would be included in any shift to gender criticism certainly prompted a feminist monitoring of the emerging work on gender criticism, of the kind that Canaan and Griffin (1990) mentioned above. However, it is also worth noting that this is nothing new for feminist biblical scholarship. When the porno-prophetics debate was at

its height, Robert Carroll, describing himself as 'a non-feminist man who is sympathetic to certain features of feminist thought' (1995: 281 n.2) wrote of acceptable and unacceptable versions of feminism. On the one hand he commends the 'stimulating' work of his colleagues, Brenner and van Dijk-Hemmes, but on the other he notes how they had been informed by definitions of pornography that derive from 'the extreme end of the spectrum, so that even men who may be sympathetic to some of the central demands of feminism will find themselves alienated by a hopelessly skewed discussion' (1995: 295). Radical feminism, in his view, is narrow and slanted and has no place in the intellectual academy. This is not the place to enter into a critical dialogue with Carroll's claims, though I share Reinhartz's view that it illustrated very well 'the high emotion that can sometimes greet the feminist enterprise' (2000: 58). His essay is noted only to illustrate the fact that there is already some debate as to which faces of feminism are acceptable and which offend. In fact, arguments about the faces of feminism have also been happening between feminists themselves; the categories applied by Osiek (1985)—rejectionist, loyalist, revisionist, sublimationist and liberationist—are to some extent indicative of hermeneutic and political squabbles. 'Rejectionist' labelled those who believed the critique was not thoroughgoing enough. Pamela Milne argued, for example, that it was imperative for the feminist critique to not be predominantly undertaken in a confessional, salvage context if feminist biblical criticism was to carry any weight with secular feminists hitherto suspicious of how biblical feminists 'subordinate their feminism to their faith commitments' (1997: 58). Heather McKay took a similar line, suggesting that loyalists (Osiek, Weems, Fiorenza, Trible) were not thoroughgoing enough given how God remained 'above reproach' (1997: 72). McKay mentions Cady Stanton (1898) as an early antidote to such positions, as does Milne (1997: 52) who appreciates how Stanton took issue with the Bible itself, exposing it as an oppressive document that contains degrading teachings about women that have been hugely influential upon the treatment of women in Jewish and Christian traditions ever since.

In addition, there have always been those who questioned the relevance of any kind of feminist critique. Fuchs, for example, notes how some female (not feminist) scholars added grist to the mill, criticizing feminist approaches as

> an aberration of the biblical scholarly endeavour … Feminist critique of the biblical text is presented as anachronistic, while feminist critique of male-dominated scholarship is presented as unfair. The implication of such work is that feminist critique is strident, or unscholarly. The tendency there is to revert to the authoritative biblical scholarship

> of the fathers of the field, and either to bypass or to excoriate the feminist revisions that have challenged this authority (2008: 52).

Fuchs also notes the tactic of taking 'radical or poststructural feminists to task for being too *strident* or *extreme*' (2008: 52) especially when feminist scholarship is perceived to have already achieved its aim of obtaining some kind of equality in the field.

So—the potential to marginalize some feminist critiques, or to tame 'extreme' politics or to criticize others for not going far enough—has long been there. When it comes to gender criticism, those arguments are bound to re-surface, especially bearing in mind Sawyer's argument that it is more 'profound' than reformist scholarship has been. The shift to gender criticism does seem to carry with it the more 'rejectionist' versions of feminist biblical scholarship. It is not, therefore, in the business of diluting feminist politics. Quite the contrary, it is about applying the feminist critique even more rigorously, not only for women, but for the wider gender and sexual spectrum. To this end, it is certainly likely to take only some versions of feminist theorizing with it and the more 'loyalist' feminist critics will probably find the new terrain difficult to inhabit, as noted above.

The second concern related to the erasure of feminist interests within gender criticism. There is a tendency to see gender criticism as shorthand for feminist-inspired work on men and masculinities, largely undertaken by male scholars. Men will be the new objects of study and, often, by men, if one considers how male-dominated the general field of masculinity studies has become. If gender criticism blossoms, then feminist biblical scholars need to be fully engaged in its work. Forays by men into feminist space have already been viewed with some concern. Alice Bach (1993) criticizes the work of those who attempt to be critically prescriptive about feminism; while Esther Fuchs's essay 'Men in Biblical Feminist Scholarship' could justifiably be re-titled 'Men Behaving Badly in Feminist Scholarship' since she finds several examples of dubious practice. Fuchs's response to this problem interestingly redefines the discrete space for the feminist scholar: 'Male scholars in biblical feminism must take special pains to credit properly, to respect the authority of the feminist scholar, and above all to understand their own position as interlopers in a field that was created specifically so as to evade male judgment, authority, and hegemony' (2003: 110).

At the moment, for all its burgeoning elsewhere, work on men and masculinities in biblical studies is in its infancy. At the time of writing there were only a handful of monographs dedicated to a discussion of men and masculinities in the Hebrew Bible, along with a small number of essays within edited publications. In this context it is good to see those two books edited by Deborah Rooke (2007, 2009) and the female contributors to

Creangă's (2010) collection, demonstrating the relevance of this field of study to feminist scholars and ensuring that the studies of masculinities is not left to those who identify primarily with that gender. Feminists have given plenty of attention to masculinities in terms of analysing male dominance, patriarchal systems and androcentric interests, but while there has been analysis of male characters insofar as they impact on the female characters, the focus has remained firmly on women. Sawyer sees this: 'focusing primarily on female characters in biblical literature feminist critique has often overlooked the implications of constructed masculinity' (2007: 8). As noted above, essays on Hannah comment critically on her relations with Elkanah and Eli, but attention to how the depiction of those men fulfil or unsettle gender norms is not thoroughly analysed. To do so runs the risk of taking the emphasis away from the woman under scrutiny, and when feminism was emerging, that would not do. Yet herein lies the continued raison d'être of feminist scholarship. There is a grit and determination about feminist criticism that drives its focus and its questions. It refuses to be pulled off track. Having exposed the centuries-long erasure of women from history and from history-writing, and worked very hard to get the feminist critique into the academy as a respected and established approach, feminist scholars pursue their analyses with a clear focal point. In the marriage of theory with personal interests and political commitments, there is a sense of *compunction* about feminist biblical scholarship. The work is done because it matters. And it continues to need doing because it continues to matter. This does not necessarily make for defensive scholars, strident agenda, or narrowly blinkered sites of enquiry; rather it speaks to feminism's continued importance to the field of biblical studies as an academic discipline and (perhaps more) its importance to the area of biblical usage in contemporary cultures.

Talk of a wider lens creates discomfort about what will happen to the work still to be done on feminist projects and the understandable desire to keep the focus predominantly upon women. We are nowhere near the time of saying that this work has been done. It was only in 2000 that the work of documenting all the named and unnamed women in scripture was completed (Meyers *et al.,* 2000). The *Feminist Companion to the Bible*, rightly hailed as a landmark series, is but a small remedy to the several shelves of existing commentaries on biblical texts, and many narratives remain underresearched from feminist perspectives. The continued existence of the Bible as a hugely influential text demands the continued feminist engagement with its use (and abuse) in contemporary contexts. Given these factors, it seems that this is not time to talk of the death of feminist biblical scholarship or of moving beyond it as if its aims had been achieved, or that its

approach was somehow dated and in need of an engine change and accompanying change of nomenclature. However, militating against that, the blind spots of feminist biblical scholarship have to be taken into account. There remains the significant fact that something called gender criticism emerged independently from a perceived vacuum within in feminist biblical scholarship. Why was this? These questions are taken up in Chapters 2 and 3 and the findings of these chapters have to be worked through before weighing up whether the benefits of maintaining a distinct feminist biblical scholarship can overcome the problems from which it suffers.

The third concern related to the autonomy of space for work on women and for feminist theory, about funding and continued existence. This is now sharper than ever. In the UK context, proposed cuts to higher education are driving cuts in universities' provision and the effect of this for departments of theology or religious studies have been alarmingly evident. If departments that cater for biblical studies continue to exist, in the stripping down of departments to cover decreasing budgets, how far will feminist hermeneutics be considered a vital force deserving of tenured positions and funding? It could be that propelling feminist work into the sphere of gender criticism, and by locating it within a Gender Studies context, will prove strategically useful. Not only would interdisciplinary connections make feminist biblical scholarship more economically viable, but more than that, the interdisciplinarity would be good for all concerned. Feminist biblical scholarship simply has not made much of an impact outside its own very limited borders. Forging links with interdisciplinary Gender Studies programmes would be an excellent way of demonstrating the continuing cultural impact of the Bible in contemporary debate. Subject domains can all benefit from putting individual modules forward for rich, collaborative programmes of studies that cut across disciplinary boundaries. It keeps feminist work alive and a location within Gender Studies would also bring critical feedback and problematize it in helpful ways.

Then I must make reference to the postfeminist context in which we all work. The reference to postfeminism in the introduction to this book was not made randomly; the ability of feminist biblical scholarship to continue inspiring students who have been raised in such climate can no longer be assumed. 'Feminist' is not a word that sits easily among new generations. When introducing feminist hermeneutics into modules I would be very surprised if I were the only tutor who observed them contributing to discussions by either disassociating themselves firmly from it, or when sympathetic, prefacing their contribution with 'I'm not a feminist but …'. This is consistent with the general UK postfeminist milieu. Geri Halliwell, cultural figurehead for the promotion of 'girl power' for a *Spice Girl* generation,

when asked if she was a feminist conceded that she sympathized with its agenda. However, she simultaneously noted her fear that 'feminism will emasculate and demoralize men' and disassociated herself from its image, saying: 'For me feminism is bra-burning lesbianism. It's very unglamorous. I'd like to see it rebranded. We need to see a celebration of our femininity and softness' (Moorhead 2007). We no longer work in a context like that of the second wave when the connections between feminist biblical scholarship and a politicized generation were more easily forged. As Angela Wilson puts it, feminism

> seems to forever belong to a baby-boomer few who fought at its vanguard and, having earned the right to pass on wisdom, have become its only spokeswomen … while students ... may support equal pay, women's right to divorce and child-care initiatives, they would wince at being labelled with the 'F-word'. While feminism seems to belong to one generation, queer seems to belong to another: one respected but dated, the other cutting-edge and cool (2006: 156).

Gender criticism is not, in reality, any less contentious than feminist criticism. When utilized to its full potential to unseat heteronormativity and categories of sex, gender and sexuality it will be seen to have its own radical agenda, though it does need to make more evident the transformative consequences of its theorizing. Its engagement with poststructuralism does not mean that the material conditions of existence have to fall out of the picture. Gender criticism has the potential to benefit those who have been historically excluded or marginalized—those who identify as sexual and gender outlaws. Ultimately, the work that is done on men and masculinities, on intersex, transgender, lesbian, gay and queer issues will potentially be for the good of society as a whole, striking a way forward to counter the conservative and often hostile ideologues that use the Bible to uphold misogynistic and homophobic values.

Yet for all this radical agenda, somehow 'gender criticism' does not have the same explosive effect as the 'F-word'. Yes, the change of name does render it less overtly threatening. Pilcher and Whelehan talk of a less provocative nomenclature that sits 'more easily within the institution' (2004: xii). Gender criticism sounds more benign and inclusive. It doesn't (initially) seem to clang the political bell that feminism rings out so resonantly. It doesn't carry the connotations of strident militarism that will forever be associated with feminism. It doesn't single out a category (women) as its main practitioners and focus of study and doesn't bear the connotations of disassociation from, and hostility to, men. Students can get on with enjoying gender criticism without fearing that their male peers and friends will cast a wary eye their way, without having initially to declare their distance

from it with 'I'm not a gender critic but …' statements. To this end Sedgwick (1992) is right; the change of terminology can be simply a useful trick of the light disguising the fact that the F-word is the driving force that gave birth to, and sits at the heart of, the G-spot.

Conclusion

Outside biblical studies the shift to Gender Studies did not render feminist work old fashioned, it has not erased women from the curriculum and it has provided a strategic life-line for programmes under threat. It has interrogated feminism, pointed out its blind spots, utilized it for new outcomes. It has been good for feminist theorizing, as the critical debate has passed in both directions, each interrogating the other. It has not sounded a death knell for feminism; quite the contrary. Feminist studies have been invigorated by the debate and provocations and have had a vital watching brief over studies in men and masculinities. However, as we have noted, in biblical studies the language is of gender criticism rather than Gender Studies. Rather than an umbrella home into which a range of approaches can sit, it bespeaks a single approach and its appearance thus raises inevitable questions; not least whether the new angles of vision provided by gender criticism are of such significance that we can never return to what was feminist biblical scholarship. Is it in need of such a radical overhaul that a new nomenclature is called for so that it is more evident that the study of men and masculinities are included within its remit, as is attention to LGBTI-Q issues and perspectives? Will dictionaries of hermeneutics no longer need to have an entry marked 'feminist', other than for telling a past story of hermeneutical developments? The following chapters provide more detailed discussion of the issues before arriving at a conclusion to these complex questions.

2

Que(e)rying the Agenda: The Impact of Queer Perspectives for Feminist Scholarship

Introduction

As Chapter 1 indicated, queer perspectives are a major feature within Gender Studies, where significant space is devoted to them. Insights from queer theorizing and attention to ways in which gender is enmeshed with a range of sexualities are included as a matter of course; and this is seen as a positive move forward. Queer theorizing has not, however, sat easily within feminist scholarship. Its emergence was subject to considerable critical scrutiny from the outset and, in some quarters the terms of the discussion came to be cast in such an antagonistic framework that queer and feminist writings appeared to be 'theoretically incompatible in their modes of reference, their priorities and their calls for action' (Richardson *et al.* 2006: 3).

Section one of this chapter explores the reasons why queer theory emerged as a separate approach that asked distinctive questions, noting particularly how its theorists were responding to a feminist framework that did not meet their needs. This has significance for biblical studies insofar as it reveals certain blind spots within (secular) feminist theory that continue to exist in feminist approaches to biblical texts. Section two identifies the different landscape shaped by the emergence of queer theory, explaining how and why disputes arose between feminist and queer theorists, not in order to reinforce the antagonisms, but because they help to shed light on why any proposed shift to gender criticism, informed as it is by queer theory, raises important questions for feminist biblical scholars. It also questions whether 'gender criticism' is a helpful term, given (a) that it does not overtly signify how this approach is informed by work in queer studies and (b) that it is better to think in terms of *hetero*gender in order to make visible the connection of gender norms with heterosexuality that is often

being analysed. *Genderqueer* criticism is proposed as a more useful and accurate term, bringing together, as it does, the connections of gender and sexuality in a rich field of analysis. Section three then moves the focus to areas of common ground between feminist and queer theorists. It considers how intersections between the two can be emphasized so that the queer vs. feminist debate can be framed positively, rather than antagonistically. This chapter needs to be read in conjunction with the following chapter's case study; the latter demonstrates how the theorizing discussed here can make a difference to a specific debate within feminist biblical studies.

Feminist Limitations and the Emergence of Queer Theory

New theoretical approaches regularly mark out their own turf by pointing out the flaws or gaps in previous approaches. McLaughlin rightly points out how academic thinking can, therefore, often run in cycles where the new area of research presents itself as a solution to the failings of previous approaches which might variously be described 'as dominating, exclusionary, narrow, and no longer appropriate for current times' (2006: 71). This inevitably produces a stronger focus on differences and prompts the debate towards a more heated and antagonistically framed series of exchanges than is probably necessary. Thus it was that 'queer' took off as the 'where-it's-at' theory, the fashionable new slant on culture, the critical undo-er that problematized radically any sense that identities such as gay or lesbian were core realities. In its street-inspired activism and politics of transgression, in positioning itself as an approach that squatted everywhere but refused to be defined or packaged, it managed to upset everyone. But it is the disturbing ripples it sent feminism's way that need to be addressed here.

There is no universally agreed story about its lineage. 'Queer' emerged from a cauldron of late twentieth century theorizing which included the legacy of feminist thinking and its attention to difference, the field of lesbian and gay studies, poststructuralist theory, Foucault's *History of Sexuality*, and street activism particularly around the AIDS crisis. Narratives of its birth draw on these common elements but each places different emphases on the various theoretical and activist antecedents. Notwithstanding, its emergence is routinely associated with some key publications—those of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick (1994), Judith Butler (1990), and Teresa de Lauretis (1991) who coined the term 'queer theory', in order to problematize the use of the phrase 'lesbian and gay' as a collective for largely undifferentiated people. However, prior to these publications and of relevance to this chapter is the oft-cited essay by Gayle Rubin 'Thinking Sex', first published in 1984, which merits some detailed attention.

Credited with setting a new field of sex studies on its way[1], Rubin argued that while feminist theory is a good tool for examining gender-based issues, when it comes to issues that concern sexualities 'feminist analysis becomes misleading and often irrelevant. Feminist thought simply lacks angles of vision which can fully encompass the social organization of sexuality' (1992: 309). Feminist theory, including lesbian feminist theory, was said to be ill-equipped to deal with this for a number of reasons.

First, for all the talk of 'difference' as second wave feminism fractured along various intersecting lines such as class, colour and sexuality, Rubin pointed out that lesbian experiences were not simply variants of the oppression suffered by 'all' women on account of their gender. Singled out for their *sexual* choices they attract the 'same social penalties as have gay men, sadomasochists, transvestites, and prostitutes' (1992: 308). Her paper was written in a United States context where such penalties were evident. There had been overt hostility in the form of crackdowns, with police busts on gay bars and bath houses, arrests, and the emergence of queer bashing as 'a significant recreational activity for young urban males' (1992: 271). In addition there was 'rampant' discrimination enforcing closeted identities in the workplace, especially in the higher echelons of society, and the general lack of protection afforded by society to those who were identified as gay and lesbian persons (1992: 292). Incorporating lesbians uncritically into the category of 'woman' thus did not do justice to the situations in which many lesbians lived and worked. In fact, the move to privilege lesbianism as 'the rage of *all women* condensed to the point of explosion'[2] erased their sexual particularity. In a later interview, by Judith Butler, Rubin clarified her position:

> By defining lesbianism entirely as something about supportive relations between women, rather than as something with sexual content, the woman-identified-woman approach essentially evacuated it … of any sexual content. It made it difficult to tell the difference between a lesbian and a non-lesbian … Adrienne Rich in a way codified a certain approach that was widespread at the time, in which people didn't want to distinguish very much between lesbians and other women

1. The collection of essays published in Seidman *et al* (2006) is useful for defining this field and acknowledges the influential work of Rubin. The new domain of 'sexuality studies' has been recognized by Routledge with their eFocus on Sexuality Studies, which has already amassed a wide range of key titles.

2. This definition comes from the Radicalesbians' Manifesto (1997: 396) published originally in 1970. See Calhoun (1995) for details of how feminist promotion of the idea that all feminists could be political lesbians actually makes the sexual particularity of lesbians disappear.

> in close supportive relationships. And I found this both intellectually and politically problematic. A lot of things that were not by any stretch of the imagination lesbian were being incorporated into the category of lesbian. And this approach also diminished some of what was interesting and special about lesbians (1998: 48).

Second, the idealization of long-standing, monogamous, non-role-playing, non-penetrative relationships as the ultimate pro-women choice, contributed to the vilification of erotic practices which fell outside that model. When lesbians came to be seen as an ideal it was, as Wilton argues, a rarefied '*idea* of lesbianism' that was co-opted as 'some utopian safe space outside the troubled realm of male-dominated heterosexuality' (1996: 10, 11). But the realities of lesbian lives were not fully understood. And those realities did not conform to the portrait of feminist utopia that was being painted:

> It was simply intolerable that lesbians should appear to be or do anything which was associated with men and male power. And as the feminist deconstruction of male supremacy and patriarchal heterosex developed, more and more behaviours became identified as male supremacist power play: butch and femme, sadomasochism (S/M), using 'pornography', etc. etc. Having initially offered lesbians *for the first time* a political and social framework within which they could be proud of being lesbians rather than apologetically assimilationist, feminism swiftly went on to reject almost every aspect of traditional lesbian culture (Wilton, 1996: 11).

Although she acknowledges far greater institutional powers that attempt to regulate queer lives, Wilton writes of how such views, located within radical feminism, took a toll; specifically how their voices were internalized in the mind of one of her lovers in ways that were inimical to her well-being:

> looking at a woman with desire (offence—sexual objectification); gazing at, adoring or touching her breasts (offence—colluding with the fetishizing of women's body parts); lying on top of or underneath a woman (offence—replicating the power inequalities of heterosex); touching her buttocks or her cunt (offence—fragmenting her body); telling her (or even thinking) that she is 'beautiful' (offence—resorting to an oppressive patriarchal concept); caring whether either of you has an orgasm (offence—being goal-oriented in an inherently masculinist way); or doing it with the light on so you can watch each other (sexual objectification again). The idea of penetrating a woman's vagina, even with a fingertip, was regarded as such an overwhelmingly patriarchal act that it was unthinkable, while sex toys belonged in some padlocked chamber of horrors along with iron maidens, thumb-

> screws and racks. These rules severely limited the amount of sexual pleasure she was able to share with her similarly haunted partners (1996: 7-8).

Given that lesbians were facing the kind of socio-economic oppressions mentioned above, the added layer of criticism that came from within the feminist community was particularly hard to bear.[3] The criticism came in various forms, one of them via feminist lesbian historiography. Rubin accuses Faderman (1981) of creating a 'master narrative' of lesbian historiography wherein 'lesbians motivated by lust, or lesbians who were invested in butch/femme roles, were treated as inferior residents of the lesbian continuum, while some women who never had sexual desire for women were granted more elevated status' (1998: 48).[4] As Rubin concluded, such moves 'displaced sexual preference with a form of gender solidarity … While female intimacy and solidarity are important and overlap in certain ways with lesbian erotic passions, they are not isomorphic and they require a finer set of distinctions' (1998: 49).

3. Accounts of the antagonisms and brute force some butch lesbians had to face from society generally and the ways in which their dress and self-presentation made them easy targets, are eloquently expressed in (autobiographical) fiction such as Feinberg (1993), and the historical memories recorded in Nestle (1987). These hostilities came from many directions: from family and home, from the workplace, from religious communities, from medical assumptions and judgments, from random acts of street victimization, and, depending on where one lived, from the state. The ways in which some strands of feminism added to this antagonism has to be seen in its context. In a period of radical feminism where 'the feminist project is seen as the elimination of masculinity' (Crawley, 2001: 177), butch/femme ways of relating seemed completely out of step with the desire to overthrow patriarchal norms, and out of step with the desire to eliminate gender roles. O' Sullivan (1999) similarly writes of the confident condemnation of sex roles in the wake of the second wave women's liberation movement which dismissed the complex realities of many working-class lesbians, older lesbians and black lesbians. As she puts it: 'An older generation may not have known better. But to ape heterosexual relationships now could only be wilfully reactionary' (1999: 466). For examples of criticisms along these lines see Abbot and Love (1972, pp. 93-98), Jeffreys (1989, 1996), Smith (1989). Such opinions contrast sharply with the words of those actually engaged in butch/femme relationships for whom they are primarily complex erotic ways of relating (see the work of Joan Nestle, for example) or for whom they are better understood as *gendered* performances or indeed actually lesbian 'genders' (see, for example Levitt & Horne [2002]). For further discussion of the experience of being censured by the feminist movement they embraced see Hollibaugh and Moraga (1984), Roy (1993), Bender and Due (1994).

4. Though Faderman (1991) would later acknowledge that during the second wave period butch/femme identities came under condemnation for aping the relationships feminists were trying to abolish.

So, the issues thus far concern insufficient recognition of lesbian difference, caused partly by the emphasis in finding solidarity between all women and taking 'women' as a key subject of feminism. But it was not just an inadequate frame of reference; strands of feminism were actively hostile to the issues and people significant to Rubin—like Sandy Stone, now a well-known activist on Trans issues, then a male-toward-female transitioning record engineer hired, knowingly, by Olivia Records, a women's collective. The reaction of lesbian feminists outside that collective pressured Olivia to accept Stone's resignation amid claims that women-only space had been infiltrated by a man and due to the threatened boycott of Olivia's business.[5]

Rubin also found herself at odds with feminist criticism of lesbians working in the sex industry, of gay male practices, and of other 'deviant' sexual practices. Rubin's connection to the emerging activism of gays and lesbians and her solidarity with those vilified for their sexual choices meant that feminism was now experienced as anything but liberative:

> Transsexuality, male homosexuality, promiscuity, public sex, transvestism, fetishism, and sadomasochism were all vilified within a feminist rhetoric, and some causal primacy in the creation and maintenance of female subordination was attributed to each of them. Somehow, these poor sexual deviations were suddenly the ultimate expressions of patriarchal domination. I found this move baffling: on the one hand, it took relatively minor, relatively powerless sexual practices and populations and targeted them as the primary enemy of women's freedom and well-being. At the same time, it exonerated the more powerful institutions of male supremacy and the traditional loci for feminist agitation: the family, religion, job discrimination and economic dependency, forced reproduction, biased education, lack of legal rights and civil status, etc. (1998: 50).

She did not feel that this criticism was warranted or justified. She could not associate the people she knew with the 'deviants' of feminist criticism or see them as the 'apotheosis of patriarchy' (1998: 51).

Rubin's work struck key notes: the neglect or ignorance of the varied ways oppression can be experienced by sexual minorities, the way that the anti-sex stance of some feminist theorizing alienated those whose desires and practices were considered to be male-dominated, aping heterosexuality, and/or oppressive, together with the insensitive assumption that lesbians

5. For accounts of that time see Stone (1991) and Gabriel (1995). For one very influential example of a lesbian feminist argument—that Sandy Stone took a typically male 'dominant' role and divided the sisterhood due to 'his' invasion of women's space—see Raymond (1979).

can unproblematically be incorporated, indeed valorized, as women.[6] In order to tackle these issues, she argued that 'an autonomous theory and politics specific to sexuality must be developed' (1992: 309).

However, it is important to note that Rubin's call for a new mode of enquiry was not intended to leave feminism behind. Rubin hoped rather for a subsequent fruitful exchange: feminism's 'critique of gender hierarchy must be incorporated into a radical theory of sex, and the critique of sexual oppression should enrich feminism' (1992: 309). At the time, feminism was simply not best placed to undertake this work, especially given the 'sex wars'[7] that were then in full flow. So, she was not trying to create a fixed methodological divide between feminism and gay/lesbian studies, or a totally independent field of 'sex' studies, or to compose an attack on feminism *per se*. Feminism has always worked on issues of sexuality, and quite rightly continues to do so. What Rubin claimed was that 'it should not be seen as the *privileged* site for work on sexuality' (1998: 61, emphasis added) and she was 'trying to make some space for work on sexuality (and even gender) that did not presume feminism as the obligatory and sufficient approach' (1998: 61), since it was not 'the best tool for the job of getting leverage over issues of sexual variation' (1998: 63). When Butler pushed her to clarify what she envisaged for her study of sexuality, Rubin said 'I wanted to have better scholarship on sexuality, and a richer set of ideas about it than were readily available. I wanted to be able to articulate a sexual politics that did not assume that feminism was the last word and holy writ on the subject' (1998: 62). And it must be remembered that she was writing in the context of those sex wars, where the promise of feminism had recoiled upon those most ready to embrace it. For example, as Bender would later recall: 'When the women's movement started, I said, hot diggity, that's great. And I really feel like over the years the most hurtful and cutting rejections I've had have come from my sisters, primarily in the women's movement and later in the PC lesbian movement' (1994: 106).

Rubin could not have envisaged the institutionalization of lesbian and gay studies, or queer studies when she was writing her paper in the early

6. I do not wish to suggest that all lesbians resist the 'woman' category, but some, like Calhoun (1995, 2000), resist the association, and Wittig (1992) is well known for her persuasive tour de force that concluded, somewhat dramatically, that lesbians are not women.

7. 'Sex wars' relates to the contests for the public face of lesbianism, fought between those who thought certain features of lesbian dress and behaviour was deleterious to the feminist cause and those who found such criticism puritanical and unnecessarily censorial. See Echols (1984), Hollibaugh and Moraga (1984), Vance (1984), Hunt (1990), Duggan and Hunter (1995), Wilton (1996).

1980s. However, her belief that it was time for a study of sexualities to develop its own tools in a space somewhat aside from feminist theorizing was furthered by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and her landmark text *Epistemology of the Closet,* first published in 1990. In what has been hailed as 'arguably, the single most influential and paradigmatic figure in queer theory and LGBTI studies over the past quarter of a century' (Edwards 2009: 13), Sedgwick called for a way of thinking, of reading, that would produce an 'antihomophobic' mode of enquiry. To do this, she did not abandon feminist theorizing but rather let it take a back seat while she pioneered a new set of tools. Feminist analysis was already well developed, in her view, whereas a gay male or antihomophobic analysis was under-theorized and needed time and space to develop its own terms.

Feminist theorizing, in Sedgwick's view, has its lens set on gender and accordingly, on relations between men and women. While some useful accounts of intragender relations are acknowledged, she argued that the main direction of feminism's attention 'must necessarily be to the diacritical frontier between different genders.' (1994: 31). Accordingly, in her view, 'it is unrealistic to expect a close, textured analysis of same-sex relations through an optic calibrated in the first place to the coarser stigmata of gender difference (1994: 32)[8]. Sedgwick did not want to talk about sex in terms of a male/female marker; but of sexuality in terms of 'the array of acts, expectations, narratives, pleasures, identity-formations, and knowledges, in both women and men'—a realm of sexuality that 'is *virtually impossible to situate on a map determined by the feminist-defined sex/gender distinction*' (1994: 29, emphasis added). And she wanted an approach that would be inclusive of male homoerotic relations and the shared oppositions of lesbians and gay men. Such an approach would counter the censorial attitudes towards porn, sado-masochism and butch-fem(me)[9] ways of relating which, in her view, returned feminists to 19th century notions of pure womanhood. It seemed that the feminism that had gained influence was incapable of understanding or appreciating the 'irrepressible, relatively class-nonspecific popular culture in which James Dean has been as numinous an icon for lesbians as Garbo or Dietrich has for gay men' for this 'seems resistant to a purely feminist theorization' (1994: 38). Accordingly, Sedgwick, like Rubin, argued that what was needed was a new map and compass, but she acknowledged that the time would come when both the

8. Sedgwick's limiting of feminist interests to gender and to a narrow understanding of 'sex' has been contested; see, for example, Martin (1994).

9. Some prefer to follow the spelling 'fem' as used by Kennedy & Davis (1993) though 'femme' is the more ubiquitous.

antihomophobic mode of analysis and feminist theorizing would interact. That time was only deferred while the latter had the time and space to develop its own terms of reference. What is often not noted is that one of her most cited sentences, regularly taken as off-setting sexuality studies from feminist studies—'The study of sexuality is not coextensive with the study of gender; correspondingly, antihomophobic inquiry is not coextensive with feminist inquiry' (1994: 27)—has to be read in the light of this *temporary* situation.

As with Rubin, the social context of Sedgwick's work is important to bear in mind. Her book was being written in the late 1980s when 'gay-bashing' was rife and the notion of 'homosexual panic' was being used in courts as a legitimate defence for attacking gay-identified people. Like Rubin, Sedgwick also acknowledged how the feminism that embraced lesbians as part of a continuum for all women might have rescued lesbianism from pathology/demonization by making it an almost pure distillation of feminist theory and politics, but simultaneously divorced the lesbian from solidarity with gay men and 'homosexual' issues. Sedgwick saw how this then facilitated a 'homophobic reading of gay male desire (as a quintessence of the male)' which was criticized variously for being promiscuous, superficial, permissive (1994: 37).

The space carved open by Rubin and Sedgwick was quickly occupied. In addition to the *Journal of Homosexuality* founded in 1974 and pre-existing non-institutionalized publications[10], dedicated journals sprang up such as *Journal of the History of Sexuality* (founded 1990), *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* (1993), *Journal of Lesbian* Studies (1996), *Sexualities* (1998). However, as this new field of study developed, 'lesbian and gay studies' could not contain a flurry of publications in transgender, transsexuality and intersex studies, and some turf wars were thrown into the mix.[11] This demonstrated what de Lauretis (1991) had already observed—that the umbrella nomenclature of 'lesbian and gay' could not do justice to difference—and it is to her key essay that we now turn.

In what is now becoming a familiar story, de Lauretis wrote about the conflict of allegiances:

> Since the late 60s, practically since Stonewall, North American lesbians have been more or less painfully divided between an allegiance to the women's movement, with its more or less overt homophobia ...

10. There were several journals circulating within lesbian and gay communities, such as *Lesbian Tide, Sinister Wisdom, and Christopher Street.*

11. See, as an example, the discussion of 'Butch/FTM Border Wars', in Halberstam (1998: 141-73).

> and its appropriation of lesbianism ... and an allegiance to the gay liberation movement, with its more or less overt sexism (1991: vii-viii).

And, like Sedgwick and Rubin, de Lauretis was aware of implications of this conflict:

> this division has been recast as an embattled, starkly polarized opposition between sex-radical or s/m lesbians and mainstream or cultural-feminist lesbians; an opposition whereby gay men are, on this side, subsumed under the undifferentiated category 'men' and/or not considered pertinent to lesbian life and thought, whereas, on the other side, they would represent the cultural model and the very possibility of lesbian radical sex (1991: viii).

In this context de Lauretis called for a new 'queer' theorizing which would not tie itself to labels such as 'lesbian' or 'gay', but rather problematize, transgress and transcend them (1991: v). Not only did the 'lesbian and gay' formula not do justice to the real differences between lesbians and gay men who did 'not know much about one another's sexual history, experience, fantasies, desire or modes of theorizing' (1991: viii); she also recognized that there was insufficient recognition of the differences *between* lesbians, or *between* gay men, or how 'attendant differences of class or ethnic culture, generational, geographical, and socio-political location' could be theorized (1991: viii). As a later paper confirms, her aim was to promote a more plural, thick and complex field of study: 'to displace the undifferentiated, single adjective *gay-and-lesbian* toward an understanding of sexual*ities* in their historical, material, and discursive specificities' (1997: 46). The resultant theorizing work would be 'queer' 'not for being about queers or produced by queers, but in its project of questioning, displacing, reframing or queering the dominant conceptual paradigms' (1999: 257). So, it is important to recognize that 'queer' is not an umbrella term for LGBTI-Q studies, though it has since often been used in such a way, but rather was meant to shatter the artificial notion of shared identities and take on the regimes that produce them. The legacy of her decision to pair 'queer' with 'theory' was, as Halperin remarks, 'more than merely mischievous: it was deliberately disruptive' (2003: 339). There was serious intent behind the humour insofar as 'she hoped both to make theory queer (that is, to challenge the heterosexist underpinnings and assumptions of what conventionally passed for "theory" in academic circles) and to queer theory (to call attention to everything that is perverse about the project of theorizing sexual desire and sexual pleasure)' (Halperin 2003: 340). In keeping with that spirit, Michael Warner, in his introductory essay to *Fear of a Queer Planet,* identified normalization as the target for the emerging queer theory where

it is theory that is made queer rather than having 'theory about queers'. As Warner noted: 'For both academics and activists, "queer" gets a critical edge by defining itself against the normal rather than the heterosexual, and normal includes normal business in the academy' (1993: xxvi).

This is an important, if not crucial development. When it comes to our discussion of feminist biblical scholarship it cautions that it is not merely a matter of incorporating lesbian, gay or trans voices, it is a case of looking at the heteronormative standpoint that is widely adopted within feminist biblical scholarship and que(e)rying its normative role within the academy. It seems odd to be describing its theory as normative—since feminist criticism operates with such a strong hermeneutic of suspicion and especially when considering Fiorenza's claim that feminist scholars are the resident aliens of the academy.[12] However, when it comes to looking for non-heterosexist perspectives or hetero-critical perspectives one finds, largely, silence—a heteronormative framework seems to be wholly adopted. This will be discussed further in section three below.

Prior to that, a quick summary: in the key publications by Rubin, Sedgwick and de Lauretis some common themes emerge. One: the need to recognize difference and specificity, opening up the frame of reference to cover a wide range of sexualities, always with the recognition that these will be affected by the kaleidoscope of attendant racial, ethnic, class, geographical, and other specifying factors. Two: the need to address the limits of feminist theorizing of that time which was either written from within a heteronormative framework, or was written from overt lesbian positions but did not do justice to the full complexities of lesbian history and existence. Rather, it ran the risk of marginalizing or casting aspersions on some forms of lesbian sexual practice and, significantly, did not form alliances with gay male perspectives.[13] Three: the advocacy of a new antihomophobic theorization

12. Fiorenza argues that women entering the academic world are entering a masculine space and have to learn the master's tools and become socialized into the 'entire constellation of beliefs, values, techniques, shared worldviews, and systems of knowledge' that govern the scholarly community, which she describes as socialization into an alien culture (Fiorenza 1992: 181). As resident alien one is inside ('by virtue of residence or patriarchal affiliation to a male citizen or institution), and outside ('in terms of language, experience, culture, and history') (1992: 185). 'Those of us who have made biblical scholarship and ministry our place of residence must not forget that we are strangers in a land whose language, constitution, history, religion, and culture we did not create' (1992: 185).

13. It might seem odd that it was pro-lesbian feminism that caused such dissent, but it is often the case that the closest of relations cause the maximum irritation.

of sexualities—an academic safe space wherein the mapping of this terrain could take place. There would be a relation to feminism but the nature of that relationship was not a pre-given. Four: the acknowledgement of a social context of oppression that prompts the need to 'do something'. Rubin and Sedgwick make clear references to the random hostility that could be directed at sexual minorities, de Lauretis less so, for her paper is more concerned with resisting dominant heteronormative discourses and cultural homogenization.

Amid all these developments came one further key publication that was to prove hugely influential for the development of both queer theory and gender studies—Judith Butler's *Gender Trouble* (1990). Butler's contribution is now so widely cited that it needs no detailed summary here. However, it is important to note that she was not calling for a separate study of sexualities.[14] Although it has become a founding text of queer theory *Gender Trouble* was always a feminist text and Butler describes herself as 'feminist theorist before I'm a queer theorist or a gay and lesbian theorist' (In Osborne and Segal, 1994: 32). She was, like Rubin and others before her, critical of 'a pervasive heterosexual assumption in feminist literary theory' (1999: vii). Butler wanted greater flexibility in feminist thought so that it could see how a heterosexist frame of reference and practice had influenced how one understands gender, and how this can lead to the unwarranted criticism and misunderstanding of the complexities of gender that take different forms and have different self-understandings. This might well be why her work became more closely allied to work in lesbian, gay, transgender and bisexual studies than feminist (so Roden, 2005: 30). Her words strike a chord with those who have lived those different forms.

It is probably, however, due to its consequent argument and themes that *Gender Trouble* set queer theory on its way, most notably in the use of drag to illustrate her notion of performativity, and in her analysis of compulsory heterosexuality. This aspect of her work had an understandable appeal and relevance to those who had picked up the calls of Rubin and Sedgwick and those working in lesbian and gay studies. It was timely. It resonated. Although there had been preceding feminist work that critiqued the institution of heterosexuality[15], Butler's approach put something new

14. On the contrary, in *Bodies That Matter* Butler argued against moves to separate gender and sexuality (1993: 223-42).

15. It was during the second wave of feminist work, however, that the critical examination of heterosexuality took off in earnest, with work from the Redstockings (1975) Rita Mae Brown (1976), Charlotte Bunch (1976) and the ground-breaking paper by Rich (1987) first published in 1980. More recent work has included Wittig (1992),

on the table. She theorized how heteronormative regimes operate with such compelling force. She recognized what it was to be posited as a culturally unintelligible as a result, and why such lives are portrayed from within the system as 'developmental failures or logical impossibilities'. But, in a countering move, argued that 'their persistence and proliferation … provide critical opportunities to expose the limits and regulatory aims of that domain of intelligibility and, hence, to open up within the very terms of that matrix of intelligibility rival and subversive matrices of gender disorder' (1990:17). This is where her work matters, in my view. While it is the case that subjects tend to disappear in her poststructurally-informed work, and that language—rather than material situations—is the object of her discourse, she has a strong political commitment that is entirely consistent with the political dimension of feminism. She is clear that she maintains an allegiance to those whose lives are rendered abject by normative discourses and practices and her preface to the 1999 edition of *Gender Trouble* puts this clearly: 'What continues to concern me most is ... what will and will not constitute an intelligible life, and how do presumptions about normative gender and sexuality determine in advance what will qualify as the "human" and the "livable"?' (1999: xxii). She adds: 'If there is a positive normative task in *Gender Trouble*, it is to insist upon the extension of this legitimacy to bodies that have been regarded as false, unreal, and unintelligible' (1999: xxiii).

Moreover, her choice of illustration—drag and butch/femme ways of relating—while alienating some feminists, was enjoyed in other circles. For Butler, the parody that is drag, and other gay and lesbian cultural gender practices, are useful in that they help to reveal the artifice of *all* sex and gender and expose that there is no original that is being imitated—just the *notion* of an original. In this, she sees the possibilities for a subversive laughter, for when '"the normal," "the original" is revealed to be a copy, and an inevitably failed one, an ideal that no one *can* embody … laughter emerges in the realization that all along the original was derived' (1990: 139). In 1990, given the trends noted above, there was an audience ready to hear and appreciate these arguments and to embrace Butler's ideas. Perhaps she was valued because she had lived in, and learned from, the lesbian and gay communities in which she moved. She acknowledged, in the preface to the second edition, that *Gender Trouble* was not written solely from within the academic world to which she belongs, but from her life—specifically 'the context of a lesbian and gay community on the east coast of the United

Kitzinger and Wilkinson (1994), Ingraham (1994, 2005), Segal (1994), Richardson's edited (1996) volume and her 1997 paper.

States in which I lived for fourteen years prior to the writing of this book' (1999: xvi) and from her experience of how she went to 'many meetings, bars and marches and saw many kinds of genders, understood myself to be at the crossroads of some of them, and encountered sexuality at several of its cultural edges' (1999: xvi). Her desire to 'link the different sides of my life' (1999: xvii) is most likely one that was, and is, shared with a large number of her readers.

In the subsequent queer theory that has emerged, Butler has enjoyed significant status, though her understanding of performativity and illustrative use of drag simultaneously provoked controversy, as will be discussed further below. Prior to that, an account of how this emergent queer theory covered a terrain that was challenging for feminist theorizing will be helpful for setting the context for those controversies.

Queer Landscapes and Feminist Borders

It is difficult to speak of an agenda, or of 'the' questions posed by queer analysis, because of the argument that it must resist definition in order to remain queer. One might wonder how Jagose can, in her opening page, stress the necessary 'definitional indeterminacy' (1996: 1), yet produce a book entitled *Queer Theory.* However she achieves this by limiting herself to a discussion of queer theory's emergence in historical context and an assessment of the usefulness of its terminology, and in 'deferring any final assessment of queer as a critical term' leaving queer's future radically open to unanticipated 'ongoing evolutions' (1996: 6). This is the key point about its indeterminacy; as Edelman (1995) also recognizes, it needs to be understood as a permanently 'becoming' mode of analysis, left radically open to speak to new situations, hegemonies, regimes of the normal, taken up by new generations of theorists in ways not envisaged or anticipated. So—queer theory requires an independent roving brief and flexibility to shape-shift. The moment it is

> transformed into an unproblematic, substantive designation for a determinate subfield of academic practice, respectable enough to appear in advertisements for academic jobs and in labels on the shelves of bookstores … the more it verges on becoming a normative academic discipline, the less queer 'queer theory' can plausibly claim to be (Halperin 1995: 113).

Halperin regrets the way "queer" has so easily become "a harmless qualifier" as it gets taken up as a theory extendable to many fields of study. What it needs is the freedom to recover its 'radical potential' so that it continues

to thrive in 'its capacity to startle, to surprise, to help us think what has not been thought' (2003: 343).[16]

Being 'homeless' facilitates this. For Edelman, it should not have any designated space; dreams of 'common territorial boundaries' or a 'common language' are its antithesis. Likening queer to a vector of desire, Edelman speaks of how it 'refuses itself, resists itself, perceives that it is always somewhere else, operating as a force of displacement, of disappropriation' (1995: 345). Its continuing relevance relies on 'the impossibility of knowing its boundaries, of knowing its coherence as a state' (1995: 345) and he concludes 'We would do well to construct queer theory, then, less as the site of what we communally want than as the want of any communal site. Queer theory is no one's safe harbour for the holidays; it should offer no image of home' (1995: 346).[17]

Some resist the rhetoric, suggesting that the growing existence of critical introductions to queer theory and queer studies indicates that things can be said about its strategies and agenda (see McKee 1999). And Halperin (2003), despite his above concern that queer will become just another commodified theory, recognizes that once out of the bag, the terminology of queer caught on massively and moved into the academy with a dramatic flair that had evaded lesbian and gay studies. The introductions to queer theory and the readers in queer studies are thus meeting academic demands and playing catch-up to some extent, having to be invented after the fact. So while one cannot predict or constrain queer theory's future interests and strategic applications, it is possible to identify some past and present interests and talk about its distinctive questions. And it is solely for the purposes of this specific chapter that I identify, briefly, some of the distinctives of queer theory without wishing to tie it down to such coverage. The follow-

16. And this is happening. Answering their question 'What's Queer about Queer Studies now?' Eng *et al.* identify ways in which new theorists recognize its usefulness for addressing, in unexpected ways, a broad range of issues such as discourses of terrorism, of democracy, immigration, family and community (2005: 2).

17. This can be discomforting, and as one who has spoken wistfully of the desire for disciplinary 'home' (Guest, 2008), I find Heyes's contrary talk of the importance of 'homes' stubbornly resonant. Speaking of her identity as bisexual as a descriptor which 'provides a kind of home for me, when everywhere else feels worse' (2003: 1097), she acknowledges that while it is a troubling matter, homes are necessary. They are necessary 'because community, recognition, and stability are essential to human flourishing and political resistance' yet they remain troubling 'because those very practices often congeal into political ideologies and group formations that are exclusive or hegemonic' (2003: 1097).

ing brief discussion is thus limited to some of its key interests to date that are of relevance to the overall remit of this book.

As already mentioned, queer analysis has positioned itself vis-à-vis regimes of the normal, most notably regimes that sustain heteronormativity.[18] Interested in how expected convergences between sex, gender and sexuality can be demonstrated to be ideological fictions in the service of heteronormativity, queer theorists turn their analytical spotlight in two directions. On the one hand, the institutions, discourses and practices that produce, police, and sustain regimes of the normal come under critical inspection. On the other hand, they explore the various non-normative ways in which sex, gender, and sexuality can line up against social expectations and prescriptions. It is in this latter area that insights from intersex and trans studies have been invaluable; insights that have not been characteristic of the field of feminist studies thus far.[19] Each of these two study

18. The phrase 'regimes of the normal' is Warner's (1993). Heteronormativity refers to 'the institutions, structures of understanding, and practical orientations that make heterosexuality seem not only coherent—that is, organized as a sexuality—but also privileged … It consists less of norms that could be summarized as a body of doctrine than of a sense of rightness produced in contradictory manifestations—often unconscious, immanent to practice or to institutions' (Berlant and Warner 2003: 179-80 n.2). Berlant and Warner additionally describe heteronormativity as 'more than ideology, or prejudice, or phobia against gays and lesbians; it is produced in almost every aspect of the forms and arrangements of social life: nationality, the state, and the law; commerce; medicine; and education; as well as in the conventions and affects of narrativity, romance, and other protected spaces of culture'. It is that 'sense of rightness' which can appear as if it is 'hardwired into personhood' (2003: 173).

19. I use 'trans' as an umbrella term which is consistent with its emergence in 1998 to aid parliamentary discussion. It incorporates both transsexuality and transgendering. See Whittle's (2006) explanation of this usage. In his view trans 'can encompass discomfort with role expectations, being queer, occasional or more frequent cross-dressing, permanent cross-dressing and cross-gender living, through to accessing major health interventions such as hormonal therapy and surgical reassignment procedures. It can take up as little of your life as five minutes a week or as much as a life-long commitment to reconfiguring the body to match the inner self' (2006: xi). Intersex is not to be confused with transgender identities. Intersex relates to a range of birth conditions where what is normatively taken for 'male' or 'female' does not line up. For example, Cornwall notes people 'who have one testis and one ovary, or a single structure called an ovotestis which contains ovarian and testicular tissue. There are people whose chromosomes are XXY rather than XX or XY, or who have a mixture of XX and XY cells in their bodies. There are people who have both a large phallus which looks more like a penis than a clitoris, and a vaginal opening. There are people whose genitalia are so unusual that they do not bear much resemblance to typical male or female genitalia at all' (2012: 7).

domains is quite distinct, but both can help to demonstrate the mobility and multi-configurations of sex, gender and sexuality. Of course, as Corber and Valocchi acknowledge, there is, actually, a wide but suppressed recognition of this—why else is there institutional regulation of practices and identities that society may deem incoherent, such as 'butch lesbians who are bottoms, gay male queens who are tops, female-to-male transsexuals who identify as gay' unless 'on some level the dominant society recognizes that there is no natural or biological relationship between sex, gender, and sexuality and that it must vigorously enforce the belief that there is' (2003: 8, 9). And Butler refers to some of this anxiety in her recognition that 'people who fear those who are gender dissonant fear something about losing their own sense of normativity, fear knowing that gender is labile, that norms are contingent, that they *could*, if they wanted to, do their gender differently than how it is being done, fear knowing that gender is a matter of doing and its effects rather than an inherent attribute, an intrinsic feature' (Blumenfeld *et al.* 2005: 20). So in some ways, trans and intersex studies bring to the surface knowledges that lurk in the deeper recesses of our minds, but they do so overtly, demonstrating vividly that it is no longer possible to understand sex as the biology to which culturally variable ways of doing gender is pinned. Through the activism of intersex communities, we see how sex assignment in the cases of 'ambiguous' births, the addition of 'gender dysphoria' to the DSM and the Human Genome Project are engaged efforts to naturalize and stabilize the idea of binary male/female sex.[20]

Significantly, for the purposes of this chapter, Chase recognizes that intersex issues have sometimes lacked feminist support, not least 'because intersexuality undermines the stability of the category "woman" that undergirds much of first-world feminist discourse. We call into question the assumed relation between genders and bodies and demonstrate how some bodies do not fit easily into male/female dichotomies' (2003: 43).

It is precisely this need to consider the interests served by the sustaining of male/female categories that prompted Ingraham (1994: 214) to ask what interests are being served when ambiguous genitalia are ascribed to a 'hormone imbalance'; who defines what 'balance' might be and by what criteria? Speaking of her own field, Ingraham notes how feminist sociology had not been positioned to tackle this analysis because it was undertaken within

20. The Human Genome project 'is involved in coding DNA so as to eradicate various bodily "abnormalities", as well as other regulatory phenomenon such as surgically altering people with Down's Syndrome to "normalize" their appearance' (Blumenfeld *et al.,* 2005: 18). On the naturalization of sexed categories see further Fausto-Sterling (2002a, 2002b).

a primarily heterosexual framework within which there was an assumption 'that the only possible configuration of sex is male or female as "opposite sexes," which, like other aspects of the physical world … are naturally attracted to each other' (1994: 215). Feminist work on gender, in her view, had not attended to the '"necessity" of gender' to a heterosexual framework. It did 'not address to what ends gender is acquired ... By foregrounding gender as dependent on the male-female binary, the heterosexual assumption remains unaddressed and unquestioned' (1994: 215). Ingraham calls upon her colleagues in feminist sociology to shift the ground of their thinking so that heterosexuality is no longer taken for granted and, instead, to 'begin the work of unmasking its operations and meaning-making processes and its links to large historical and material conditions' (1994: 216). Crucial to such developments is the recognition of sex as something that is assigned rather than taken as a pre-given. It is the cultural pressure that led to assignment of sexed identities that needs to be analysed and unpacked, in order to demonstrate cultural values, politics, anxieties that are at stake when the two-sex binary model is undermined. The theoretical landscape shaped by queer theory is moulded and enriched by these new directions.

Also re-shaping that landscape is the burgeoning array of Trans Studies which arguably have their own disciplinary 'home' but are regularly included under the general banner of both Gender Studies and Queer Studies. Such inclusion has not been without critical debate, but Trans Studies make regular and useful contributions to these overarching subject areas.[21] However, these studies prompted a further, sometimes very acrimonious debate within certain strands of feminism. That discussion arguably began at grass root level during the time that Gayle Rubin was writing. Thus, one motivation for Rubin's paper was the exclusion of male-to-female transsexuals from any automatic membership of women's collectives, festivals and community groups. She cited the Olivia Records case, but that was just one example of the wider community furore about who could lay claim to women-only space. The Michigan Womyn's Music Festival is perhaps the more widely known illustration. Founded in 1976 as a separatist place for women to gather, its admission criteria was problematized in 1991, when male-toward-female Nancy Burkholder was evicted. Similarly, the 1991 National Lesbian Conference would not admit 'nongenetic' women.

21. There are objections to assimilating tendencies of queer theory and it is important to note, for example, Jay Prosser's (1998) objection to Judith Butler's emphasis on fluidity and performativity if it fails to pay sufficient attention to the constraints of bodily edges. See also Stryker's comments on the 'close but sometimes vexed' relationship between queer and transgender studies (2006: 7).

Women-only space was a hard won, cogently argued principle. It is entirely understandable that transsexuality would raise significant questions that required airing. The border wars that erupted as Camp Trans set up its stall at the Michigan festival had to be fought.

These grassroots issues were inevitably taken up at a more theoretical level within the academy, not least due to the intervention of prominent feminists such as Mary Daly (1978) and Janice Raymond (1979). But what might have been a brief, necessary spat has since been recognized as a larger battleground in which the trenches were dug deep. For example, Halberstam talks of Raymond provoking a heated debate after which 'feminism and transgenderism have been pitted against one another in mortal battle' (2006: 98). For all that a quarter of a century has shifted the terms of that enmity, Halberstam maintains that 'a core of mutual suspicion continues to animate debates between transgender and feminist scholars about the politics of gender flexibility' (2006: 98). Sally Hines similarly notes how Raymond's publication 'established an anti-transgender feminist perspective that was to significantly affect the dominant feminist position for successive decades' and owing to the fact that it was so widely read it 'created the dominant feminist perspective on transsexuality throughout the 1980s in both the US and Britain' (2008: 28, 29). Heyes describes Raymond's work as 'the archetypal articulation of radical feminist hostility to transsexuality' which has had 'a persistent influence on feminist perceptions of transgender' (2003: 1099).

Some of the major concerns can be itemized as follows: first, that the transsexual was the 'dupe of gender' (Heyes 2003: 1095)—uncritically attached to the two-sex binary and all the culturally scripted stereotypes of being male/masculine or female/feminine, thereby reinforcing an unhelpful essentialism. Repeated talk of 'being in the wrong body', in the autobiographical literature of transfolk, and the adoption of gender dysphoria as a recognized condition within the medical establishment, reinforced the notion of stable genders whose cultural stereotypes were left unchallenged by transgendering and transsexual individuals. In such a situation one can understand the question: How can such individuals contribute to a feminism which aims to undo such assumptions? Once the image of the 'dupe of gender' had been fixed in the mind, then nothing trans activists could say would be worth listening to. If the notion of the trans feminist was already an oxymoron then the 'debate' was destined to stalemate before it had begun.

Second, the grassroots issue of what constituted 'women-only space' was also of relevance to the academy. Raymond had argued that male-toward-females invaded women's space with little or no appreciation of what is has

been like to be positioned as a women from birth. Moreover, her belief that transsexuals could never be *fully* female meant that they would always be perceived as infiltrators. The second wave context in which Raymond was writing, particularly the lesbian feminism context, disassociated strongly from the realm of the male. As Heyes reminds us, the woman-identified-woman paradigm was 'conceptually and politically dependent on the radical separation of women from men' (2003: 1099) and thus, acutely attuned to any threat to that separatism.

Third, linked to this is the 'celebration of woman' atmosphere of second wave feminist politics. Although strongly resistant to the 'woman' category as it had been defined by patriarchal attitudes, the Radicalesbians' manifesto, first published in 1970, constructs the new 'woman-identified-woman' who is independent and creates her own self-defined way of doing 'woman'. She is one who has made a courageous and torturous journey from being stigmatized for her choices and at odds with the role that society had laid down for her. The journey takes her to 'liberation of self, the inner peace, the real love of self and of all women'—to a new place that can be shared 'with all women—because we are all women' (1997: 396). Confrontation of self-hate is a major part of this manifesto. The new woman being celebrated will be in tune with herself and her body; not alienated or dislocated from it.

If one had adopted the ideology of this woman-identified woman paper, then the desire to change one's body in any form might be considered a backwards step, while the desire to change to a body so that it conformed more to male physique (or to emulate a female body when one was genetically male) was even more problematic. Male-toward-females, through participation in the medical interventions of institutions deemed patriarchal and misogynistic, were understandably thought to be compliant with sexist ideologies and contrary to the self-determination of the woman-identified woman. Raymond is particularly scathing about the technologies of re-assignment surgeries and those who submit to them. Desertion from the (feminist re-defined) 'woman' category appears to bespeak an internalized misogyny; while appropriation of the category by transsexuals is arguably more of a problem since it places 'artificial' woman within women-only space.

Fourth, the notion that transgendering might serve a feminist cause through its subversion of gender was not allowed to carry any feminist value. The subversions were considered merely apparent; unable ultimately to change the status quo. Transgendering, then, had nothing to offer feminists. Such a stalemate position leaves the onlooker, as Heyes rightly sees: 'wondering if there could be *any* kind of trans life that would satisfy

Raymond with its feminist credentials and contribution to social transformation. I suspect the answer to this is no, because Raymond's brand of feminism requires only one subject: the woman-identified-woman' (2003: 1108).

In short, trans subjects have been confronted with a feminist position that requires convincing answers but which, simultaneously, rules out the possibility that any convincing answer could come from a 'dupe of gender'. It has not been helpful to put such subjects into straitjackets and then to accost them with verbal attacks that offer no wriggle-room. It is true that there remain key, astute, feminist questions: Raymond asks, in the new preface to the 1994 edition of *The Transsexual Empire*, 'What good is a gender outlaw who is still abiding by the law of gender?' (1994: xxxv). Heyes asks: How do female-to-males maintain a feminist activism within their masculine home? And her question to Feinberg is: What is so good about masculinity? (2003: 1112). Choosing ways of gender expression that are commonly associated with 'man/male' is one thing, occupying 'male' space differently is a far more interesting topic for discussion. Given how hegemonic masculinity has been associated with disdain for femininity, with violence, and with repression of minority non-white, non-straight masculinities, how might a female-toward-male challenge such norms or subvert them effectively, especially given the violence that has been pitted against female-to-males by such males? These important queries require answers, but in order to provide them trans activists need a listening space in which to air their responses. However, rather than feminism providing a safe home for such airings, it was Gender Studies and Queer Studies that offered the more welcoming landscape in which to explore trans voices and experiences, especially given queer's interest in 'non-normative' ways of doing sex and gender. It was not always thus, but Queer Studies' interest in combating regimes of the normal appeared to provide an obvious place for such trans work to flourish.

It has taken a thirty-plus year period for the heat to cool somewhat so that critical, measured discussion could take place. A helpful contribution is that of Heyes (2003). Returning to Raymond's work, she looks for potential shared goals between trans and feminist politics and latent alliances. Her careful analysis of the 1994 re-issue of Raymond's book and Bernice Hausman's *Changing Sex* (1995) recognizes that one key problem has been the way in which trans voices were utilized and then routinely dismissed from the debate as having nothing relevant or helpful to offer feminists, in fact, setting the feminist cause back years. Heyes, however, assumes that the term 'trans feminist' is not an oxymoron. This most simple and basic of moves immediately sets the debate on a different plane though she is, of

course, writing from a later date and context in which trans theorists are offering new self-critical views. But what Heyes exposes most significantly is the blind spot in feminist critiques, i.e. the fact that many feminists write from an unassessed, unchallenged privilege of being stably gendered. The feminists criticizing trans politics have, in Heyes' view, orientalized transgendering.

In such an overall context, the shift from Women's Studies to Gender Studies from the 1980s onwards, as discussed in Chapter 1, becomes more understandable. In the wake of the seismic shifts provoked by the emergence of Queer, Intersex and Trans studies, including the development of masculinity studies discussed in Chapter 4, something had to give. Gender Studies, (or Women and Gender Studies in some instances) provided a new nomenclature, one that would signal the positive inclusion of matters pertaining to lesbian, gay, bisexual, intersex, transsexuality and transgendering, for the application of queer theory, and for working out how attention to these perspectives impact upon existing feminist theorizing. The terrain of the debate was newly formed out of the heat of controversy and antagonism. The conflicts were both inevitable and necessary, creating a landscape that is cratered with debris rather than newly fashioned as something pristine. But it is here; we all now live and work in this new context—biblical scholars too. And we need to think of how we can work productively within it.

From Antagonisms to Alliances

Throughout its emergence, queer theory inevitably marked its area of expertise clearly and this had the effect of emphasizing its difference from the feminist theory that had informed it. Theorizing sexualities on their own terms had to be done—and it was inevitable that the conflicts and antagonisms discussed above arose. This section clarifies how some of the questions might be resolved, and how alliances rather than antagonisms could provide the platform for future work. The suggestions will not satisfy all parties; there will always be a range of feminist responses to queer theory and the terrain will always be subject to contest. Precisely how one responds will always be a matter of individual choice and commitments. Some might understand queer theory and feminism as remaining distinct fields of study with some shared interests, strategies and goals; others will work on the assumption of a more permeable relationship between the two. But they do not need to be positioned as adversaries. This section highlights some of the ways in which we might move profitably from antagonisms to alliances in order to inform the later discussion of the place of genderqueer criticism.

What the F—? Specifying Feminism

As we have seen, in the demarcation of the new field of study that is 'queer', 'feminism' came under scrutiny for its omissions and apparent inability to deal with the issues Rubin, Sedgwick, de Lauretis, Butler and others wanted to explore. One unfortunate effect of this was that 'feminism' could appear unnecessarily dated and out of touch with emerging LGBTI-Q concerns. Biddy Martin, for example, notes how 'queerness' could easily be constructed 'as a vanguard position that announces its newness and advance over against an apparently superseded and now anachronistic feminism with its emphasis on gender' (1998: 11). So while convinced of 'the potential of "Queer Studies" to provoke more complex accounts of gender and sexuality' (1998: 11), she expresses concern that feminism thereby gets unfairly caricatured as dour, overly policing, and bogged down in fixity. Vaunting queer's new angle of vision should not come at the cost of unwarranted criticisms of feminism or reductionist polemical accounts that do not do justice to the richness and diversity within feminism. Taking Martin's views on board, it is important to see through the homogenous, generalized 'feminist' theorizing that was being chastised, in order to look closely at the particular strands of feminism being targeted.

Looking back over the terrain, the feminist voices most criticized were those highly suspicious of trans phenomena and critical of lesbian dynamics that were thought to be caught up in male-dominated ways of relating rather than breathing the rarefied air of woman-identified politics. Detailing specific names remains a blurry business; sometimes one can only guess which voices have irritated most. However the feminists evidently criticized include Janice Raymond, Sheila Jeffreys, and Catherine MacKinnon—few names, but it is the *influence* of these few voices that has to be borne in mind. Thus, in Tamsin Wilton's criticism of the 'lesbian sex prefects' she identifies 'a small and angry group of women', one which has 'had an extraordinarily powerful effect on the beliefs, self-esteem and sexual activities of large numbers of lesbian feminists' (1996: 8). She speaks of the 'disturbing strand of politico-moralistic dogmatism which runs through pro-censorship feminism', the 'handful of misguided and vocal women' who have 'attempted to control the sexual behaviour of other women' (1996: 12). Radical feminism as a homogenous strand is not being criticized here—Wilton herself makes clear her allegiance to it—rather the minority voices that have had an influence beyond their numbers, for her the

> revolutionary feminists ... who support the political approach exemplified by Sheila Jeffreys and the Leeds Revolutionary Feminist Group, political lesbians ... who define lesbianism as a refusal to have sex with *men*, not as anything to do with sexuality between women, pro-

> censorship feminists and, when speaking of a political trend which includes all of these groups, orthodox lesbian feminism (1996: 12).

So, for all that slippage happened whereby specific voices became conflated with 'feminism', feminism *per se* was never the enemy. There are many testimonials to the fact that feminism has been enabling, transforming, liberating, and a thought-driving, passionate commitment; that feminism gave those marginalized as lesbian a place of pride and strength. So, as we have noted Wilton's criticisms it is useful to note also her praise: Feminism, she writes, has been 'of immeasurable importance to the development of our lesbian and/or queer communities' (1996: 10). Yet there remains the fact that a place of strength also became a place of exclusion. She cites Persimmon Blackbridge in this regard:

> The feminist movement gave me far more than its faults. It gave me hope, pride, work, a place to stand. But sometimes it seemed no different from where I grew up. You had to pretend and not notice you were pretending. You had to shut up and swallow it. So I went to those meetings and kept my mouth shut when some of the bad pictures in the anti-porn slide shows turned me on (Blackbridge *et al.* 1994: 7).

So, while it may indeed be the case that 'it is radical feminist arguments and campaigns that lie at the heart of queer displeasure with feminism' (McLaughlin 2006: 63), one has to take care not to associate specific arguments with a homogenized 'radical feminism' and certainly not with feminism as a generic whole. And, as McLaughlin goes on to say, specification is also necessary for reverse arguments, for queer ideas were also stereotyped and queer theory narrowed to certain stars, such as Butler.

In the quest for alliances rather than antagonisms, a number of things need to happen. First, the avoidance of continued slippage so that feminism does not get caricatured. Criticisms of 'feminism' should be specific. And if it indeed is the case that it is predominantly a narrow stream of voices within the larger movement of radical feminism, then the distinctive voices should be acknowledged. Second, it is important to return to the texts of those feminists rather than rely upon generalized summaries of their positions. McLaughlin, for example, objects to the ways in which 'Particular figures such as MacKinnon and Andrea Dworkin have become the straw figures (although rarely read) of queer theory attacks on dowdy feminism' (2006: 72). A careful reading demonstrates that Raymond, for example, had some important questions to ask that remain resonant. Third, listening needs to take place; an open, serious, willing listening on all sides without judgmental presuppositions getting in the way.

So, when considering the shift towards gender criticism within biblical studies it will be important to analyse which kinds of feminism are taken up and which are being rendered invisible through neglect or through being argued out of the debate, or in other ways.

What about the Women?

One of the key reasons for the antagonisms of the past regards the concern that queer theory damages feminism, not least in the 'loss of conceptual space for lesbian/feminist approaches to sexuality and gender, which has significance consequences for both gender theory and politics' (Richardson 2006: 21). She is right; for those whose lives have been enriched and transformed beyond measure by feminist thinking, there will always be a very guarded response to anything that threatens to dilute or erase the space for women to think for themselves—whether this be within grassroots organizations or within academic Women's Studies programmes. The new avenues that were proposed by Rubin, Sedgwick and Butler prompted concerns that 'women' were being 'disappeared'. Thus it was that Sheila Jeffreys (1994) took these authors to task for contributing to sexuality studies and queer theory in ways that were largely 'feminist free'.

However, if Rubin can be accused of talking of a homogenized 'feminism' without specifying which feminist theories are actually being criticized, Jeffreys can be accused of over-stating Rubin's argument. Rubin did not want to set up a new field of study that was 'impervious to feminist theory' (1994: 466) as Jeffreys put it, nor did she talk about feminism's 'illegitimacy'. Rubin was quite clear that feminist thinking had been helpful and influential but that there needed to be space for other voices to emerge in a non-hostile space before being re-interrogated by a feminist critique. She deferred this discussion—she did not close the door on it. Likewise, Sedgwick had always acknowledged that the necessary focus of her work created gaps. She was aware that the scrutiny of male homosociability, in both *Between Men* and *Epistemology*, meant that there was limited focus on the voices and agency of women caught up in the triangulation, but, as Edwards points out, 'This absence gives us, as readers, permission to imagine some female needs, desires and gratifications that the book does not represent. Indeed, Sedgwick claims this as her project if not her subject' (2009: 40). It is not entirely helpful, therefore, for Jeffreys to comment, rather sarcastically, that Sedgwick is 'stimulating so long as the reader is not looking for feminist stimulation' (Jeffreys, 1994: 462).

Others are more open to the forging of alliances. For instance, to ensure that a focus on women is not diluted, Mary McIntosh encourages her readers to engage critically with queer theory but to do so in ways that strive for

gender awareness. Queer theory may be very astute in destabilizing heterosexist norms, but when it comes to destabilizing the male dominance inherent in heterosexism the keen edge is sometimes found wanting. Here, then, is a continuing issue that requires attention. If the time for rapprochement has come—which seems to be the case—then the integration of feminist concerns with studies in sexualities offers a promising way forward. However, I am not sure the nomenclature of 'gender criticism' is the best for such a development.

I have already drawn attention to the fact that the terminology of 'gender criticism' is somewhat out of kilter with the wider academic propensity to talk about Gender Studies. Outside biblical studies there are very few papers that address what 'gender criticism' might be—there is not a widespread notion that such a 'criticism' exists. Indeed, the key paper on gender criticism, that of Sedgwick, talks about how it is a heuristic euphemism for other things that sound more disconcerting—the F-word, for instance, or lesbian and gay studies Time spent searching for and defining something we could call gender criticism might thus be wasted.

Besides this, gender criticism's very title inevitably places the emphasis on an analysis of gender, and does not offer any recognition of the fact that we are usually speaking of *hetero*gender. It also clouds over the need gender criticism to be informed by queer theory. Accordingly, a more satisfying terminology would be 'genderqueer criticism'. This felicitous phrase, in existence already elsewhere,[22] contains a number of helpful nods: it bespeaks queer theory's impact upon studies of gender, it implies that gender is not always to be understood in binary heterocentric terms but can be performed in alternative, queer ways, and the addition of 'queer' indicates an interest in the sexual as well as the realm of gender.

Its main drawback is the lack of reference to feminism as a most significant informing theory. If and when adopted within biblical studies, would genderqueer evolve alongside a continuing feminist biblical scholarship or would it be seen as the evolution *of* feminist biblical scholarship? A final word on this thorny matter is reserved until the conclusion of this book. But for now, I believe there are good reasons for moving to a new terminology for a new, broader and more inclusive method of analysis. 'Gender criticism' is simply not the best name for this development. This discussion is taken up further in the following chapter, which provides an illustration

22. Genderqueer is used popularly in a range of ways, but what I have in mind is the usage found in Nestle *et al.* (2002) wherein Wilchins speaks of this term bringing 'back together those two things that have been wrongly separated: gender and gayness' (2002: 27).

of the differences a genderqueer criticism might bring to an existing feminist debate within biblical studies.

What about the Politics?

Jeffreys criticizes Rubin, Sedgwick and Butler for absent feminist politics. She misses the nuances of Butler's work in her criticism of performativity and the politics of camp which is 'inimical to women's and lesbian interests' (1994: 460) and she is doubtful that the poststructuralist basis of Butler's work will do anything for feminist political action. Rubin is pointedly criticized for her references to cross-generational sex and attempt to put 'feminism in its place and to establish the illegitimacy of feminist analysis for many areas of sexual behaviour' (1994: 466). In addition, these theorists are accused of bowing to a (gay) male agenda, or at least, not rocking the boat by putting uncomfortable, impolite, feminist concerns at the forefront, such as the residual power difference between women and men. Calling upon an anonymous amorphous band of lesbian feminists for her defence, she claims 'Many lesbians, perhaps the vast majority of lesbian feminists, feel nothing but hostility towards and alienation from the word queer and see queer politics as very specifically masculine' (1994: 460).

These criticisms are not surprising when the feminist critique comes from one who has a keen awareness of the continued subordination of women and who wants feminist politics to make a tangible difference. However, Jeffreys seems to want to promote an orthodoxy: a version of lesbian feminism where (some) lesbians might have rejected femininity but are still clearly seen as 'members of the political class of women' (1994: 459)—something that is not the experience of all lesbian feminists. They might well be avidly pro-women, and staunchly feminist, but to incorporate them so seamlessly into the 'women' category is acutely uncomfortable for some. Such attempts fail to recognize that some lesbians have already announced their defection from that category. Esther Newton 's autobiographical essay includes brief reference to a 'lonely childhood … stuck in the girl gender, which is linked, worldwide, to hard work, low pay and disrespect' (2001: 111) and she goes on to say that

> this is not the only reason why, for me, *neither being female nor being a woman has ever been easy or unequivocal*. Later, when I found gay life, I was given a second gender: butch. This masculine gay gender makes my body recognizable, and it alone makes sexual love possible (2001: 111, emphasis added).

If Calhoun is right that many lesbians 'exit the category "woman" altogether' (2000: 32) then attempts to incorporate lesbians into the feminist home by expanding/reshaping what 'woman' might mean/include may

be wrong-headed. Moreover, Calhoun argues that in order to include the lesbian specifically, feminism would have to open up the binary so that all those who occupy the not-woman-not-man space are embraced. This would mean the inclusion of female-to-male or male-to-female transsexuals, transvestites (gay and straight), and that these subjects would be seen '*not* as men or imitation women, but as the third term between gender binaries. In an opened frame, these male bodies could no longer be constructed as Other to women. They would be fully feminist subjects' (2000: 73). She suspected that the cost would be too high for some feminists. But there is also the counter query of whether that cost might actually be too high also for transsexuals who might not wish to become 'fully feminist subjects'.

As Biddy Martin so rightly notes, 'For those of us who have felt constrained, even obscured, by feminists' injunctions to identify with and as women, over against men and masculinity, the celebration of an antinormative queerness has been a welcome relief' (1998: 12).

However, to her credit, Jeffreys refuses to tame or dilute the F-word; she puts it straight back on to the agenda, refusing to let newer approaches off the hook if they fail to produce feminist-driven results. She thus picks up that mantle of keeping a close eye on developments and encourages others to maintain the watching brief. By the close of the paper, she recognizes the potential good of the new lesbian and gay field of study, saying it 'has the potential to give strength and confidence to lesbian students', but encourages her readers to hold on to their own embodiment while sustaining ' a serious challenge to the use of the term "queer," which disappears lesbians by subsuming them, at best, into a variety of gay men, and to the dominant politics of queer theory and practice, the politics of camp' (1994: 471).

McLaughlin claims that Jeffreys' concern about disappearing lesbians and absent politics is taken up more widely among those who find queer 'transgression' a 'limited political tool' (2003: 145) insufficiently cognizant of the dangers that might lurk in the celebrations of sexual pluralities. It has also been feared that queer theory removes the basis for coalition activism, since it undoes the identity categories that seem so vital for such work—whether these be 'lesbian' or 'woman' or 'gay'—and challenging the notion of any pre-existent core identity that provokes adoption of such labels, it removes the ground on which one can dispute their oppression. Richardson thus notes that one of the limitations for queer theory, for feminists, is 'its reluctance to recognize that identity categories can provide both a space for political action as well as frameworks by which we become intelligible to ourselves and others' (2006: 22-23). In queer theory's disruption and subversion of gender and sexual binaries there is pleasure and potential

transformation, but it does little justice to the bafflement and unease that ensues from an abandonment of strategically used categories. Judith Butler may well be right that sexed and gendered identities are not expressions of core or true selves, but rather the fictional consequences of discourses that produce them, combined with the compulsory performances of identity; but where does this leave the politics? It is a sticky question and it remains pertinent.

A number of voices justifiably challenge queer theory's ability to create social transformation.[23] But as McLaughlin indicates, the terms of the debate are presented as either/or, whereby queer theorists get frustrated with feminists unwilling to look at sexuality outside a framework of oppression while feminists argue back how attention to material realities is vital to any political enterprise. In reality there is much to be gained by joining forces, for

> Queer arguments cannot obtain greater relevance and political significance without a genuine engagement with material issues, while feminists concerned with matters that count, need to acknowledge the greater complexity involved in talking of such matters due to queer arguments about the presence of discursive and linguistic processes within material relations (2006: 66).

Yet it would be wrong to say that queer does not have a political conscience or potential for social transformation. Adding further to what was noted in Chapter 1, a Butlerian framework puts regimes under scrutiny, particularly their production of co-dependent binaristic terms, and it exposes the 'failures' that are thereby created. Doing so has political significance, for by calling for a 'radical rearticulation of what qualifies as bodies that matter, ways of living that count as "life", lives worth protecting, lives worth saving, lives worth grieving' (1993: 161), Butler challenges the regimes of the normal that produce and sustain them.

That said, while Judith Butler and much queer theory put the focus upon the production of co-dependent binaristic terms, there remains an insistent voice within feminism that is concerned with material differences and subordinations. Asking 'Is Transgression Transgressive?' Elizabeth Wilson reminds her readers that transgression has, as a central feature, the desire to shock, to flout the status quo and affirm difference. However, insofar as transgression politics are 'cast in the terms set by that which is being rebelled against, they are the politics, ultimately, of weakness' (1993:

23. See, for example, McIntosh (1993), Wilson (1993), Fraser (1995), Hennessy (1995), Matisons (1998), Gamson (1998), Stanley and Wise (2000).

109). She thus raises the disturbing question of whether such politics are 'merely reaffirming the boundaries of our own ghetto, paradoxically while attempting to cross, to transgress them?' (1993: 110). Her paper argues that behaviour and discourse often hailed as transgressive does not actually have a great deal of impact upon the status quo, for 'it can't deal with the systematic or structural nature of oppressive institutions. On the contrary, it reaffirms and may even reinforce them. An act of defiance may be personally liberating and may indeed make an important ideological statement, but whether it can do anything more seems uncertain … we can shake our fist at society or piss on it, but that is all' (1993: 113).

She argues that transgression needs to be coupled with other approaches, often labelled as 'assimilationist', for progress to be made. Thus, advances have been made not because organizations such as Outrage and Stonewall have been in opposition, or are seen as alternatives, but because of the combination of tactics. She concludes:

> We transgress in order to insist that we are there, that we exist, and to place a distance between ourselves and the dominant culture. But we have to go further—we have to have an idea of how things could be different, otherwise transgression ends in mere posturing. In other words, transgression on its own leads eventually to entropy, unless we carry within us some idea of transformation. It is therefore not transgression that should be our watchword, but transformation (1993: 116).

Ultimately, I have to concur with such sentiments. As indicated in Chapter 1, the weakness of queer-inspired gender criticism, as it currently exists, lies in its insufficient attention to precisely how its approach might lead to social transformation. Moreover, I suspect it is not clearly advertising its ideological commitment to a transformative agenda because it is floundering a little in that regard. While feminism's political agenda is abundantly clear, the ideological commitment for gender criticism too often remains implicit (as discussed in the previous chapter). It might be implicitly there for those who have ears to hear, but this is not enough. So when this approach is taken within biblical studies, the ramifications of the ways in which biblical texts are interpreted and deployed in very real contemporary political arguments need to be made overt. Gender criticism without the feminist commitment to transformation would be a very weak tool indeed.

Finding Common Ground with Trans Discourses

We are currently enjoying a period of rapprochement in this area. The term 'feminist transsexual' is no longer an oxymoron and the contributions that

Trans studies can make to feminist theory are now far more thinkable. This progress has been facilitated in the more recent work by trans activists who resist the previous narratives of moving from one gender to another and promote a more subversive, binary-resistant understanding of their experiences. A significant breakthrough in this regard came with Sandy Stone's Posttranssexual Manifesto, which broke with the earlier autobiographical literature's strongly drawn journey between life in a previous gender and the one newly assigned. Stone recognized that, to some extent, such an emphasis on traversing from one gender to the other, including narratives of being compelled to do so on account of being in the wrong body, were necessary fictions: the shared elements in these narratives were fulfilling the expectations and requirements of medical institutions. Members of the transsexual community were 'only too happy to provide the behavior that led to acceptance for surgery' (1991: 291). However, Stone sees how failure to 'develop an effective counterdiscourse' (1991: 294) left them passive and vulnerable to diagnostic criteria; or to the accusations of certain radical feminists such as Jeffreys and Raymond. In a landmark paper, Stone carves out a space for transsexuals to break with the pre-existing script in order to acknowledge that they 'do not grow up in the same as "GGs," [genuine girls] or genetic "naturals". Transsexuals do not possess the same history as genetic "naturals," and do not share common oppression prior to gender reassignment' (1991: 295). Herein lies a way forward that does not reify the male/female binary and, significantly, does not presuppose that one can unproblematically occupy the 'woman' category. Rather, Stone advocates the generation of a counter-discourse that will 'speak from outside the boundaries of gender, beyond the constructed oppositional nodes which have been predefined as the only positions from which discourse is possible' (1991: 295). Transgendering and transsexual readers are called up to resist the urge to pass, stably, and conservatively, as people who have acquired the desired gender—a resistance that she knows will run completely counter their aspirations (Stone writes that she could not ask 'anything more inconceivable than to forgo passing' [1991: 299]. But it is in the courage to be 'posttranssexual' that she locates the positionality from which to write themselves into the discourses that have so far circumscribed their lives.[24]

Consistent with the spirit of Stone's paper, Kate Bornstein, having undergone male-toward-female transformation, came to the view that sur-

24. This was not envisaged as a 'third gender' speaking position, Stone thinks of posttranssexual discourse as a genre rather than that of a third gender—'a set of embodied texts whose potential for *productive* disruption of structured sexualities and spectra of desire has yet to be explored' (1991: 296, emphasis original).

gery negates sexual ambiguity and the power that sexual ambiguity can have. In *Gender Outlaw* Bornstein identifies as neither man nor woman: 'I know I'm not a man—about that much I'm very clear, and I've come to the conclusion that I'm probably not a woman either, at least not according to a lot of people's rules on this sort of thing' (1994: 8). Bornstein challenges the view that one has to fully occupy one or the other category and hopes for a future world that will have taken on board the transgender revolution where such limited categories are defunct, estimating that this will take at least a thousand years to complete.

Bornstein's comments are part of a wider, intriguing shift in transsexual activism where the notion of two sexes is questioned and activists call for political strategies devised to break down and eliminate this binary. Califia notes how this coincides with the 'increase in numbers of people who label themselves as third gender, two-spirit, both genders, neither gender, or intersexed, and insist on their right to live without or outside of the gender categories that our society has attempted to make compulsory and universal' (1997: 245). Such developments enable fruitful discussion to take place, unhinging as they do transgender and transsexual living from rigid adherence to the sex/gender binaries. Insofar as feminism challenges these dimorphisms there is a shared political goal here.

In what seems to be a spirit of concession, repentance and moving forward, there have also been acknowledgments of ill-judged behaviour. Bornstein, for example, understands Raymond's fears concerning women-only space and acknowledges instances of 'male-toward-female transsexuals entering "women-only" spaces, and attempting to assume a position of control and power' and concedes that 'occasionally a male-toward-female transsexual will carry more than a small degree of [male privilege] over into their newly gendered life' (2006: 239). Heyes, meanwhile, comments that she has 'seen transsexuals act in ways I thought showed poor political judgment on matters of oppression and privilege' while also pointing out that she has 'seen lesbians misstep too' (2003: 1115). The solution to this is not to damn all transsexuals as would-be enemy infiltrators but, as Bornstein suggests, 'to point out what's going on, and to talk it through' (2006: 239). There is a common cause here: the need to talk and listen to one another, and to expose and tackle the common enemy which in this case is identified as male privilege.

A further shared goal can be found in the need to challenge gender defenders who insist on upholding the gender status quo. For Bornstein, there is a need to move beyond the two-and-fro hostilities between lesbian separatists and trans writers—it is about locating the 'correct target', which is defined as 'the group that has both the will and the power to oppress you

wherever you go. The correct target for any successful transsexual rebellion would be the gender system itself' (2006: 242).

Additional progressive development relates to the challenges and interventions that trans activists have made in regard to medical discourses:

> Many FTMs in particular refuse surgeries, especially lower-body surgeries. The cosmetic and functional inadequacy of phalloplastic techniques is undoubtedly a major element of this resistance (and a valid one: who wants a lousy outcome to their surgery?), but resistance is also motivated by the feminist recognition that the penis does not make the man ... Many MTF transsexuals are developing their own form of feminist consciousness and expressing their politics by refusing certain medical interventions and asserting their rights to transform medical requirements (Heyes, 2003: 1115).[25]

Feminists have always been good at self-critical analysis and the current trans discourses offer a new opportunity for feminists who speak from the comfort of a stably gendered existence to recognize and evaluate the effects of speaking from a such a perspective. In a move reminiscent of second wave calls to recognize the white and middle-class biases of feminism, Heyes (2003: 1117) rightly calls feminists to account for criticizing trans discourses while failing to interrogate their own non-trans identity. Intriguingly, Heyes simultaneously points out the similarities between transgender body unease and the wider phenomenon of body unease among women generally:

> In making decisions about hormones, surgery, passing, and gender conformity, trans people—especially if they are feminists—face ethical and political dilemmas [which] ... might be best understood as related to others faced by non-trans feminists ... In this regard, genetic women who ponder the wisdom of breast implants, crash diets, or bodybuilding are hardly different (2003: 1116).

In a candid insight into her own experience, Heyes says 'I am quite clear that I am not a transsexual, but I have often wished (including for periods of years at a time) to be in a different body. In some ways, I feel as though the body I have is the *wrong* body: too large, too female in some respects, too clumsy' (2003: 1098). Heyes, entirely reasonably, wonders why non-trans women aren't equally motivated to explore at great depth how their own body concerns can be analysed alongside trans narratives. Being 'in the wrong body' is not just a trans experience, and yet feminists have disassociated themselves from such thoughts, assuming somehow that

25. See Devor (1997: 405-13) and Cromwell (1999: 112-17, 138-40) for examples of such work.

bodily discomfort and unease cannot be part of feminist politics. Perhaps it is thought to bespeak an internalized misogyny that must be purged. But what Heyes' essay does is to open up some obvious and yet until now missed shared interests.

Finally, it bears noting that the insights of third wave feminism, with its attention to difference, can be utilized to challenge anti-trans views. The interjections by women of colour, working glass woman, women with disabilities, teach that experience is specific and the result of various interlocking factors. In Koyama's view, the prior existence of a male-toward-female person is one of those differences and it does not mean they cannot be feminist: 'The fact that many transsexual women have experienced some form of male privilege is not a burden to their feminist consciousness and credibility, but an asset—that is, provided they have the integrity and conscience to recognize and confront this and other privileges they may have received' (2006: 704). In fact, in Koyama's view, the exclusion of transsexual women could be deemed racist insofar as it posits a homogenous category of women who share experiences which transsexual women have not, owing to their earlier years within male privilege. Looking at the reasons why transsexuals pose such a disconcerting presence, Koyama suggests this lies in their challenge to any theoretical framework based on polarized understandings of gender, to any ideological views on the female body being a reliable source of identity and politics, and to any tendencies towards a notion that women share universal experiences and oppressions. This is food for thought and, as transgender and transsexual studies develop, they will provide feminist theory, with 'a further model through which to account for gender difference' (Hines, 2008: 32) even while they interrogate feminist theory.

Conclusion

The first section of this chapter noted how and why Rubin and Sedgwick were creating space for their studies of sexuality while positing feminism as the space for studying gender. As Richardson comments, this can be seen as a rather 'tenuous' distinction: 'a division constituted—at least in part—out of the material interests of those who invoke such theory borders and the political and historical contexts associated with the emergence of such interests' (2006: 25).[26] If we choose, however, to look at interconnec-

26. Richardson does not have the space to go into the impact of such contexts on the creation of different fields of study, but I have tried to draw attention to this in the first section of this chapter.

tions and the benefits of theorizing shared interests, then common projects potentially come into focus.

Bearing these things in mind the next chapter moves the discussion into feminist biblical studies in order to consider how queer-inspired gender criticism, or better still, genderqueer criticism, could provide new, rich layers of analysis that have not yet been mined.

3

Genderqueer Analysis of the Pornoprophetic Debate

This chapter problematizes the heteronormative framework in which feminist biblical scholarship has been undertaken and provides a case study that illustrates the difference a genderqueer analysis can bring to an existing topic: the pornoprophetic debate within feminist biblical scholarship. This issue engaged feminists and interested male colleagues quite intensively during the 1990s, petering out a little in more recent years, though it remains an active discussion, returned to from time to time. It is a suitable choice of terrain for several reasons.

First, pornography has been a well-known battleground issue within feminism; pitting pro-censure and anti-censure feminists against each other. It was one of the issues over which a divide emerged between those often identified as 'radical' feminist and those who were resistant to those views. A case study that involves pornography debates helpfully enables us to see how feminist biblical scholars lined up with wider secular feminist debate, highlighting connections with a clarity that might not be so immediate in other textual terrains. As we shall see, essays written on the pornoprophetic debate were often informed by, and sided with, a relatively few anti-pornography feminist activists of the 1980s, though the specific voices were often hidden within more general reference to radical feminism. The work of pro-censure feminists such as Andrea Dworkin and Catherine MacKinnon were certainly influential for Setel, whose (1985) paper appears to have provoked the pornoprophetic debate in earnest.[1] Use of their work by her and later contributors certainly informed and enlivened a discussion that prompted reactive alarm in some quarters; for example, it was precisely engagement with Dworkin that caused Robert Carroll consternation. In his

1. Setel did not use the term 'pornoprophetic' herself, but this term soon became popular in studies her work provoked.

essay, Dworkin's position (quickly aligned with the viewpoint of all radical feminism, see 1995: 283) is curtly dismissed: 'An extreme ideologue's point of view is useless for intelligent, academic analysis. Dworkin on pornography is like Hitler on the Jews—a point of view, of course, but not one that is going to contribute to a rational account of anything' (1995: 281). Carroll's paper may have its flaws, but he did at least raise the point that there are other definitions of pornography, other views of S/M where sexual domination is not deemed oppressive. How far did feminist biblical scholarship follow the lead of the small but vocal and influential group of radical feminists and how far did it recognize that there were other pro-sex views about pornography? The choice of this case study enables us to chase such questions and thereby demonstrate some of the debate's limitations.

Second, this debate centres upon a husband-wife metaphor. The heterosexual frame of reference could not be more clear and visible, but how far did scholarly contributors to the debate acknowledge this? And how far did they raise critical commentary about compulsory heterosexuality itself and the way these texts reify that compunction? Given how queer theory is ideally positioned to expose the heteronormative assumptions of texts, and indeed of interpreters, here is a good opportunity to think through the distinct slant that a queer contribution brings to the debate. In addition, since queer theory has been positioned in an antagonistic relationship to feminism generally, and to radical feminism specifically, here is a useful opening to consider how a genderqueer analysis might respond to the specific radical feminist influences that have informed the debate thus far.

The third reason why the pornoprophetic debate is such a useful case study is because while the texts use a husband-wife metaphor, it is with a twist. As it is the male audience that is configured as the wife, the metaphor takes on homoerotic and/or transgendering, feminizing connotations, with men obliged to view themselves in terms of a stripped, battered and unfaithful wife of a jealous, raging male deity. The pornoprophetic texts positively invite a queer analysis owing to these features, and thus showcase the distinctive contribution a genderqueer criticism can offer.

Finally, there is a personal reason. I was a feminist contributor to this debate prior to developing my work on lesbian hermeneutics and queer commentary. It thus offers a useful opportunity to criticize my own work and recognize its blind spots while simultaneously being sharply reminded of the feminist motivation that drove (and continues to drive) my research. What happens to that feminist commitment and those feminist values when looking at the same debate through the lenses of a queer critic? I was also one of those scholars who drew upon the work of Dworkin (1984).

Will I still find her work so unproblematically useful when coming to the text as a genderqueer critic? If not, why not?

This chapter is organized into three sections. Section one notes the heterocentric framework in which existing feminist biblical scholarship has operated and discusses the different positionality of the genderqueer critic who is feminist-informed but stands in a different place, looking through a lens adjusted to take in a different landscape. Section two reviews the key points of existing feminist contributions to the pornoprophetic debate, noting which strands of (secular) feminism informed the debate. Section three goes on to discuss the distinctive contributions that emerge from a genderqueer analysis.

The Heterosexual Imaginary of Feminist Biblical Scholarship and the Benefits of Different Sexual Positions

Chrys Ingraham argues that it is heterosexuality, rather than gender, that needs to become a prime target of critical analysis within feminist sociology. This is because existing scholarship has been insufficiently aware of its own reproduction of 'the heterosexual imaginary' where 'heterosexuality circulates as taken for granted, naturally occurring, and unquestioned, while gender is understood as socially constructed and central to the organization of everyday life' (1994: 204).

Feminist biblical scholarship requires the same wake-up call. To date, it has been conducted almost entirely within a heterocentric frame of reference; one that assumes the 'natural' heterosexuality of the scriptural women themselves and one that appears to presuppose a heterosexual community of readers. There are only a few footnoted nods (such as Fuchs 2000: 18n.23), and notable exceptions (such as Exum 1996: 129-74) that provide light relief in this unhappy state of affairs. It remains the case that overviews of feminist biblical studies have no discussion of how, say, a lesbian feminist or transgender feminist perspective might contribute. One has to move from publications labelled primarily as feminist biblical studies to those that are identified predominantly as 'queer' or 'lesbian' or 'gay', in order to find these things.[2] In an earlier (2008) tentative exploration of why this might be so, I raised three possibilities: (1) that the sexual preferences of a feminist biblical scholar were thought to have no bearing whatsoever on their academic work; (2) that fear of being put at odds with the (seemingly heterosexual) community of feminist biblical scholars to which they belong and which they value, led to the suppression of any non-heterosexist

2. Such as Goss and West (2000), Stone (2001) and Guest *et al.* (2006).

interpretation, perhaps because of fear that it would lead to accusations of eisegesis, or that it would be professionally risky; (3) that lesbian perspectives have not been readily found within feminist biblical criticism because, although it might seem the most natural place for them to flourish, it is not their most welcoming primary 'home'.

The insight gained from Ingraham's work, however, leads to a deeper awareness of the pervasiveness of the heterosexual imaginary, which explains, to a large extent, the heterocentric framework in which feminist biblical studies has been undertaken. And as Ingraham sees so clearly, the problem with this is not only that scholarship in her discipline had reproduced heteronormative assumptions, but that those assumptions had driven the agenda and had methodological effect and consequence: When heteronormativity 'represents one of the main premises not only of feminist sociology but of the discipline in general … it underlies and defines the direction taken by feminist sociology and by gender studies in particular' (1994: 204).

It is worth staying with Ingraham a little further because her comments have direct relevance for other disciplines, including biblical studies. Her review of some key works within sociology demonstrates, for example, how the 'dominant notion of sex ... depends upon a heterosexual assumption that the only possible configuration of sex is male or female as "opposite sexes," which, like other aspects of the physical world … are naturally attracted to each other' (1994: 215). Once this binary model of sex is assumed, then gender is seen as the *culturally* organized way of 'doing' male or female—and investigating gender is where feminist sociologists have put most of their energies. However, they have not addressed the '"necessity" of gender' nor have they explored 'the interests served by ascribing or assigning characteristics based on sex ... By foregrounding gender as dependent on the male-female binary, the heterosexual assumption remains unaddressed and unquestioned' (1994: 215). They have not, for instance, queried whether gender would even continue to have a point without institutionalized heterosexuality. For Ingraham, to change the angle, to transform the discipline from one that reproduces the heterosexual imaginary to one that sees it for what it is and investigates the ways in which it has so pervasively operated, is *to create a whole new programme of study which requires a transformed or at least modified methodology*.

Shifting to feminist biblical scholarship with Ingraham's observations in mind, it seems my 2008 pondering that feminists did not think their sexuality had any bearing on their academic work did make sense, since this would be entirely consistent with the effects of the heterosexual imaginary. When one is dealing with a collection of texts that both assume and

prescribe women's sexual orientation towards men, which reinforces the notion that the human race is divided into a two-sex binary, *and the interpreter shares that ideology*, then why should one's sexuality make a difference to one's commentary? It has only made a difference insofar as feminist biblical scholars who share that heterosexual frame of reference are critical of the way gender and heterosexuality was organized and enacted within the ancient world i.e. in terms of the exploitation of women's relationships with men, and of the lack of female agency in setting the terms of those relationships. But the basic concept of compulsory heterosexuality is left unquestioned, and there appears to be little thought that it requires unpicking.

Not surprisingly, this blind spot is facilitated via adoption of the view that sex (male/female) is biologically mandated while gender refers to the socialization of males and females into culturally acceptable ways of behaving as befits the sex. Turning to a relatively recent landmark publication—*Women in Scripture*—the introductory essays maintain this distinction between sex and gender. Thus, in her opening sentence Bellis writes 'Although women have been reading the Bible with sensitivity to issues of sex (*biologically determined*) and gender (*culturally constructed*) for centuries …' (2000: 24, my emphases). And Meyers' Preface to this publication, discussing how this research project was necessary given the continued influence of the Bible, includes this paragraph, which ends on a reification of gender being the culturally organized category:

> Despite the theoretical separation of government and religion in the United States and many western countries, attitudes and policies that affect women's lives are often determined by biblical materials, either in explicit references to certain texts or in the general way in which Western culture has incorporated biblical ideas. Certainly people within most Jewish and Christian denominations, whose beliefs and customs are rooted in biblical tradition, are often affected by the Bible in matters of gender, that is cultural ideas about female and male (2000: ix).

Notice how the categories of sex themselves are *not* thought to be 'cultural ideas'—only the gender norms that are appended to them. But queer and intersex discourses have blown open the construction of 'sex', demonstrating it to be also culturally (often medically) assigned—in Butler's view, dictated by the prior requirements of compulsory heterosexuality. I am not arguing that there are no biological differences between male and female sexes. It is obvious that there are, though intersex conditions indicate how blurred these can be. The problem is the *significance* that gets attached to various body parts and reproductive capacities which is first constructed and then allowed to concretize differences into a rigid binary. Once the

important shift has been made whereby 'sex' is no longer an inherent given, then the unsettling queer thought begins—why did we ever believe it was? What mechanisms have repeatedly and successfully stultified our awareness of its construction? The proposition that it is the institution of heterosexuality itself that demands two sexes and two genders is a startling one and means feminist thought can never be the same again.

If feminist biblical scholars are to follow Ingraham's (1994) lead, then the very least that needs to happen is an adoption of her term 'heterogender' rather than the more neutral 'gender'. Heterogender is preferable because it makes clear the complictness of gender in the institution of heterosexuality. It points to the cultural construction of both terms—gender (which is usually taken to be cultural constructed) and heterosexuality (which is not). It also flags up that this is just one way of understanding gender or doing gender, rather than accepting it as a hegemonic norm.[3]

Better still would be a change of positionality. In order to break the heterosexual imaginary, the genderqueer critic comes to the text from a position that neither assumes nor privileges heterosexuality. The critic operates at a critical distance from heterocentric mechanisms and assumptions that the world has to be organized thus, even while the pervasiveness of heteronormativity cannot be escaped. This is a position that requires an Adrienne Rich kind of astonishment. She comments on how the assumption that women naturally have a heterosexual preference, 'seems to me in itself remarkable: it is an enormous assumption to have glided so silently into the foundations of our thought' (1987: 34). So, while feminists come to these texts with a hermeneutic of suspicion, genderqueer criticism applies a hermeneutic of hetero-suspicion.[4]

Accordingly, when it comes to the pornoprophetic texts and responses to them, reading from this position means one looks at the husband-wife mode of relating askance; in a way that has not been overtly, consciously present within existing readings. While feminists identify the rampant inequalities in the husband-wife configuration, expose the fear of female sexu-

3. Ingraham writes: 'Reframing gender as Heterogender foregrounds the relation between heterosexuality and gender. Heterogender confronts the question of heterosexuality with *the natural* and of gender with the cultural, and suggests that both are socially constructed, open to other configurations (not only opposites and binary), and open to change. As a materialist feminist concept, Heterogender de-naturalizes the "sexual" as the starting point for understanding heterosexuality, and connects institutionalized heterosexuality with the gender division of labor and the patriarchal relations of production' (1994: 204).

4. On how such an approach works to disrupt and resist the ways in which the scriptures are used to sustain heteronormativity, see Guest (2005).

ality that drives it, and highlight the enduring problem of male violence and the pornographic exposure and fetishizing of female body parts, the genderqueer critic looks also at the time- and context-specific configuration of heterosexuality, recognizing that the institution of heterosexuality is not an unchanging, 'natural', just-there mode of relating, but an economic and political construction. Seen in this light, heterosexual relations themselves are no longer a shared social and ideological framework between text and interpreter; they are deprivileged, lose their normative status, fail to inspire uncritical allegiance.

Thus, in one of the few lesbian responses to the problematic husband-wife metaphor, Rabbi Dawn Robinson Rose writes of how it does not address her in any direct way: 'I do not engage in heterosexual relationships. I am not dependent upon and have no reason to be in close proximity to that abusing male … A Jewish lesbian stands outside the heterosexual matrix. From that position, I identify neither with the abusive God nor the abused whore-wife' (2000: 147). Her subject position, she argues, is in the margin as *witness* of this domestic abuse scene, she is not *in* it. This is not to say that the critic who identifies as heterosexual cannot see these things, but mobility requires certain things of the critic, and in this case there needs to be serious self-critical awareness and distance from any easy elision with the construction and reification of heterosexist assumptions and norms.

It is helpful, in this regard, to consider Sara Ahmed's work on *Queer Phenomenology*. She talks about orientation as something that we are habituated in; a familiarity. 'If we know where we are when we turn this way or that way, then we are oriented. We have our bearings. We know what to do to get to this place or to that place' (2006: 1). A queer orientation, however, is one where expected connections are out of place, at odds; a place where things do not line up. And anticipating the argument that a heterosexual orientation is the more natural position from which a queer orientation deviates, she notes that heterosexuality is not a given, something that is inherent and innate, but rather one is given a framework within which heterosexuality is an expectation. She re-writes Simone de Beauvoir's famous dictum to read 'One is not born, but becomes straight' (2006: 79). So whereas heterosexuality has been normalized as an unproblematic connecting line between male and female sexed bodies with desires that are directed towards each other, a queer positionality is one that recognizes the normalizing mechanisms and is therefore off key and out of kilter, and exposes things from a different vantage point. As an example, Ahmed shares an anecdote from a holiday experience. Entering the dining room with her partner she sees male/female couples seated, facing each other across the tables, in a cosy picture of heteronormativity. But this vision of normality

actually prompts curiosity and wonder in Ahmed, sensations reminiscent of Rich's astonishment:

> I am shocked by the sheer force of the regularity of that which is familiar: how each table presents the same form of sociality as the form of the heterosexual couple. How is it possible, with all that is possible, that the same form is repeated again and again? How does the openness of the future get closed down into so little in the present? (2006: 82)

She goes on to describe how this sense of wonderment can be articulated in terms of noticing the forgotten:

> Rather than just seeing the familiar, which of course means that it passes from view, I felt wonder and surprise at the regularity of its form, as the form of what arrived at the table, as forms that get repeated, again and again, until they are 'forgotten' and simply become forms of life. To wonder is to remember the forgetting and to see the repetition of form as the 'taking form' of the familiar (2006: 82-83).

To operate as a genderqueer critic thus demands something of those who identify as heterosexual. It is to experience curiosity and wonder when confronted with the mechanisms, assumptions and compulsions of heteronormativity and to realize that it is in their sheer repetition that they get taken for the normal, the natural. In terms of an academic discipline, is to expose the heteronormative orientation of a field of study so that its presuppositions and comfortable framework are noticed; to throw people off balance by suddenly making conscious what it is they are doing unconsciously, to occupy a resistant location and positionality. This is familiar territory for the feminist who is used to looking askance, but this time it is the feminist position that comes under scrutiny for its own heteronormatizing effects. Accordingly, the heterosexual gender critic becomes a traitor to the normative culture that privileges their chosen sexual identity and as will be discussed further in the conclusion of this book, transitions into a queer heterosexual.

I do not see this in terms of creating a new significant shift within feminist biblical studies. The shift required is of such foundational significance that the new terminology of genderqueer is required, along with its introduction of new dialogue partners and strategies. While lesbian readers, like Rose, make their sexuality a starting point for the discussion, feminist contributors to the pornoprophetic debate have not generally acknowledged that they are writing from their own heterosexual position. Brenner is an exception, since she acknowledges that she is writing as a 'heterosexual' woman (1995: 272) and recognizes that some readers will have relation-

ships not organized in male-female ways and who would not slip as easily as she can into a husband-wife metaphor. However, although such differing perspectives are noted, her essay as a whole does not really include non-heterosexual views and standpoints. In fact, the acknowledgments are inserted into what remains a feminist heterosexually positioned paper. And lesbians, far from being recognized as standing outside that framework, are seemingly incorporated; for the references are largely to gay male alternative positions and she says that she 'cannot ignore the gendering effect most pornographic presentations have for persons who belong to the same anatomical sex as I do' (1995: 273), which collectivizes all women by their assumed shared anatomy. It does not show awareness that the gendered effects might be different for lesbians, who have less at stake in the metaphor, less complicity with it, who stand at a considerable distance from it. Or that anatomy is not necessary a shared ground of 'woman' any more. If the heterosexual imaginary is to be blown apart, it is not enough to acknowledge one's complicity with the heterosexual framework; rather it is a matter of adopting a new positionality. However, I am keenly aware that I cannot speak for all feminists and that not all feminist scholars may be able, or indeed desire to make this shift. As noted in Chapter 1, the whole idea is intersected and complicated further, I suspect, by location (in some parts of the world it would be highly dangerous to adopt this approach) and by confessional allegiances to religious institutions that retain attitudes which are not exactly gay-friendly, or border on the homophobic.[5] Biblical studies, attracting as it does scholars who are both committed lay people/ministers of religion and academics, has long been troubled by issues of faith/academic boundaries. When it comes to homosexuality, transgendering, queer activism and theorizing, one cannot ignore how it interplays with those other allegiances. It is one thing being a feminist scholar and finding liberating texts in the Bible for women; it is quite another thing to be a feminist scholar finding liberating ways of reading the Bible for those who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex.

At this point in time, my task can only be to put forward the rationale for a shift to genderqueer criticism, while acknowledging that complex talking points that arise from such a move. Also, to identify strategies by which the vantage point that is available to lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersex and/or queer readers might facilitate a breakthrough. As with all hermeneuts, their life experiences put them at a tangent which enables them to see things from the margins. However, once the different positionality of

5. For the dangers inherent in taking up any pro-lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender approach see Guest (2005:65-81).

the genderqueer critic has been opened up, perhaps the mobility that exists for all critics can come into play and enable them to step into the space thus created. I return to this issue in the conclusions of this book.

Feminist Contributions to the Pornoprophetic Debate

A review of feminist papers on the pornoprophetic texts reveals the following key topics of interest: From what context does the metaphor derive and does this context mitigate against its content and effects?[6] Does the biblical metaphor invoke pornographic imagery and if so, how do we handle the presence of pornography in biblical texts?[7] Does the metaphor get used in misogynistic ways, i.e. does it give rise to views that women are inherently susceptible to dangerous flirtations, wanton, rebellious, thoughtless, weak; that women can be reduced to objects that can be violently acted upon, without repercussion, in order to control their wilder tendencies? And that to be thought of as a being woman or womanly is deeply insulting for men? If the answers are in the affirmative, then the pertinent question is, what should we do with these texts?[8] In terms of its reception history, how have

6. Galambush (1992) demonstrates how the prophets manipulated a metaphor grounded in the conventions of ANE literature where the city was understood as a goddess, consort of the patron deity. As she goes on to point out, however, their manipulation of this gendered metaphor encourages 'she got what she deserved' assumptions from Ezekiel's male audience and shifts the attention away from their own complicity. Magdalene (1995) argues that the prophetic twist on the metaphor may have had its way prepared by the formulation of treaty curses, which include the three threats that a) the city will become a prostitute; b) it will be stripped; and c) wives will be raped. This puts the deity's violent punishment of the city into context: a shared understanding that this would be appropriate action for the purpose of maintaining honour and enforcing covenantal compliance. Magdalene, however, justifies her disdain and rejection of this metaphor. Setel (1985) had earlier posited psychological social reasons for Hosea's use of the metaphor, suggesting that the Israelite community was struggling to come to terms with its conquest.

7. For example, questions of whether or not the husband-wife metaphor is actually pornographic, as opposed to 'just' erotic, are discussed in Brenner (1995) and Carroll (1995) and Carroll's doubts are responded to by Exum (1996) and particularly Brenner (1997).

8. Exum (1996) and Brenner (1995) argue that the metaphor relies on misogyny and a shared agreement that female sexuality needs to be controlled in order for male dominance to be upheld. Brenner does advise caution, saying that 'an automatic equation of pornographic female representation and misogyny should not be adopted without due consideration' (1995: 261), but follows this with the statement that 'If we readers feel that the textual voice [of Jeremiah] disapproves of women as wild and (un) natural animals; that the target audience is drawn into sharing this disapproval; that the

the negative effects of the metaphor been reinforced by male commentators and how might feminist engagement intervene in that complicity?[9] Often, too, the relevance of these texts for contemporary situations/issues such as the domestic abuse and rape of women is brought overtly into the discussion.[10]

In terms of the debate's links to the broader feminist movement, pro-censorship feminism has been most influential. The fact that pro-censorship feminism has been challenged by feminists with different views hardly figures at all. The platform for this rather one-sided influence was established by the foundational essay of T. Drorah Setel (1985) and subsequent contributors, including myself, followed where she led, criticizing the objectification of female sexuality and its negative valuation over and against a positively drawn male norm and drawing connections between prophetic texts and contemporary definitions, functions and features of pornography. On the whole, despite one or two nods to the fact that women can enjoy pornography, the general consensus was/is that pornography is bad for women and that these texts are bad for female readers.

Throughout, the focus of the debate was firmly on women: on the fact that the metaphor of Woman/Zion is grounded in the legal context pertaining to actual ancient Israelite women, the ways in which female sexuality is negatively imaged and the metaphorical female body stripped and battered, and also on how the female reader is asked to read against her own interests. There has always been a consciousness that the prophets are addressing a male audience and that it is men who are being described, collectively, as an adulterous woman punished for her betrayal,[11] but it is the fact that the biblical narrators chose the image of adulterous wife that is predominantly criticized. For all that it might be grounded in ancient treaties and the ancient practice of gendering cities, feminists refuse to let the

pornographic fantasy feeds on the view that female sexuality is uncontrollable—then, yes, misogyny underscores this dehumanized, animalized depiction. This is *not* "just a metaphor"' (1995: 264). The possibility that biblical writers may not necessary have been conscious of the misogynist tendencies of their use of the metaphor is but 'small consolation' (Brenner 1997: 167).

9. Criticism of the reception history of these texts is contained in virtually all contributions to the debate, but see Exum (1996) as a good example.

10. The impact for contemporary women is discussed in Setel (1985), Brenner (1995, 1997), van Dijk-Hemmes (1996), Exum (1996), and Guest (1999). Discussion of contemporary experiences of domestic abuse and the ways in which these texts provide scriptural sanction for wife-battering and rape can be found in Weems (1995).

11. Brenner twice notes how 'male sexuality is attacked too' (1995: 260, 273) but her focus is on the unjust representation of female sexuality.

narrator off the hook for his choice of metaphor. They point out how easy it is for the male audience, originally addressed, to shift the blame and vitriol from themselves and on to a woman scapegoat. I based my own article on this scapegoating, noting how explanation for the deity's rage has 'successfully been directed away from any specific culprits to a general image of female adultery which attracted justified punishment' (1999: 414). It was this unrelenting focus on the female imagery that Robert Carroll criticized in his essay (1995), which determinedly puts the focus back on the male community addressed, and the way the metaphor insults men by describing them as whores.

Unpacking the debate further, we can deepen our attention with a more detailed discussion of four feminist contributors: T. Drorah Setel (1985) (whose pioneering essay has been so influential for all subsequent discussions), Athalya Brenner (1995, 1997), since she has been such a major contributor with an ongoing interest in the debate, J. Cheryl Exum (1996) because her distinctive methodological approach offered a potentially new avenue of exploration, and closing with a self-critical assessment of my own contribution (1999) in order to see how my work needs to be challenged and reassessed in the light of my journey from feminist to genderqueer criticism.

Revisiting Setel's essay is an interesting experience. It is a relatively short essay that demonstrates how, in Hosea, the deity is positioned as the good and true provider. The consequence, or 'underlying implication' is that females should be passive, dependent, and grateful (1985: 92). In the service of this narratorial desire to contrast Yhwh's male, positive fidelity with Israel's negative, female harlotry, the objectified and pornographic images of female sexuality come into play. This she addresses only in the final paragraph of the paper and it is clear that her concern is a contemporary one: how do modern 'religious feminists' resist the potential for scriptures 'to so define women in our own societies' (1985: 95) and what can/should they do with texts that purport to be 'the word of God' when they utilize negative pornographic imagery? While some might be able to use 'moral realism' to contextualize such texts and thereby offset their unsettling imagery, 'For others, the "pornographic" nature of female objectification may demand that such texts not be declared "the word of God" in a public setting' (1985: 95). She closes the paper with the suggestion that the issues arising out of this discussion might mean that we 'redefine our relationship not only to the text but also to our histories and communities in ways which fully acknowledge female experience' (1985: 95).

However, the terms of her essay are established in its opening pages, which outline the definitions, general features, functions and causes of

pornography. In her view, pornography's distinguishing features include the objectification, degradation, humiliation and possession of women. Its function is to maintain male domination and female submission. Its cause is attributed to a 'psychological need for a sense of power and superiority and a proof of manhood' (1985: 88) and to power shifts in male/female relationships in contexts where the autonomy of women has been increased. For these summaries and for definitions of pornography Setel relied on the work of Andrea Dworkin (1976, 1984), Susan Griffin (1978) and three essays in Lederer's (1980) collection *Take Back the Night*,[12] and use of these sources (alone) leads the reader to think that there is a feminist consensus on what constitutes pornography. The pornoprophetic debate was thus founded upon the work of a vocal and influential radical feminist (Dworkin) and has to be contextualized within the 'Take Back the Night' activism of the pro-censorship campaigns of the 1980s. As the debate took off in biblical studies, the comments that Setel had made about prophetic views on female sexuality, which she narrows to 'three areas of emphasis: procreation, ritual purity, and possession' (1985: 88) seem to get dropped in the excitement of addressing the presence of pornography in the prophets. Her definitions of pornography get repeated in subsequent publications with an ease that now seems surprising. For example, van Dijk-Hemmes opens her essay saying she will be 'making use of a model which is offered by T. Drorah Setel' (1996: 170). Setel's brief discussion that drew on the limited sources noted above has thus become a 'model' that van Dijk-Hemmes accepts and applies to Ezekiel 23. Moreover, the negative evaluation of pornography that is present in Setel's work is elaborated in subsequent essays by further contributors to the debate, as we shall see.

Brenner's (1995) essay 'On Prophetic Propaganda' also picks up Setel's definitions and works rather uncritically with them: 'Contemporary feminist theories define pornography by distinguishing four categories: its *features*, *function*, *definition*, and *causes*' (1995: 261), she writes. When one checks the footnote for these theories/theorists there is reference only to Setel (1985), thus creating an equation between Setel (and her sources), and 'contemporary feminist theories'. This happens despite the fact that Brenner's section on 'feminist definitions of pornography' opens with the note that feminist definitions do vary. As for the function of pornography, 'most feminists agree on the functionality of pornography, as presented earlier: pornography objectifies females and degrades them. It encourages female abuse and restricts female sexual choice to a state of virtual servitude. Consequently, male power is highlighted and legitimated' (1995:

12. The essays concerned were Rich (1980), Longino (1980) and Diamond (1980).

265). A footnote takes the reader, again, to Setel. I belabour the point, but it is important to see how one paper has indeed laid the foundation for the larger debate.

Brenner does, however, broaden the definition of pornography to include fantasy (1995: 259, 1997: 158) and to take into account gender-specific social factors (the fact that 'male sexual fantasies have been and still are presented as universally and transgenderwise valid is usually ignored' [1997: 159], and definitions need to 'be supplemented by incorporating data from feminist criticism in psychology, sociology, literature and the arts' [1995: 259]). She also addresses the difference between erotica and pornography in some detail. While she has no wish to censure erotics (1997: 172), pornography cannot be tolerated. The difference, for her, lies in four factors. First: fantasy sources and their derivation. While erotica might contain fantasies that derive from personal experience, pornographic representations, she suggests, explore the potential, the non-experienced. Second: gender inclusivity—how far does the representation include reference to female fantasy? If male fantasies are regarded as universal and include no 'curiosity, or knowledge, about the Other's desire' then erotica risks mutating into pornography (1997: 159). Third: the treatment of women. 'Wherever I detect an underlining [sic] world view of gender asymmetry and female otherness, there I tend to respond by screaming, Pornography' (1997: 160). Violence especially marks the pornographic: 'For me, a pornographic representation qualifies as such, as a fantasy of pornographic sexual desire to be distinguished from erotic fantasy, when it contains abuse and/or violence' (1997: 171). Fourth: readerly judgment. In the spirit of acknowledging different views, she agrees that 'conventions, variations in taste and norms, spatial and temporal and individual determinants, do indeed motivate the making of distinctions between eroticism and pornography' (1997: 159). Deciding whether a representation is erotic or pornographic thus, to some extent, boils down to the views of individual creators and users. It is this recognition of individual difference, however, that merits further attention.

There is welcome acknowledgment of diversity in Brenner's work. Aware of the limitations of her own 'white, Western, Jewish ... Israeli, middle class, heterosexual' perspectives (1995: 272), she does accept that women might respond to different sexual stimuli in different ways. She acknowledges that women might experience fantasies that include power and gender dynamics, possibly with an element of violence. Brenner frankly lets her readers know that she, herself, 'can tolerate, sometimes enjoy, pornographic representations' though 'cannot ignore the gendering effect most pornographic presentations have for persons who belong to the same anatomical sex as I do' (1995: 273). I admire her candid acknowledgment that, when faced

with the *Story of O,* there is a recognition, albeit a discomforting one for her, that *O*'s fantasy is somewhat hers also, owing to 'the socialization process I've undergone' (1995: 273).

Furthermore, the several insertions of 'heterosexual' into the discussion helpfully indicate how the general framework of the chapter is heterosexual, implying that differently located readers might approach the subject from other vantage points. For example, there is an acknowledgement of gay men's perspectives when she talks about sexual acts affecting bodies. Having said that 'women's bodies are more deeply affected by sexual acts' she sees that this does not take into account the experiences of non-heterosexual men (though her analysis does not recognize the possibility that some heterosexual men might also choose to have their bodies penetrated). Acknowledgement of lesbian perspectives may be present in the discussion of voyeurism where she notes that 'Women, at least heterosexual women, are taught to gender themselves as both subjects and objects of the gendered gaze' (1997: 168): this is a tacit inference that lesbians might have a different relationship to the gaze (which indeed they do). However, there are also some uncomfortable nods towards lesbian perspectives. When she voices her personal resistance to the depiction of Woman/Israel she writes: 'I do not want to join in the game of undressing that woman; I do not want to leer at her uncovered body. I am a heterosexual woman; I would rather view Israel, God's chosen son, being paraded naked in the marketplace' (1997: 171). It might not be an intended or conscious inference—Brenner is making a point that her desire is located on male bodies and it is the male gaze that leers—but that statement potentially suggests that non-heterosexual woman have a different kind of gaze in relation to the naked female body. I have argued elsewhere (Guest 2008) that this is indeed the case—that lesbian-identified viewers can look at the body of a bathing Bathsheba in a far more appreciative way than heterosexual feminists have done. But to allow the possibility that a non-heterosexual gaze might join in the narratorial undressing, or 'leering', of a male author does not discern how the lesbian gaze is also resistant and how it might actually offer a positive alternative.

Brenner's acknowledgments of diversity are welcome, but do not actually take us very far when the focus slips very quickly back to its heterosexual frame of reference. For all its recognition of difference, the essay makes little attempt to imagine what the debate would look like from diverse perspectives, or to engage with the work of those who own those different standpoints. And sometimes it unhelpfully homogenizes the discussion so that 'women' are an undifferentiated collectivized category. Apart from one footnoted remark, made 'in passing' that acknowledges 'the relatively

modern phenomenon of female-authored pornography' which, 'when it involves hierarchic relations and S/M relationships, is in my view no better than any other type of pornography' (1995: 162 n. 20), the pornography she talks about always seems to be heterosexual. Thus, she writes of 'heterosexual pornographic ideology' where 'the social group "women" mostly exists as the agent for or object of male gratification' (1997: 166). It is good to see Brenner making visible the normally invisible heterosexual marker, but in order for the work to shift from heterosexual feminist to genderqueer, we need more than a fleeting glimpse that there are readers whose sexual experiences are different Brenner's and who might have different views from those expressed in the general heteronormative tenor of the discussion.

As for the feminism that has influenced her paper, Brenner draws on Setel (1985) and thereby on Dworkin, Griffin and Lederer. However, she later distances herself from 'feminist writers like Andrea Dworkin, or Camille Paglia', thinking that they go too far in defining 'sexual activity a-priori as violence against women' or seeing 'sex as a war game' (1997: 161). As dialogue partners outside biblical studies she works mainly with Susan Griffin (1981) and Jessica Benjamin (1988). One has to work hard, however, to find engagement with feminist attitudes to pornography that is not in the pro-censorship category. Brenner acknowledges that some people might not think pornography is necessarily a bad thing, but she is critical of 'ostensibly politically-correct attitudes towards pornography … invoked for the sake of personal freedom and personal choice' (1997: 154). The danger of such views is that they minimize the 'thrust of the image for contemporary readers' (1997: 154). The footnote, provided at the point at which she refers to those politically correct attitudes, does not direct the reader to multiple proponents of such opinions, rather to 'a refutation of such and similar arguments' (1997: 154 n. 8). Moreover, she identifies those who claim to 'understand' the love metaphor and describe it as 'erotic' as being 'seduced by the image' (1997: 154). This is using quite detrimental language to describe those who do not follow her view. To have been seduced implies the overtaking of one's independent, discerning judgment, to have had one's rational defences wooed away. Contrasting with such seduced readers are the 'Resistant and more suspicious', i.e. the awake and alert ones—'those who refuse to be co-opted', who 'disapprove of their pornographic thrust and anti-female bias' (1997: 155). So while Brenner even-handedly acknowledges how 'Both factions are motivated by their own worldviews and specific ideologies' (1997: 155), one faction has been rather summarily dismissed as beset by 'politically-correct' attitudes and having been 'seduced'. During this discussion there are no references

to those who hold those with the different views mentioned, other than Robert Carroll (1995, 1996). However, he is by no means an advocate or spokesman for such views. Rather he seeks to offset what he deems to be the narrow, biased views of 'radical feminism'.

Before leaving Brenner's work, I want to mention the comments she makes regarding the perceived sadomasochistic element of the love metaphor. Specifically, she uses the *Story of O* as an intertext to demonstrate this characteristic,[13] while more generally she discusses how stereotypical imagery in (heterosexual) porn culminates 'in the S/M fantasy of rigid gender roles: passive masochistic … female; active sadistic … male' (1997: 165). She adds a personal note about her discomfort with this: 'I feel acutely uncomfortable with that paradigmatic icon. It contains an inflexible model for gender relations. I sense it is damaging to my gender and take no comfort in other biblical models for gender relations. I wish ... to resist it' (1997: 171).

Again, there are issues that need to be raised. S/M is generalized and also heterosexualized in this discussion and the lack of references to those who have contrary views, or can speak from the perspective of sadomasochist practice (or D/S: domination and submission) does not help. From a queer vantage point several years later, readers might question how far the complexities of S/M practices and fantasies have actually been understood. They might also wonder whether the gendered roles are really 'fixed', in the way Brenner assumes within the erotic play of S/M. The feminist from whom Brenner takes her lead is Jessica Benjamin (1988), whose essay draws on psychological insights mainly from Freud and Winnicott in her attempt to explain and trace back sadomasochistic urges and practices to infancy. Notably there is not moral judgement, as such, in Benjamin's essay, though she does conclude that S/M is a limited, ultimately (false) substitute for true recognition of self from the other, and for differentiation of self from other. When we come to Brenner's paper, however, there is a much bolder moral judgment, as noted above. The reader gets the clear sense that sadomasochistic fantasy/actions cannot be a good thing, however conceived, if hierarchical relations are posited. Voices that might be raised to the contrary are limited to the anonymous 'politically correct'.

So, Brenner's work pushes the debate forward in terms of including the fantasy element of pornography, distinguishing pornography from erotica, highlighting arguably sadomasochistic strands of the metaphor, and

13. Brenner sees sadomasochistic connections between the control and possession of O and her transmutation from human to animal, and the subjection and animalization of the (male) community in Jeremiah.

acknowledging the heterosexual framework of her response. Her interventions could have shifted the debate to a much broader canvas had she engaged in depth with the views of those whose experiences are different to her own. I provide an alternative view on the supposed sadomasochistic content of the metaphor when it comes to discussing my own work, below.

J. Cheryl Exum's contribution to the debate is interesting because she does not appear to rely on connections to the pro-censorship activism of some prominent radical feminists. Nor does she work overtly with Setel's definition of pornography and its functions. There is less concern with definitions of pornography, or the difference between it and erotica. Rather, Exum focuses attention on the continuing damage these texts inflict on women and the need to intervene in the invitation to 'assume the text's male gaze at the women's genitalia' (1996: 106); to intervene in the message that the threat of female sexuality merits severe punishment; and to intervene in the scapegoating of women which puts them perpetually into victim status. She offers a different angle on the pornoprophetic texts, one which is consistent with the interest of her book as a whole in cultural representations of biblical women. At first, the chapter on pornoprophetics is puzzling. Here is a book focused on the ways biblical women are recycled in film, art, music and literature. How do texts like Ezekiel 16 and 23 fit into those categories? But it *does* cohere with other chapters in the book, particularly the first, insofar as it analyses the responses readers are expected to make when served up an exposed, personified female body 'for our literary and visual consumption' (1996: 102). *We*, then, are put under the spotlight as culturally located consumers of this imagery, just as we are with the representations of biblical characters in various cultural media. Like cinema goers we are presented with the language and images of female mutilation and humiliation, but are now challenged to examine our consumption of this material, particularly our gendered reactions. It is tough going. A close look at the specifics of these texts is always shockingly salutary and it is with justification that Exum calls for feminist intervention into these texts and their assumptions.

At the outset of her essay Exum indicates that her focus will be on the deity as the initiator of the sexual violence. She draws attention to the effects that ensue from putting God in the husband position. It not only reinforces the gender hierarchy where he occupies the superior, controlling and authoritative role while the wife's is one of submission, but it means that to challenge the biases of this male construct becomes 'tantamount to challenging divine authority' (1996: 114). She notes how fear of male competition is a hallmark of the masculinity displayed, indicated in the fantasy-driven fascination with imagined excessive female desire: 'The irrationally

jealous husband imagines that his wife will have sex with anyone' (1996: 107). It is as part of this specific discussion that Setel's paper is noted, but Exum is not drawing on her definitions of pornography; rather on how she too noted the contrast between a positive male deity as the wronged but faithful husband vis-à-vis the negative female portrayal of the ungrateful harlot. Like Setel, Exum also presses home the contemporary significance of the ideology, linking the irrational jealousy of the husband to Ellwood's (1998) observation that this trait is shared with husbands in contemporary situations of domestic violence. Other traits identified by Ellwood, such as victim self-blame, or how violent husbands see their abuse as instructional, or how wives are invited to be reconciled once the anger and violence has been vented, are also noted. While the contexts may be vastly different, Exum's point is that the Bible is an influential document and a live text for those who look to it 'for ethical principles and moral guidance' (1996: 113 n. 30).[14]

Quite rightly, Exum takes issue with commentators who uncritically reinforce the gender bias, concerned about the added influence these exert on readers who turn to them for explications of biblical texts. Comparing these with female contributors to the *Women's Bible Commentary*, she argues that although God still gets some measure of exoneration from the latter, there is an 'honesty' about their work that recognizes the 'deeply problematic' issues raised by pornoprophetic texts and the fact that the stakes are much higher for female readers.

It is important to pause here and consider carefully this section of Exum's argument. Back in Chapter 1 I noted how the definition of gender criticism provided by Sawyer (2007) included mention of a profound and wider lens. I pointed out that this related to how far one is prepared to move beyond a reformist confessional perspective and be willing to put the deity under the critical spotlight. Here, in Exum's essay, is an unexpected return to this point. In her brief review of the several essays in the *Women's Bible Commentary,* she shows clearly how they all 'wrestle with the implications of biblical violence against women and struggle to find ways of dealing with it' (1996: 117). However, she also says that 'like their male counterparts they still seem to have a stake either in defending the "real god" or defending the text, either because of their own commitment to the biblical text

14. The message that the reader (in any context) picks up is that '"Bad women are promiscuous and rapacious, and female desire is consuming and dangerous … male control, then, is seen as necessary and desirable, and sexual abuse becomes justified as a means of correction. To make matters worse, physical assault paves the way for the abused woman's reconciliation with her abusive spouse' (1996: 114).

or for the sake of the commentary's stated audience of "laywomen, clergywomen, and students"' (1996: 118). This is where Exum's distinctive contribution comes into its own, for she has clearly stated from the outset that she wishes to examine the deity's responsibility for sexual violence. For her, 'god' is a male construct, a character among other male characters, and that 'as investigation into the gender-determined nature of biblical discourse becomes more sophisticated, biblical interpretation will have to come to terms with this fact' (1996: 122). More 'sophisticated'. Does this perhaps resound with Sawyer's more 'profound'? When we ask about the kind of feminism a genderqueer critique will take with it, the approaches espoused by Exum and Sawyer are likely candidates. But the stakes are different for those who are wrestling with these texts with honesty and openness while being embedded within faith communities, and as I suggested in Chapter 1, it might be that a genderqueer critique cannot take all feminists with it, for a variety of reasons. However, the inference that to do anything less than adopt the position taken by Exum or Sawyer is to fall short is problematic; not least because it creates a divide between those considered thoroughgoing and those who appear to be compromised by faith positions. This is not a new situation; on the contrary it is but one of the latest rounds in a knotty debate that has always been part of feminist biblical scholarship. However, it still needs to be addressed rather than brushed under some academic carpet.

For now, let us recognize that Exum's approach has much in common with a genderqueer approach. The latter, though, would press still further in unpacking the masculinity of the deity and of his prophets, and would pay greater attention to the homoerotic connotations of these texts and the transgendering moment. Exum notes that men are 'placed in the subject position of … harlotrous, defiled, and sexually humiliated women' (1996: 123) but quickly points out that the contrasting subject position available to them is the point of view of the faithful, aggrieved husband—something that would not be so uncomfortable or against their interests. So Exum does not actually attend to the objectification of Israelite males in any depth. For all that a violent male deity is firmly implicated in her feminist response, this remains a paper interested in the different stakes of male and female readers. Consistent with the political engagement of a feminist approach, the focus is particularly on the impact for women of texts that devalue and denigrate them. Exum recognizes, of course, that it is men who are being insulted, but, like Brenner, points out that the mechanism of the metaphor works only if we agree that one most humiliates men by referring to them as women. She thus returns the gaze to the beaten Woman/Israel and the misogynistic ideology that informs the metaphor, rather than

thinking about the construction of some very odd masculinities that ensue from it. The impact for women remains uppermost: 'you insult a woman by assuming that a way to insult or put down a man is to call him a woman' (1996: 121).

Before leaving Exum, it should be noted that the influential voice of Setel is not entirely absent. While a footnote (1996: 125 n. 65) makes it clear she is not going to enter into complex questions of what constitutes pornography, Exum refers her readers to the discussion in Brenner and Dijk-Hemmes (1993: 167-95) and Brenner (1996). So insofar as Brenner and Dijk-Hemmes draw on Setel for their definitions, Setel is still informing this discussion in an unchallenged way. In addition, Exum refers her reader to the 'subtle and compelling' account in Susan Griffin (1981), but Exum herself speaks only briefly of pornography involving 'objectification, domination, pain, and degradation' and challenges her readers to recognize that 'In reading about it, we are complicit' (1996: 124). Her follow-up challenge is to consider what we can do about that. There is an element of activism inherent here and although she recognizes that the problems these texts pose cannot be resolved, she closes with four counter-strategies that might be employed when dealing them. When it comes to a genderqueer critique of these texts, this political commitment has to be borne in mind, for this is what provides the necessary edge. If we broaden the discussion to include a more detailed examination of the masculinity constructed in these texts, and the sexuality constructed for both men and women, this should not be at the expense of the 'so what?' question. Exum sees, very clearly, the consequences of leaving the gender ideology of these texts unexamined.

My own work on Woman/Zion in Lamentations was prompted by awareness that the things feminists were saying about pornography in the prophets were valid for this text too. The references sprinkled throughout the essay indicate the influence of Setel (1985), Exum (1996) and Magdalene (1995). However, what readers may not so readily recognize is that my inspiration came predominantly from Mary Daly (1978). It was through her, not Setel, that I found my way to Dworkin's *Woman-Hating*, and it was Daly who remained the more significant influence. The 'second passage' section of *Gyn/Ecology* draws together elements common to five violent practices against women: *suttee,* footbinding, genital mutilation, witch burning and interventions in contemporary gynaecology. These shared elements reveal the following: 1. that a woman's place is in the home. 2. That men get exonerated while women carry the blame as scapegoats. 3. That there is a disturbing association of pleasure and pain, eroticism and the mutilation of the female body. 4. That the horror of women's actual

experience is erased via compulsive fixation on minute details when describing practices like footbinding. 5. that male obsession with female purity has damaging effects for women's bodies, while women are manipulated into readjusting their consciousness so that the unacceptable becomes acceptable. 6. That patriarchal scholarship instead of challenging these things, serves to reinforce them. Overall, Daly says all these elements comprise 'the Sado-Ritual Syndrome' (1978: 111). The way out of this is to engage feminist metaethics 'to examine and analyse this language, untangling the snarls of sentence structure, unveiling deceptive words, exposing the bag of semantic tricks intended to entrap women' (1978: 112). It was with these words ringing in my ears, far more so than Dworkin's, that the Lamentations paper took shape.

In her call for women to break free from the deathly messages prevalent in myths such as *Snow White* I found liberative energy. Recognizing that the poisoning 'wicked' queen is the other side of the Prince Charming figure lulling woman into a fearful sleeping existence was vital. Understanding that it is fear of authentic female living that possibly drives the story likewise continues to be an important insight. *Gyn/Ecology* is a *tour de force* manifesto that calls readers to awake from the stultifying and annihilating discourses that surround them, particularly those mythic discourses that glorify female self-sacrifice, seducing women with ideas that self loss is a religious ideal for which she will be rewarded. By contrast, Daly compels her readers to break through to the Background and find the Self; to see through the seductive calls to voluntary denial of self and create their own definitions and Self-centering boundaries (1978: 67).[15] Spinsters must 'smash our way out of the mirror coffins by our courageous/contagious Revolting Risking' so that the 'State of Sleeping Death' is exchanged for 'Furious Voyaging' (1978: 352-53). She is particularly keen that women see through male masquerades (such as Dionysus assuming a girl-like form), exposing the disguise, and identifying the male agenda that lies behind such strategies.

15. The Background is the place 'where the Great Hags live and work, hacking off with our Dreadful double-axes the Athena-shells designed to stifle our Selves' where as the Foreground is the place of 'false selves, of fathers' favourites' (1978: 72). The Foreground is the everyday sphere of human life that has been thoroughly pervaded and distorted by patriarchy. It is, accordingly, the 'male-centered and monodimensional area where fabrication, objectification, and alienation take place', while the Background is 'the Realm of Wild Reality, the Homeland of women's Selves and of all Others; the Time/Space where auras of plants, planets, stars, animals and all Other animate beings connect' (Daly, 1993: 1).

Inspired by her work, I looked closely at the scapegoating that goes on in Lamentations; specifically, the way Woman/Zion is made to voice her own guilt. Yet, in so doing, I was used Setel's work uncritically and I took an inclusive category of 'woman' to describe their reactions, not sensing that there might be alternative feminist perspectives or indeed other vantage points from which to view this material. I failed to recognize that my work was implicitly, if not explicitly, founded on the views of one radical feminist in particular at the expense of counter voices that existed. Now I am far more alert to the blind spots of my own work and my acceptance of Daly without questioning some of her more dubious claims. For example, in calling upon women to see how damaging male ideologies lurk within the speech of apparently female figures/characters, and in the actions of supposed male allies, she evokes the 'phenomenon of the drag queen' to demonstrate 'such boundary violation' (1978: 67) and herein lies a source of discomfort that I experience now, though did not back then.

Informed by Janice Raymond, whose negative appraisal of transsexuality has already been discussed in the previous chapter, Daly's choice of 'drag queen' terminology and her decision to use transsexuality as a case in point now makes me wince. Drag queen terminology is used to describe those in female guise who seem to be on the side of women but in reality are death-dealing. Thus in the story of Snow White, the true identity of the 'wicked queen' is 'the male stepmother, the other side of Prince Charming's multiple personality … He is able to trick the princess because he dissembles, falsely re-sembling the true Queen, the Wild Witch, the dis-membered Goddess' (1978: 351).[16] As for male-toward-female transsexuals, they become further examples of male masquerades that deceptively infiltrate and overstep category boundaries, and, it is inferred, stifle women's consciousness of their authentic Selves (1978: 72). Like Raymond, Daly rejects any suggestion that they can be included in the category of 'woman': 'The surgeons and hormone therapists of the transsexual kingdom … can be said to produce feminine persons. They cannot produce women' (1978: 68). A footnote clarifies her biological and experiential reasoning for this: they 'cannot menstruate; they lack clitorises; they cannot give birth; they require

16. Other examples of drag queens include the third person of the trinity, traditionally described in female terms, but this, for Daly, means dealing with 'the false implication that the femininity of the holy ghost has anything to do with females' (1978: 75). The trinity in her view is a 'supreme Men's Association ... To the timid objections voiced by Christian women, the classic answer has been: "You're included under the Holy Spirit. He's feminine". The point is, of course, that male made-up femininity has nothing to do with women. Drag queens, whether divine or human, belong to the Men's Association' (1978: 38).

continual hormone fixes; they are without female history and Background' (1978: 432-33).

Then there is her reference to the Sado-ritual syndrome, noted above. While her feminist analysis of its elements remains perceptive, the generic terminology and her references elsewhere to sado-masochism, offer no room for distinguishing between non-consensual sadistic practices against women and mutually consensual sado-masochistic relationships. This, as Zussman (1998) notes, is rather typical of etic literature, which tends to focus on perversion and hierarchical power relations. Feminists in particular comment on the latter, focusing on power dynamics and condemning S/M or D/S interactions 'as symptomatic of the patriarchy of the "dominant culture"' (1998: 18).[17] In her view, feminists 'tend to have a great deal of ideological aversion to D/S behavior of any flavor in that it highlights and sexualizes power imbalance' (1998: 19). Such views run counter to the emic literature, where the language is of mutual power exchanges, of transcendental edge-play and altered consciousness. Contrary to expectation, the one inflicting pain is not usually the one who experiences the desired state of altered consciousness, nor is he or she (there are many female dominatrices) the one with the power or the one who gains therapeutic benefits:

> The top, by nature of his or her role of maintaining control over the scene, cannot under most conditions enter into a euphoric state, for the scene, depending on its nature, may become dangerous, deadly or need to be disrupted. Nor do they generally allow themselves to reach a point of ecstatic release. Instead, it appears that while topping, dominants relish in detail, such aspects as setting the 'scene', binding with technical precision and care, and slowly taking the bottom to '*that* place', in which he or she can find release, for bondage can give rise to psychic or emotive freedom. It is the duty of the top to keep the bottom safe from harm, and great attention is paid to this (1998: 23).[18]

As for 'bottomspace', Zussman's anthropological study, informed by practitioners, suggests that its appeal 'is complex. It includes, but is not limited to, catharsis, heightened awareness and sensitivity, euphoria, and a sense of safety and trust, relief from the burden of decision making, and achieving a sense of balance' (1998: 28).

17. In this regard she cites Gilligan (1982), Hrdy (1981) and Kaye/Kantrowitz (1992).

18. That said, Zussman (1998: 27) also notes that 'topspace' can sometimes provide moments for shifts of consciousness as the top fully immerses themselves in the role.

So, while emic literature recognizes that S/M is about domination and submission, it places the focus on how this needs to be understood ritualistically as a mutual, pre-negotiated exchange of power. The memorably named Juicy Lucy thus lists what S/M is not. It is not 'abusive, rape, beatings, violence, cruelty, power-over, force, coercion, non-consensual, unimportant, a choice made lightly, growth-blocking, boring' while her list of what it *is* includes 'passionate, erotic, growthful, consensual, sometimes fearful, exorcism, reclamation, joyful, intense, boundary-breaking, trust building, loving, unbelievable good sex, often hilariously funny, creative, spiritual, integrating, a development of inner power as strength' (1987: 31). Scenes are negotiated in advance so that they can achieve their objectives as the parties work through what materials might be used, what each is prepared to bring to the scene, discussion of fantasy content, and how desires are to be fulfilled. At the end of an enactment, players often process what has occurred. Scenes require closure, satisfaction. The pain endured within a scene is an agreed part of the exchange. It can be tender or more excruciating. It can include razor or knife play, burning, branding, slapping, kicking, flogging, and so on. However, as Peterson says, what often goes unreported from public performances of bondage is 'the degree of caring, hugging, and gentle affection that is manifested by the couples who are engaged in these rituals' (2005: 338). Domination is thus not equated with abuse nor is submission equated with powerlessness. It is fundamentally about trust and reaching desired objectives through the play of ritual. As Zussman concludes:

> S/M play entails ritual process and facing such ultimate realities as the boundaries between life and death. Play induces trance and results in feelings of transcendence, absolute faith, trust, safety, protection, and euphoria. Players achieve heightened awareness, catharsis, recalibration and the achievement of balance. Play gives practitioners a feeling of union with the divine, or even a sense of having achieved divinity oneself, and it is, for the most part, ineffable (1998: 35).

Writing more directly from a theological perspective, Joseph Bean's essay 'The Spiritual Dimension of bondage' gives further insight into the appeal of 'bottomspace'. It opens with a description of Scott, lashed restrictively to a pine box, naked, unable to move. Kept there for as long as his lover requires. The experience for Scott is one that allows him to be vividly alive to the moment, to reconnect with himself, to be moved outside the routine of everything humdrum, and there is clarity of mind that comes from this experience of simply *being* within himself and with his lover. The lack of movement contrasts sharply with the usualness of everyday life. His submission brings 'all movement to a halt' (2001: 258). As Bean

comments: 'Ordinarily, to do nothing might mean to pace, to drum idle fingertips on a desk top, to flip blindly through newspaper pages. Now, in bondage, doing nothing means *doing* nothing—just Being' (2001: 258). There will come the point when this scene reaches its climax in whatever way has been negotiated, where 'these moments of complete equilibrium may turn to ecstasy' (2001: 258). What has this to do with spirituality? Everything, thinks Bean. Such performances can 'touch regions of ourselves and of reality that can only be spoken of in spiritual terms' (2001: 259).[19]

When reading through such emic literature, it becomes evident that describing the pornoprophetic texts in terms of sadomasochism is inappropriate. There is no mutuality in such texts. No informed consent. No trust. Yhwh may indeed behave sadistically, but this is something else entirely from contemporary S/M or D/S practices and the two should not be equated, in my view. There are scholars who plausibly suggest that the wider biblical story of Israel's relationship with God is one that had its sadomasochistic elements. For example, Boer (2001) imagines a discussion between Yhwh, Moses, Sigmund Freud, the Marquis de Sade, Leopold von Sacher-Masoch, Jacques Lacan and Gilles Deleuze. The topic of their dis-

19. Jeremy Carrette's paper also considers S/M's links to religious experience. He concedes that S/M dungeons are exposed to capitalistic market forces which advertise and sell products and outfits for practitioners, and encourage a hedonistic and commercial non-spiritual view of S/M. However, it is his view that its consensual, planned exchanges 'have much to teach contemporary theology … in terms of the economics of relationships and the dynamics of intimacy' (2005: 17) and that its world 'has to learn from a critical theological politics that reflects on patriarchal sexual abuse and the ethical importance of non-violence forms of relating' (2005: 19). He arrives at these views from a number of recognitions, one of which is that pleasure is derived from the 'exchange of deep trust and intense intimacy' (2005: 23). In his view Christian communities could learn much from these intense exchanges and accordingly live differently, releasing those communities from the grasp of the patriarchal hierarchies of social relationships into communities where 'belief will be the enactment of faith between vulnerable bodies and a demolition of the isolating politics of capitalistic exchange'—also demolishing institutional structures that damage rather than nurture social relationships (2005: 23). Carrette is not just interested in how S/M can transform theology, but also in how it can be transformed by theology. S/M, he notes, can become an end in itself for pleasure and satisfaction of desire, in which cases the act of submission can become an idolatrous act, something that can be easily appropriated by the capitalism and commercialization of sex. But 'if S&M pleasures are located in the intense exchanges between persons and … what William James called the "unseen presence", then the intensity of pleasure becomes a revelation of God (James 2002: 42-65). In the loss of self in submission to the other, or in the responsible act of dominance, we find a ritual exchange where bodily intensity and limits become pathways to intimate expressions of love' (2005: 25).

cussion is whether the Lord's relationship with Israel is one characterized by sadomasochism. Boer argues that where one might expect Yhwh, who is often punitive in his treatment of the wayward Israelites, to be in the position of power as sadist, contemporary thinking suggests that it is the masochist who holds a substantial position of power. It is the masochist who trains the punisher and can give or withhold their consent. The law is there to be broken and the Israelites demonstrate the desirability of deliberately disobeying the law in order to invoke the period of suspense that inevitably follows before the punishment is meted out (the suspense is a major feature of S/M). Thus, in the Garden of Eden and in repeated acts of disobedience such as the creation of the golden calf, punishment is something that is 'outwardly avoided but unconsciously wished for so that they might gain pleasure' (2001: 100). The covenant which ties the two parties into the relationship is something that Boer suggests is initiated from the human side, from the position of the 'bottom' to their divine 'top'. In the same publication Lori Rowlett (2001) notes commonalities between S/M play and that of Samson and Delilah before lifting the discussion to a broader plane, asking whether the Deuteronomistic History as a whole is pervaded by a never-ending cycle of deploying power and relinquishing power in a cat and mouse game between God and Israel. Such interaction of S/M discourse and biblical studies is unusual and the argument is unexpectedly persuasive. But this is not the same as arguing that the pornoprophetic texts have sadomasochistic elements for in the latter, there is no sense that it might be desirable to be on the receiving end of Yhwh's punishment.

Returning now to my paper on Lamentations and Daly's reference to the sado-ritual, I trust that the above has explained why I would now write a different paper on Lamentations. While Daly gave me the feminist insight to see through apparent self-accusations of Woman/Zion and identify the strategies of the male narrator who provides a self-incriminating female voice, I would be far more circumspect about the negative inferences Daly directs towards S/M, drag and transsexuality.

As for the influence of MacKinnon, Dworkin and the anti-pornography movement on my work, these were not pivotal, though I used Dworkin's data on how rape victims can be accused of provoking their own fate to think through how Lamentations encourages readers to read Woman/Zion's confessions as self-incriminating. However, insofar as Setel's paper had established a Dworkin-informed foundation for the pornoprophetic debate, it is indeed the case that I was influenced by the general radical feminist tenor of the debate and I did not consider any counter voices that offered different understandings of pornography, its users, and its effects, which might have broadened the debate and taken it in a different

direction. One voice did emerge specifically to push for such a turn: that of Emma Clewlow.

Clewlow's (2004) unpublished thesis is rare in its suggestion that there might be value in adopting an anti-censorship approach to these texts. Her thesis, as a whole, does not dispute that the biblical texts in question are pornographic; but what she does (convincingly) argue is that the framework of the discussion has been narrow and slanted towards a radical feminist agenda. Situated within that general pro-censorship context, the debate in biblical studies took one strand of feminist thought which focused only on the negative features of pornography. Clewlow's innovative thesis suggests that this anti-pornography framework, itself, could actually be detrimental to women.

That said, Clewlow is not complacent about the negative features of the pornoprophetic texts. For example, she concurs that Hosea can be 'read as a violent pornographic fantasy' which 'exemplifies the darker side of pornographic imagery' (2004: 277). She recognizes that readers, in view of its violent nature, may find no redeemable features in it and 'categorize it with other parts of the Bible that she or he deems undesirable' (2004: 277). However, her thesis notes that these texts are being considered pornographic (negatively so) from *a point of view.* She considers how the imagery in such a text might resonate differently with those who are not ideologically opposed to pornography, or to sadomasochistic fantasies and practices. Those belonging to sadomasochistic subcultures, she suggests, may well recognize dynamics at play that might promote a different understanding of these texts. She also raises the important question of how 'female sexuality' has been understood by feminist scholars. Van Dijk-Hemmes, for example, writes about how Ezekiel's use of the metaphor shapes and distorts women's sexuality but 'it remains unclear … what van Dijk-Hemmes considers "normative" female sexual experience to be, and whether all female readers would see this text as a misrepresentation of their experience' (2004: 28). This is not a viewpoint that one finds taken up much within feminist biblical studies. Brenner, as noted above, is an exception, but for a more detailed exploration and analysis of homoerotic and sadomasochistic connotations one has to turn to queer commentary, as discussed further below.

Clewlow also demonstrates how the pornoprophetic texts might be considered pornographic in a much broader sense than the debate originally suggested. Pornography, for example, has the 'useful function' of testing the boundaries, criticizing social institutions and providing critique of hierarchy (2004: 274). As part of her discussion, she documents how (contem-

porary) pornography unsettles rigid gender binaries,[20] how it can be used and created by women for women, and how, as noted above, some of its features might be read differently by those who engage in sadomasochistic encounters. Hers is not a genderqueer analysis, but it does challenge the existing feminist debate to move towards a broader canvas.

A Genderqueer Analysis

The following discussion identifies four themes that a genderqueer approach might discuss in regard to the pornoprophetic texts. Doubtless other readers will identify further themes. Those identified below do not exist in splendid isolation from the feminist critique that has already taken place; they build on those insights and in so doing broaden the debate into new areas, while challenging those new areas to be cognizant of the vital political edge that feminism offers.

The Sexual Economy Underpinning the Marriage Metaphor

Re-reading Setel's paper as a genderqueer critic, the section that catches my eye afresh is her work on Hosea's views of female sexuality; specifically her discussion of procreation and possession. Here she criticizes a social system wherein women had value primarily for their reproductive capabilities and where female sexuality had to be carefully monitored so that paternity of children could be assured. Although Setel does not take this any further, it is evident that the supposed heterosexuality that conservative politicians and religious spokespersons love to find in the Bible has little to do with naturally embedded sexual desire for 'opposite' sexes, but is far more to do with economic need for sons as contributors to the family's labour and as inheritors of the family's wealth. In such a system, as Setel (1985: 89) noted, virginity is not such much a moral value as an economic one; women are partnered to men primarily as breeders and the more sons they have the better. So underpinning the portrait of the deity/husband in the pornoprophetic texts is a prior sexual economy wherein men are competitors for fertile women, where women are expected to find their advances acceptable, and where the successful male is entitled to monitor his woman closely to ensure her fidelity.

20. In her view 'sexuality and gender roles are not static in pornography … females may use strap-on dildos to penetrate other women or to anally penetrate men' (2004: 121-22). She also points out that the pornoprophetic texts actually contain indications of male gender instability that are worth further exploration.

What would a genderqueer critic do with this observation? Following the feminist lead to look closely at the narratorial mechanisms and see through their construction to underlying ideologies, a discussion of how this economic system took root in the first place and how it became justified and naturalized seems appropriate. This takes us away from the immediate interest in the pornoprophetic texts to texts like Gen 3.16, for this is a primary text that constructs a male-female binary pair and mandates heterosexual relations between them. Moreover, it reveals that a sexual relationship between the pair requires divine ordinance—while positing female 'desire' as the pill meant to soften the blow.[21]

Of course, such insight has not escaped feminist observation. Carol Meyers (1978, 1988) tries to put the Eve story in context. Given threats of plague, the endemic presence of disease, famine and warfare, and the high mortality rate for women and the pre-adult population, women would have been in short supply[22] and the kin-tied group would be propelled towards maximal child production if it was to maintain land-holdings and to have the means to gain more. In fact, it 'would need to produce twice the number of children desired in order to achieve optimal family size' (1978: 95). Moreover, the demands of frontier life would create another motivation for larger family groupings.[23] Overall, as Meyers would later put it so succinctly: 'Motherhood … was to be encouraged as being in the national interest' (1988: 116). And a society that places a premium on procreation has to justify and naturalize the sexual act required to procreate and thereby naturalize heterosexuality.

One means of inducing women to comply was to produce texts that provided the necessary 'encouragement'—hence Gen. 3.16 injunctions that women will suffer multiple pregnancies in the context of hard, physical labour (not painful childbirth, as Meyers [1988] has persuasively argued). The reluctance of women to fulfil such a destiny is indicated by the fact that it is presented with the most powerful endorsement available; divine

21. For readings that problematize attempts to use these verses of Genesis for unequivocal scriptural support of the heterosexual contract see Alpert (1992) and Stone (2000).

22. The very limited evidence available in the skeletal remains found at Jericho, Lachish and Meiron indicates that a woman's life expectancy was around thirty years, while men survived on average to forty years and that the pre-adult population was most affected by early deaths (Meyers 1978: 95).

23. Terracing, sowing, harvesting, cistern-carving, forest clearance are all labour intensive occupations, and labour intensive tasks create the need for human labour resources. Then, the increased production of children would, in turn, contribute to an increased need for food supplies. Women would find themselves in a vicious circle.

ordinance. But Meyers explains this reluctance in terms of childbirth risks only, and makes much of the (intended) sugar within which this toxic pill is encased—that a woman will not experience male rights over her body as oppression because it will be mitigated by her (sexual) desire for her husband.

Regrettably, it is a pill that the majority of readers ever since have swallowed—including Meyers, whose work will mostly benefit only heterosexual women. For insofar as her interest lies in demonstrating how the husband's right to predominate is not a transcultural universal sanction, but a privilege forged in a particular time of social need, she implicitly defends the right of modern day heterosexual women to refrain from intercourse with their husbands if they so choose. She hardly questions the heterosexual arrangement itself. However, although this is not developed in her work, she does recognize that biblical texts inducing women to fulfil a heterosexual role as wives and mothers are a mirror image of sanctions against such taboos as incest, rape, adultery, virginity, bestiality, exogamy, homosexuality and prostitution. Thus: 'the drastic need to concentrate human energy, male and female, into family life and into intensive cultivation of the land … meant a sex ethic, the primary societal function of which was to make childbirth and sexuality within the family crucial societal goals' (1978: 100). The severe effects of this 'sex ethic' for generations since are not discussed, though her demonstration that such sanctions are the product of a particular historical context and therefore have limited relevance and force as opposed to universal constants or God-ordained givens, is welcome.

Queer readings of Genesis commence from a different positionality. The gendered implications for women are noted, but the sexual implications figure strongly also. Ken Stone, for example, notes how

> the text seems to display a certain amount of insecurity about the woman's desire for the man, having to insist upon that desire as something that God ordains while also recognizing that it is a consequence of her rebellion … Moreover, this statement about the woman's heterosexual desire is followed immediately by the infamous recognition that, from now on, her husband will 'rule' over her. The conjunction of these two statements almost makes it sound as if the text recognizes, as Wittig, that women might have good reasons for refusing to submit to the terms of the heterosexual contract, so the text has to insist upon the installation of heterosexual desire as a guarantee of such submission (2000: 64).

If this is so for the Genesis text, how much more will women have 'good reasons for refusing to submit to the terms of the heterosexual contract' when faced with the repercussions of this economic system, as seen in the

pornoprophetic texts? It is the *connection between the two* that has been missed. The violent abuse of woman/Israel by the deity/husband is facilitated by the foundational sexual economy that propels men into breeding relationship with women, subsequently monitors women's sexual faithfulness, and justifies the encounter as a whole by a supposed fulfilling of women's sexual desire. On this predicate, the cuckolded deity, as we have seen, imagines female sexual desire to be nothing short of rampant, transfixed by the fantastic size of male penises and being willing to risk the safety of the home, compelled to seek out new lovers. Feminists have pointed out the ridiculous portrayal of insatiable female lust, dissociating contemporary women readers from having such over-strong heterosexual desire. But the heterosexual desire *per se* is not so evidently questioned, nor is the heterosexual norm. Yet both these things are problematized by the existence of those who construct their genders and sexualities differently.

The marriage metaphor is exactly that: a marriage metaphor. It is founded on a notion of a heterosexual contract. Subverting the marriage metaphor involves more than noting its effects for women readers (though that work remains very important); it involves questioning the elephant in the room that no one seems to want to address: compulsory heterosexuality. To disrupt the metaphor we have to disrupt the heteronormative logic on which it rests and this involves casting our net wider to include texts like Genesis 1–3 which ordains that humanity will be arranged so.

One way in which the rhetoric has been resisted is by learning from a lesbian critique. Thus Alpert's (1992) approach is one of using her worldview and then seeing how the text speaks, or fails to speak, to that non-heterosexual perspective, as opposed to taking the text on its terms as the priority. This vantage point enables her to see, not without humour, that the ordering of male-female relations has its queer elements that disrupt the heterocentric rhetoric. As I have already discussed (Guest 2005: 149-50) the fact that Eve's desire is mentioned within the *punishments and curses* meted out in verses 14-19 is not to be missed. Desire for a husband is thus an element within a disordered world out of tune with itself and its creator. Moreover, Alpert's observation that a women's sexual drive has to be specifically directed towards a male object chimes notably with Marilyn Frye's point:

> There is so much pressure on women to be heterosexual, and this pressure is so pervasive and so completely denied, that I think heterosexuality cannot come naturally to many women; I think that widespread heterosexuality among women is a highly artificial product of the patriarchy … I think that most women have to be coerced into heterosexuality (1982: 196).

Perhaps Genesis 3.16's insistence that a woman's desire must be for her husband can be read as a very early but influential example of such pressure. The male object of Eve's desire has to be clearly and unambiguously stipulated because there is so little to be gained by complying with the sex-gender system.

If Judith Butler has done sterling work in bringing 'the regulatory fiction of heterosexual coherence' to our attention, then the efforts of the genderqueer critic are just as vital in demonstrating how influential scriptural texts have been a founding platform for such fictions, particularly when it is considered how often Genesis 1–3 is used in contemporary political debate to resist progressive legislation for those who identify as trans, lesbian, gay, and intersexed (discussed further below). Both Stone's and Alpert's essays on the Eve story are important for resisting the naturalization and universalization of the notion of sex complementarity. For so long as Genesis 1–3 continues to figure in political debates that have real effect for the legal situation of trans, intersexed, lesbian, gay and bisexual people, then exposing the insecurity of the Genesis creation accounts gives genderqueer criticism that political edge that is put to work so well within feminist criticism. If the biblical foundations for the heterosexual contract are not 'so coherent as we have been led to believe, we may open up spaces for the production of alternative, queer subjects of religious and theological discourse' (Stone 2000: 68). This could go some considerable way towards combating the religious normative discourses and practices that render some lives abject while normalizing the state of affairs described in Genesis. Thus, for example, The Christian Institute's paper on 'Counterfeit Marriage', written for the purposes of lobbying government in the context of civil partnerships discussion, argued that marriage is biologically ordained in terms of gender. Marriage is an '"honourable estate" based on the different, complementary nature of men and women—and how they refine, support, encourage, and complete one another' (2002: 7); that it is 'part of the natural moral order', citing Gen. 2.24 and noting that this is endorsed by Jesus in Matt. 19.4-5. So while marriage is the 'cornerstone of society' and 'the primary carrier of values' (2002: 7) the Christian Institute limits its availability to heterosexual men and women. Lesbian and gay unions and parenting is thereby rendered counterfeit outside the protection of the state. For further detailed discussion of the ways in which religious discourse sponsors discrimination and examples of Christian homophobia see Guest (2005: 91-103).

We really have not scratched the surface of the work that needs to be done. The marriage metaphor is founded on a general view of women as the property of men: as sexual and gendered beings 'other' to the males who compete for access. Woman's value lies in her virginity and then in her

reproductive capacity. The economic system accordingly relies on a division of the world into male and female as mutually exclusive categories; a division that, as Gayle Rubin influentially argued, is based not on 'an expression of natural differences' but rather on the 'suppression of natural similarities' (1974: 180). Once that is assured, biology becomes destiny. Critics of the marriage metaphor do not go far enough when they expose its pornographic features, or when they point out that the mechanics of the metaphor depend on an agreed understanding that female sexuality is dangerous and merits punishment when it strays. These things do need critical exposure, but they do not reach the root of the problem, which lies in the creation of a sexed universe and the construction of compulsory heterosexuality for the purposes of breeding. If the feminist critical agenda were to focus more on exposing the assumptions upon which the exchange of women is based, then a genderqueer critique would have much to offer feminist critical readings and vice versa.

So, it turns out that Setel continues to inform the debate but perhaps in ways she did not envision. Her direction of our attention to the construction of female sexuality prompts the above discussion and demonstrates that the pornoprophetic debate needs to expand: it needs to include theorization of heterosexuality, particularly demonstrating the normalization of heterosexuality and beginning to unpack the way it, like gender, is a social, not a natural phenomenon.

Men as Traitorous Whores and the Connotations of Homoeroticism

Despite recognition that the metaphor places the *male* Israelite audience in the position of subservient wife, there has been little pause to comment on the queerness that arises as a result. A genderqueer analysis engages with Carroll's essay, not in order to endorse it, but to stay with his emphasis on the male addressees. 'What is being "described"… by Ezekiel is a *male* community's persistent apostasy from YHWH' (1995: 282), says Carroll. Ezekiel denounces men: 'The target of the mockery is the male society' (1995: 288). 'It is essentially a male community (in public terms) which stands condemned by the sexual rhetoric of the prophets' (1995: 292). The genderqueer critic, informed by feminist theory, knows that the medium for the metaphor cannot be as easily dismissed as Carroll surmises. I would still concur with Exum's (1996: 103) point that such texts always require female readers to read against their own interests, given how the imagery reinforces male control over women and promotes physical abuse as an acceptable means of control (1996: 114). These feminist insights into the damaging effects of the texts remain valid and important. Insofar as genderqueer criticism is informed by feminist theory there is no clash of interests

here. However, genderqueer criticism is also informed by critical studies of masculinities and this will call into question the adequacy of a focus so emphatically placed on the female imagery. And the 'queer' of genderqueer criticism will also want to address the homoerotic connotations of a male macho deity addressing his male congregants through the use of a marriage metaphor. Genderqueer criticism thus creates a broader vista in which to place feminist concerns that does not obscure the fact that there is gender-bending going on in the marriage metaphor and a certain level of homoerotic sadism—something Carroll's paper did not adequately address. Indeed, it is conceivable that the decision to depict an apostate male audience as an adulterous wife was a way of *avoiding* uncomfortable homoerotic connotations. Depicting males as adulterous women was an insult guaranteed to cause humiliation but it at least leaves the gender norms of a heterosexual relationship intact. Perhaps here we find an early example of homosexual panic—a phrase utilized by Sedgwick (1994) to describe fear of crossing an invisible boundary between homosocial male bonding and homosexual activity, or being thought to have crossed that boundary. The paranoia that one might have feelings or thoughts that indicate homosexuality creates this panic.

But what if, instead of moving swiftly to the effects upon women, we choose to stay in the rather uncomfortable territory of feminized men and a dominant male deity? We are then presented *not* with a male-female pornographic scene, but a homoerotic scene where the prophets portray an alpha dominant male stripping, battering and raping his wayward male underlings who, for the purposes of this scene, have been imaged as an adulterous woman. Certainly, there are issues of concern here for feminists and all the comments about using a woman's body to achieve this effect remain valid, as does the fact that the metaphor can all too easily shift the actual political blame from men to women. These are good reminders that genderqueer criticism needs its feminist credentials; but by keeping the focus almost entirely on the female aspects of the metaphor we have lost other insights. However, a discussion of these aspects of the metaphor has to be postponed until the next chapter, which considers the contributions critical studies of masculinities can offer to the genderqueer critique. The theoretical discussion in that chapter will be grounded by a return to this case study and the effects of those critical studies for the pornoprophetic debate.

The Alternative space of Female Homoeroticism

A genderqueer analysis might also point out that it is female adultery *with other men* that is at the forefront of the metaphor. There is no sense of any outrage being prompted by female relations with other women. One might

wonder why posing such an obvious observation helps; but it helps on two fronts at least. First, because it calls a halt to the routine erasure of female homoeroticism. As I have argued elsewhere (Guest 2005), it is important to honour a lesbian space that exists in resistance to the dominant hegemonic space of heteronormativity. One of the main strategies for a hermeneutic of heterosuspicion is to resist such erasure. The focus on husband and wife, and on the wife's adultery with other men, all but obliterates the opportunities women had for creating primary bonds with other women and the possibility that their erotic affections were actually directed towards women. The male narrator in the pornoprophetic texts simply assumes that female sexuality is always directed towards other men. It practically goes without saying. But, as is often the case, the things that often go without saying are naturalizing mechanisms that most need to be spoken. The relatively simple acknowledgement that it is their sexual activity *with men* that is being censured alerts the reader to suppressed alternative options; options that, in fact, would have removed women-loving-women from such a metaphor. Once that alternative is posited, then different readings of the pornoprophetic texts become possible; readings that arguably open an escape hatch that straight feminist critics have not been able to offer. Rose argues that her lesbian existence gives her a different vantage point; and from that positionality she acknowledges her impulse to intervene and present herself, with humility, as a rival but chaste suitor. She claims that a lesbian reading turns the text on its side (2000: 147). She stands at this critical distance observing from the sidelines, assessing texts that purport to present the words and actions of God. She offers, as a contrasting reality, the healing power of transgressive lesbian sexuality which has not internalized the myth of sexuality-as-evil-requiring-punishment, which lies at the heart of the Woman/Israel metaphor. Jewish lesbians faced with the internalization of the message that their sexuality is sinful or perverse have 'to survive the heterosexist cultural onslaught, [to] see through misogynist mythology surrounding female sexuality. Therefore when such propaganda is presented to one in a text, I, as a mature Jewish lesbian reader, already see through it' (2000: 150).

Rose's approach is also of significance because it comes from one embedded within a faith tradition, demonstrating that a genderqueer approach can carry with it confessional feminisms. Thus when confronted with the metaphor of God acting as an abusing husband she questions the text on two fronts: the worthiness of such a deity, and the refusal to agree that this is God: 'Either I know this God of Israel is not worthy any fidelity, or this is not God' (2000: 147). She appears to come to this conclusion because the punishment of Woman/Israel is unjust. Either God is not just or the

text does not speak of God, and she goes with the latter option. The effect of this is that she can unmask the metaphor. In her declaration 'That man is not God' she exposes the image as 'a literary trope written by a man apparently steeped in cultural misogyny' (2000: 147). However, she still looks for the presence of God in this scripture, asking: Where is God in Ezekiel 16? Her answer is nowhere until someone intervenes. And she intervenes, calling on God as she does so: 'an anti-institutional God, a rebellious God, an antiauthoritarian God who guides my days and guards my rights as I live in my place on the margin of this page' (2000: 148).

Masculinities, Competition and Violence.

The thing arousing the deity to such extensive wrath in the pornoprophetic texts is *male competition*. However, the pornoprophetic debate has centred largely on woman-as-victim, with critical nods to the jealousy and cuckolded rage of a husband deity, particularly, as noted above, in Exum (1996). But the kind of masculinity being performed, and the way it interacts with other models of ancient Israelite masculinity, has not, generally, been under feminist scrutiny. It is not that feminists are uninterested in such things; the contribution of feminists to the emerging field of men and masculinities in the Hebrew Bible is witness to that. It is rather that feminist biblical scholarship has historically defined its field as being concerned primarily with women. Indeed, when Exum was asked what her male colleague should 'do' when confronted with feminist analyses, her answer was that he should go study masculinity (see Clines 1998: 353); the implication being that this is a complementary project to the feminist project through which men can provide a valuable contribution. But Exum does *not* see it in such terms.

> Lest anyone think on the basis of this brief discussion of men's contributions that gender studies is the study of men by men whilst feminist studies is women's work, I stress that gender studies deals, as the name indicates, with both men and women as gendered subjects. Maleness and femaleness are constructed each in terms of, in relation to, and over against the other. Some will continue to use the term 'feminist studies' to stress their feminist agenda, but we all have an interest in studying the cultural constructions of 'male' and 'female', for we are all affected (2000: 106).

Indeed, Exum (2000) rightly speaks of the continued usefulness of the F-word in terms of the political agenda. There is still a huge amount of work to be done to improve the economic, political, social, and religious situation of women, and in terms of biblical studies, so much work remaining to be done, that a feminist political agenda remains not only relevant but imperative. The question, for me, is whether feminist biblical scholarship

is the best, or only, home for such work, or whether the feminist political agenda could inhabit the broader context of genderqueer criticism. If it can, could we abandon the language and domain of feminist biblical scholarship which is all too easily thought to be the rather narrow study of women by women, and shift to this new critical approach in which many voices can contribute and where maleness and femaleness are both objects of scrutiny? This seems to be consistent with Exum's call for 'sustained critical dialogue between male and female readers on the subject of gender construction; with male scholars both adopting some of the various approaches and strategies of feminist analysis discussed here and debating the resultant constructions of masculinity found in feminist work' (2000: 105). I would see genderqueer critical space as ideal for such negotiations.

So, for Exum, contributions to the pornoprophetic debate would involve male scholars engaging with feminist studies that consider, for example, of the fear of female sexuality and the resulting controlling male, and talking with those feminist studies to demonstrate how and why male readers might see things differently. Accordingly, she points to the work of Eilberg-Schwartz, Stephen Moore, and Harold Washington whose 'discussions of ancient Israel as a "rape culture"... and of biblical women who kill men as simply sustaining rather than disrupting the gender *status quo*' (2000: 106) as offering valuable insights.

A genderqueer domain would encourage a range of voices at the table, including those that address the construction of Yhwh's masculinity in pornoprophetic texts. This would draw on the work that has been done on masculinities in the Hebrew Bible and in queer readings of biblical texts, developing further our study of the masculinity modelled by this most prominent character. It would also be informed by secular masculinity studies, many of which take up the feminist critique of male violence. Stephen Whitehead, for instance, argues that 'if we are to have some understanding of otherwise inexplicable acts of violence by men, whether it be serial killing, sexual assault, rape, child abuse, mass violence, random violence or torture, then we must recognize that dominant forms and codes of masculinity serve to legitimize, to some degree, that which is, arguably, the major social problem of our time' (2002: 38). Although contemporary (secular) studies of masculinities do not often address the Bible and its constructs of maleness, the Bible remains an influential, live text that contains 'forms and codes of masculinity'. For example, it is the foundational text for groups like the Promise Keepers. Originating in 1990, this men's movement has grown phenomenally. Organizations under its umbrella include The Christian Coalition, Focus on the Family and the 700 Club and its website currently speaks of reaching directly 'more than 6 million men

through men's conferences—including an assembly of 1.4 million men on the United States national mall in Washington D.C., on October 4, 1997'.[24] It promulgates the view that men are biologically and essentially different from women and, on this basis, justifies a certain model of male leadership. As Clatterbaugh puts it: 'Men are in the image of God and Jesus, who is the paradigm of masculinity for men to emulate' (1997: 181). Whitehead speaks of the group's 'antipathy towards feminism, their fear of men's emasculinization (by "modern culture" and feminism) and their belief in a deep essential masculinity' (2002: 67). The movement 'combines a right-wing Christian fundamentalism with an anti-gay, anti-lesbian stance, all presented and packaged under the image and ideal of a traditional male breadwinner family' (2002: 68). There are various critiques of such movements available, but it is not the biblical scholar's role, necessarily, to be involved in that; our role is to address the foundational text on which the movement stands: the Bible. Too often the Bible is taken hostage by conservative groups and wielded as an authoritative weapon; a genderqueer critic is aware of this and therefore aware of the political import of their work in demonstrating how the Bible is not the easy purveyor of family values that it is often thought to be. However, the genderqueer critic is also keenly aware of how its constructions of sexed and gendered human binaries, particularly in Genesis 1–3, play into essentialist agenda and arguably mandate it.

Discussion of the pornoprophetic debate will be enriched if it addresses, unflinchingly, the masculinity performed by the Bible's main character, and the performances of masculinities in any other biblical text under discussion. So, while feminists have questioned assumptions of male privilege in the depiction of Yhwh as husband and the inferiority of the metaphorical woman, genderqueer critics, interested in the masculinity ascribed to Yhwh, might spend an equal amount of time unpacking the issues of male rivalry, hegemonic and subordinated masculinities, the practice of feminizing other men in order to maintain honour and dominance, and the way masculinity is constructed to justify heterosexual privileges. Critical questions about how the heterosexual contract itself calls husbands and wives into existence, analysis of how biblical texts reinforce the normativity of heterosexual relations, exposure of the textual strategies for making such mechanisms appear invisible, will be the work of the genderqueer critic.

Further discussion of these aspects of the metaphor is postponed until the next chapter, which will explore masculinity in more detail. But the above issues will be returned to in that chapter when it discusses the con-

24. http://www.promisekeepers.org/about

tribution of those critical studies in masculinities for the pornoprophetic debate.

Conclusion

This case study has demonstrated the broader canvas and teamwork required to expand an existing feminist debate into a genderqueer discussion. It has tried to tackle the question Brenner (2008) posed to Sawyer: Does the move to 'gender critique ... offer new avenues for research and understanding?' and answers it in the positive. It does carve out new areas of interest, new topics for research, and advocates new ways of interdisciplinary teamworking. Like feminism, it is about exposing, critiquing, being resistant, imagining differently; it is about politics and transformation. It can have a feminist edge and owes much of its theoretical development to feminist theory and the results of feminist biblical scholarship, but it asserts its own voice which can, sometimes, be at odds with existing feminist interpretation and, significantly prompts a critical interrogation of those feminist positions. True, it is precisely these shifts that worry feminists in the ways we noted in the previous chapter, but I do not believe the focus on women is lost, neither do I believe that the feminist politics is diluted. The focus is rather made more three-dimensional and the coalitional politics enhances, rather than diminishes the feminist edge, granting those who had felt excluded from feminist space and debate, a legitimate voice.

It has also taken up concerns that a shift to gender criticism takes with it only certain acceptable forms of feminism. The case study above demonstrates that feminist biblical scholarship was already guilty of this charge. The pornoprophetic debate was founded on an influential strand of radical, activist feminism introduced by Setel and later assumed by subsequent contributors. Definitions of the form and features of pornography espoused by Dworkin and contributors to Lederer's *Take back the Night* volume set the tone and platform for the debate. Although not intentional, this had the effect of putting a picket line around the discussion, making it a brave feminist who would break rank. Carroll, who dared put his head above the parapet, got short shrift. A fellow-feminist, however, had more to lose by not taking the consensual position. There may well have been those who were wondering how the work of anti-censorship feminists fitted into this discussion but thus far those thoughts do not appear to be getting published in regard to the Hebrew Bible debate.[25] And yet, as Clewlow

25. Helen Duckett's (1998) work on the figure of the Great Whore in the book of Revelation is an exception insofar as it acknowledges a wider range of feminist views

has argued, the actual debate about pornography was far more complex than the pornoprophetic debate has allowed for. Indeed, she argues that it has thus far provided only superficial cover of the issues involved in the pornography debate. Clewlow acknowledges that it is quite legitimate to examine biblical texts from an anti-pornography perspective, but suggests that future engagement with this debate should do justice to 'the growing body of both anti-pornography and anti-censorship literature', in order to 'give a more accurate picture of feminist opinion' and qualifying the more 'sweeping claims made by certain writers concerning the attitudes of women to pornography, and its effect on them' (2004: 186). And, for the record, I am justly included as one of those contributors who needs to reconsider their work.

Finally, this chapter's opening discussion of positionality has left us with an important question. If it is desirable for feminist biblical scholars to embrace this new landscape and shift their work into a more 'gender studies' model, then how do feminist biblical scholars who do not own any positionality as gay, lesbian, intersex, transgender or bisexual become equipped to carry out genderqueer analyses? This question will be tackled in the conclusion which considers recent work on the notion of the 'queer heterosexual' as a potential way forward.

on pornography, includes lesbian and gay perspectives, and at is aware that sadomasochistic imagery is not always considered violently abusive or exploitative. However, as Clewlow notes, 'despite her acknowledgment that pornography is not necessarily viewed negatively by everyone, she has still opted to examine Revelation from an anti-pornography feminist perspective' (2004: 185).

4

The Critical Study of Masculinities and the Hebrew Bible

This chapter explores how the emerging studies of masculinities might contribute to genderqueer criticism. I say 'emerging'; perhaps it would be more accurate to refer to the snowballing interest in men and masculinities, for it is certainly an interesting time to 'do' man these days. No longer the unmarked sex, advertising now equally coerces men into creating the body beautiful through gym work or surgery, encourages them to buy into exfoliating and moisturizing rituals, pressures them to support financially the project of being a satisfactorily attired, aromatic, well-honed man. Moreover, in the world of popular media and publishing, those who want to be associated with this gender are encouraged to self-observe in ways previous generations would probably not have considered: debating the models of masculinity that surround them, pondering how they can out-manoeuvre themselves from inherited but dated and unhealthy models of manhood, some getting in touch with their inner wild man, others ruminating about the costs of 'doing man', while fathers think about how they raise male children.[1] And this popular interest in packaging and doing man runs alongside the new academic subject domain that is CSM (critical study of masculinities).[2]

Academically, CSM has been a flourishing field of study since the 1980s. I don't think I would go as far as Ashe (2007: 19) in declaring that academia is 'saturated' with studies that analyse men and masculinities or that 'every man and his dog is writing a book on masculinity' (MacInnes 1998: 1). But certainly it is a field now replete with dedicated journals, introductory textbooks, readers, chapters focusing on men and masculinities in a range of

1. See for example Bly (1990), Biddulph (2003, 2004), Keen (1992).
2. This abbreviation derives from Hearn (2004).

Gender Studies texts and a considerable range of monographs. It is all very reminiscent of the excitement and flurry of activity created by second wave feminism. Operating largely under the aegis of Gender Studies, the enthusiasm for the study of men and masculinities has been contagious, infecting a whole raft of subject disciplines—again, as did feminism. Indeed, much of this work has been inspired by feminist theory and research, though, as we noted in Chapter 1, this engagement with the tools of feminism has not been without controversy. Conferences and books dedicated to the 'men and feminism' debate were quickly organized and published as both feminists and practitioners of the CSM worked out (and to some extent are still working out) the terms of their relationship with each other.

Biblical studies has not been immune to all the excitement; yet published work in this area remains quite limited. Moore and Anderson's (2003) edited collection contains an informative theoretical introductory essay followed by the individual contributions, which demonstrate how New Testament texts can be examined from this angle. There is now a similar volume available for the Hebrew Bible (Creangă, 2010), together with a scattering of journal articles and isolated contributions to books dealing more broadly with gender and the Bible. Pioneering such studies, David Clines (1995, 1998, 2002, 2010a and b) has been a significant influence, producing 'more work on biblical masculinity than any other biblical scholar' (Moore 2003: 7), which explains why his work features so strongly in this chapter.

To achieve its aim of discerning how the emerging studies of masculinities contribute to a genderqueer criticism, this chapter falls into four sections. The opening section considers how and why CSM evolved within a biblical studies domain that, to date, has had little contact with wider Women's and Gender Studies programmes. It examines how CSM contributed to the shift that we have been seeing in feminist biblical scholarship where 'gender' has come to be the more 'in' word and 'gender criticism' started appearing as a named approach. Section two analyses the hermeneutical objectives and ascertains the political agenda envisaged for such work. In a return to our case study of the pornoprophetic debate, section three queries what masculinity studies have had to say about the gendered and sexual performance of the Bible's major character. It also picks up the homoerotic connotations that we left dangling provocatively in the previous chapter. The chapter closes with a final argument that while CSM does have its particular remit, it would work best as an integral aspect of genderqueer criticism rather than pursuing an independent route with a narrower focus.

Concerned as it is with the dilemmas a male deity poses for a male worshipping community, whose relationship to the deity is sometimes figured in marital and erotic terms, Howard Eilberg-Schwartz's (1994) *God's Phallus and Other Problems for Men and Monotheism* initiated debate about biblical masculinities. His project had a personal angle, acknowledged in his introduction. He was writing at a time of struggles with his own masculinity and with the father-son relationship; struggles that he believes enabled him to see more clearly the gaps and suppressions in work on monotheism and divine husband/fatherhood (see 1994: 10). It is interesting to see in his acknowledgments the experience of 'groping to formulate a question that I could not yet conceive' (1994: ix). He knew that his work intersected with, and was informed by psychoanalysis, anthropology, feminist and gender criticism but there was no thriving publication series on biblical masculinities into which the book would obviously slot.[3] It was a feminist publication insofar as Eilberg-Schwartz acknowledges feminist work on the problems of conceiving deities as male. But whereas he accepts how male deities legitimate and indeed deify male authority, he wanted to explore something that feminist work had not really addressed: the ways in which a male deity provokes dilemmas for men, not least how it 'renders the meaning of masculinity unstable' (1994: 2).[4] He also talks of the influence of gender criticism (which he separates from feminist criticism), but gender criticism is not specifically defined. He refers the reader very briefly to Butler's influential *Gender Trouble* and there is mention of Wittig's (1992) work on 'The Straight Mind', but he mostly seems to understand gender criticism as something focused on distinctions between sex and gender and the theorizing of that binary. But what is notable in all this is the lack of direct

3. In fact, it is worth noting that his work was quickly taken up within queer readings of the Bible, which is not surprising given his focus on the homoerotic connotations of Israel's relationship with a male deity. This is an early indicator of the cross-fertilization potential between CSM and queer studies (a cross-over that is also seen in non-biblical domains) and another reason why a genderqueer criticism provides a useful multi-dimensional way forward. But, at the time of publication, Eilberg-Schwartz's work seems to have hung in a not-yet-occupied space within biblical studies.

4. The dilemmas include the imaging of God as husband to Israelite males in the marriage metaphor and the need to suppress the resultant homoerotic connotations and the image of a sexless celibate deity for a culture where so much emphasis is placed on procreation and patrilineal descent. Pulling psychology into the discussion helps to complicate the picture, for while feminists are right in suggesting that the deity is masculinity writ large, this 'generates all kinds of tensions for men and masculinity ... that have largely been ignored in recent feminist writing on religion' (1994: 16).

references to studies in masculinities. For all that this is a book concerned with 'problems for men and monotheism' there was no ready framework for it to belong to. But that was set to change.

Clines pioneered that new framework with his 1995 essay on King David. He too saw his work as being in some kind of relationship with feminism. Indeed, his turn to masculinities was motivated by a personal conversation with his colleague, Cheryl Exum:

> [I settled on this subject topic] because one day, feeling a little marginalized by the impact of feminist biblical criticism, I asked Cheryl Exum, in the words of Peter, What shall this 'man' do?, feeling sure that feminist criticism could be no business of mine. I got a one-word answer: Masculinity; and I have gone in the strength of that word forty days and forty nights.
>
> As I have discovered, it was a subject that needed taking up in biblical studies. It was a stunning example of the unthinking androcentrism of biblical scholars that it had not occurred to anyone much to ask what was typically male about their primary texts; they just assumed that 'human' and 'masculine' were coterminous. Once one recognized what a canard that was, a rich vein of research opened up almost of its own accord. (1998: 353).

His thought that masculinity studies would consider male indicators within texts did indeed lead to a subsequent rich vein of studies on male characters (Moses, Job, David, the Son of Man), and the beginnings of work on the male language of texts, often taken to be neutral but in fact written in Masclish, as evidenced particularly in the prophets[5]. Unlike Eilberg-Schwartz's work, Clines's (1995) essay was placed very clearly within a broader CSM framework, his essay littered with relevant secular studies of masculinities.

Clines's confession of feeling 'a little marginalized' by feminism's impact and his sense that feminism couldn't be any of his business—both sentiments consistent with wider acknowledgement of this experience within masculinity studies[6]—offers food for thought. Given evidence of Clines's

5. Masclish is discussed further in section two of this chapter.

6. Stephen Heath, for example, also suggests that it is not his business. In the hope of not impinging upon feminist territory, he writes that while engagement is desirable, men's 'relationship to feminism is an impossible one … this is a matter *for women* … It is their voices and actions, not ours: no matter how "sincere," "sympathetic" or whatever, we are always in a male position which brings with it all the implications of domination and appropriation, everything precisely that is being challenged, that has to be altered' (1987: 1). In a different approach to that of Heath, but also looking for complementary work rather than merger, Harry Brod's outline of 'The Case for Men's

general empathy with feminist approaches (as indicated, for example, in his 1990 essay), he is not evading responsibility. Rather, he seems to be doing feminist criticism the honour of leaving it to those who know best. However, it does give the impression that feminist criticism is considered to be the (sole?) business of women and his subsequent concentration on male characters implies that that it is also properly concerned with women, not masculinities.

A founding and influential paper for the study of masculinities in the Hebrew Bible thus gave the impression that while feminist theory informs it and has been a motivating rationale, CSM is something different from feminism and its concerns. Here was a new avenue of research that male scholars could involve themselves in without, perhaps, having to deal with the controversies provoked when male scholars engage in feminist projects or present themselves as profeminist.

This impression seems to be reinforced by Roland Boer's views. In his essay on the unstable masculine hegemony posited within the Books of Chronicles, Boer states that Chronicles is ripe for the 'study and critique of masculinity ... because it is a work devoted to the world of men' (2010: 20). This may well be true but it has that unfortunate effect of marrying the methodological approach with the study of male characters, neglecting the possibility of studying female masculinity or unhinging the connection between 'men' and 'masculinity'. Likewise, when DiPalma focuses on God's, Moses' and the Pharaoh's performances of masculinity in Exod. 1–4 he defends his 'intentional focus on men and masculinity' by crediting the influence of feminism and affirming his desire 'not to subvert the important work of feminist scholars', saying that the focus is 'only a corollary of intentionally exploring masculinity' (2010: 36). There is not a sense here that female characters can be part of a study on masculinity—quite the contrary. However, DiPalma is aware of how masculine characteristics are not always pinned to men. Thus, when noting how Exod. 3.1–4.17 por-

Studies' acknowledges that feminists were right to expose supposed universal 'knowledge' as male-biased knowledge. The 'new men's studies' similarly recognizes that 'traditional scholarship's treatment of generic man as the human norm in fact systematically excludes from consideration what is unique to men *qua* men' (1987: 40). He thus calls for studies to 'situate masculinities as objects of study on a par with femininities' and claims that this will provide a 'necessary complement to women's studies' (1987: 40). He does not view this in terms of parity where Men's Studies requires equal time for a related study of gender, for this might lead observers to think that Men's Studies makes up for some deficiency in feminist studies. In reality, he argues, 'Men's studies calls for qualitatively different, not quantatively more, attention to men. We should be clear that men's studies is a complement, not a cooptation of women's studies' (1987: 60).

trays God as the persuasive speaker, he questions whether this is necessarily a marker of masculinity, noting how 'other scholars argue that persuasive speech can be characteristic of both masculinity and femininity' (2010: 47-48, see Olsen [2004]). In fact, both Moses, his sister and the midwives 'engage in persuasive speech so it is difficult to definitively link it with either masculinity or femininity' (2010: 48 n.15). His footnote goes on to suggest that the indicators of masculinity (detachment from women, persuasive speech, and violence) do not really work as stand-alone markers either. The acknowledgment is significant. It undermines the creation or reification of a rigid masculine/feminine binary on the basis of characteristics alone, suggesting that we cannot necessary associate certain behavioural traits with one gender only. The problem pertains to the narrow focus that seems to currently occupy CSM which has resulted in a consideration of the male characters in the text. When that happens it is too easy to assume that the traits uncovered characterize masculinity. But if our analysis of texts looks across the gender spectrum including all characters, then those indicators may well appear less prominently 'masculine'.

Taking Clines's work on the prophets as an example, is it necessarily the case that prophecy *was* such a masculine project? Clines acknowledges, in a footnote, the references to Miriam, Deborah, Huldah, Noadiah and the unnamed prophet in Isa. 8.3, but the small fragments of information pertaining to woman prophets does not form part of his enquiry. The unfortunate consequence is that the possibility prophecy was *not* essentially a masculine project is ruled out of the discussion and, accordingly, the traits attributed to masculinity are solely associated with men. Failure to acknowledge the potential for female prophethood means that we miss the way characters like Deborah and Miriam might problematize associations of strength, honour, holiness etc. solely with male prophets. If one is limited to working with the grammar of the text only, then admittedly, there is little there to contradict Clines's account. However, if one applies a feminist hermeneutic of suspicion, and sees the necessity of using the historical imagination to fill out the submerged material of which the references to Miriam etc. are but tips of the iceberg, then the possibility that prophecy was *not* a male project comes into view.[7]

Thus, while Judges 4 admittedly imagines an inverted world, it remains the case that Deborah—whose femaleness is asserted with emphatic repetition—simultaneously takes on some of the indicators of masculinity mentioned by Clines. She is certainly a messenger and, far from being confined (Clines writes 'messengers in the world of the Bible are males. Women do

7. On the critical use of historical imagination see Brooten (1985).

not travel; their place is in the home' [2002: 312]), not only sits in the public space of a palm tree, known as the place to go for judgment, she delivers the command of God to Barak and goes up, herself, to Mount Tabor to encourage the cowardly Barak to arise. As for strength, Deborah's narrative is surrounded with military imagery and she sings her celebratory Song of war in Judges 5, which also contains references to a warrior deity. Violence is present in her call to arms and her Song celebrates the penetration of Sisera by Jael. As for the negative attitude to women that Clines detects, at first this seems to be interestingly absent in Deborah's narrative. There is no despising, threatening, blaming or humiliation of women going on. On the contrary, Deborah's counterpart—Jael—is celebrated (though it must be born in mind that there remains the stereotypical association of women with seduction, betrayal and dangerous sexuality). Male prophets are not the only ones who can use sexual metaphor in a violent context for the male narrator has her envisaging Sisera's death throes in unmistakable sexual terms. As for honour, it is true that no references can be found in relation to Deborah. However, one must query whether grammatical silence indicates that a woman prophet was not considered to have honour, or for that matter, holiness. If women did take on cultic roles in an ancient world where Yhwh appears to have had a female consort,[8] how realistic is it to assume that Israelite women could not have entered the realms of the holy? The Hebrew Bible might not admit to such possibilities, but herein lie the limitations of a study of masculinity that confines itself to the text alone and to its male characters, and lacks a feminist approach to history and its reconstruction. There is a danger of depending too heavily on the text itself and not coming to it with the hermeneutic of suspicion that questions the gaps and silences and thinks otherwise. While Clines very helpfully exposes and maps the markers of masculinity from what is self-evidently there in the text, the methodology does not always serve feminist interests well. Clines's analysis *is* of use to feminists insofar as it challenges readers to think through the implications of texts being written in Masclish, but it simultaneously closes down the possibility that masculinity can be a space inhabited by women, and that female prophets may have shared qualities of the kind he identifies as 'masculine'.

It is true that Clines is always aware that the components of masculinity he identifies can also apply to women. He notes that beauty is a trait shared by men and woman, as is the capacity to be musical, and that there are clearly 'intelligent and persuasive women speakers in the David story', but

8. On how the cult of Asherah might have provided opportunities for women see, for example, the work of Binger (1997) and Meyers (1999).

he goes on to state that this fact 'by no means undercuts the assertion that this is a characteristic of masculinity' (1995: 220). It is his view that our contemporary assumptions have coloured our judgements too much; the imperative for men to be not-woman in our context has made it difficult to appreciate that shared characteristics are possible. Maybe so, but this has not prompted a study on female masculinity, just a continuation of work on males: Moses, Job, the He-Prophets, the Son of Man.

In my view, we have to look across the character spectrum and not attach masculinity solely to men. It may well be the case that some feminist readers are not too impressed by images of women adopting masculine traits, but for some lesbian readers the picture of Deborah doing man with style and panache, and indeed better than the men themselves, is a gratifying (if problematic) picture. All this prompts further discussion on what, if anything, masculinity has to do with being considered 'biologically' male. It compels us into a genderqueer discussion, inclusive of intersex and trans voices, that queries the ways in which the Bible constructs sexed binaries and associated gender norms.

At the moment we are not in that space. We are shifting gradually into a space becoming known only as 'gender criticism', which appears to be used as useful shorthand for feminist-informed work on texts together with the growing corpus of work on masculinities. As it stands, studies in masculinity furrow a path alongside feminist studies, giving the impression that these are related efforts, but there remains insufficient critical thought on how they are related.

Hermeneutical Objectives, Strategies and Political Agenda

At least four identifiable objectives emerge from currently published work: to remove the invisibility of man/men as a marked category, to let culturally specific constructions of masculinities speak for themselves, to identify hegemonic norms and map instances of alternative, subordinated and marginalized masculinities, and to problematize the givenness of the sexed category 'man' by exposing its constructedness. There are no doubt other objectives, but these are the ones most pertinent to this study.

To Remove the Invisibility of Men as a Marked Category

To remove the marker of 'gender' from women (alone) and place men and masculinities under critical scrutiny as constructed, scripted categories is probably CSM's most basic, valuable objective. As Todd Reeser notes, there are a number of ways in which masculinity becomes more visible. It is noticeable 'when something goes wrong or when it goes into excessive over-

drive' (2010: 1). Examples of performances in which it is absent/present to excess, would be in the effeminate man or the body builder. It is also made visible in cross-cultural and cross-temporal studies where it is performed in the ways out of kilter with the performances of the researcher's own time. These moments jolt the reader into the recognition that masculinity is not a given, but a contextual thing. It is also made noticeable when there are critiques and competitions between co-existing models: a working class factory worker can call into question the masculinity modelled by, say, a university lecturer. It registers again when there are performance failures: 'The confident, successful Wall Street businessman suffers from anxiety on some level and, if one looks closely, he can be read as faltering and not always confident and successful' (2010: 3). When women perform it, it becomes visible not only because it is found in an unexpected location but 'it may be the threat of women appropriating masculinity that makes it so visible, as a cultural anxiety about men losing masculinity to women is expressed' (2010: 3). In trans embodiments, masculinity and maleness is something that can be acquired through body modification and hormone intakes. And it is made visible in the queerer moments when 'it morphs into something unfamiliar or ambiguous', for example 'when a heterosexual late-night talk-show host makes homoerotic jokes about himself and his male guests night after night' (2010: 3). When these things occur 'their unexpectedness calls attention to masculinity as more unstable and more complex than we may have originally thought' (2010: 4).

So far so good, but how does one remove the invisibility of more normative versions of masculinity? One of the strategies advocated by Reeser is to explore the ways in which it accomplishes one of its most successful characteristics: its ability to hide itself. How does it manage 'to keep itself under cover of darkness and to pass unnoticed? How has masculinity created distractions to keep attention away from itself as gendered? How is masculinity's absence significant? And how does masculinity's silence speak?' (2010: 9).

When applying these thoughts to biblical studies, it would be well to heed Reeser's caution against focusing attention on the moments of failed or excessive masculinities, on its queer moments, at the expense of looking at those citations of masculinity that seem to need no analysis at all. It is understandable that we start with examples where masculinity is most visible, since these that stand out from the page and give us something to work with. But we need strategies that enable us to get at the places where masculinity just appears a natural feature of the text, places where it has covered its tracks.

The practitioner of CSM will also have to work against the fact that men have a vested interest in keeping masculinity invisible. As Reeser comments, hiding it can 'allow masculinity to function without challenge or question' (2010: 7) and also allow 'normative' models to be reinforced by letting other versions be those that become visible. For example, heterosexual masculinity is shored up when it makes gay masculinity the marked category. But talking about normative masculinities, refusing to let them continue to be hidden, is what might most enable change to happen, for it opens up discussion for the connections between men/masculinity and power, justice, subordinations. As Collinson and Hearn observe: 'Not talking of men is a major and structured way of not beginning to talk of and question men's power in relation to women, children, young people, and indeed other men, or perhaps more precisely men's relations within power' (2001: 97). It also facilities self-critical reflection. Yes, this can be the unhelpful kind that ruminates about the damages done by feminism and results in even great reification of manhood, but it can also be the productive, progressive kind. Thus Whitehead, while acknowledging how feminism has done much to challenge inequalities and the continued material subordination of women, notes that 'of equal, if not more importance, is individual men recognizing their own gender as an inhibiting factor to gender equity and gender justice, a reflexive state that is entirely possible' (2002: 78). And there has been a good deal of useful, significant work done in this regard, work that is on-going.

That said, the effect of such work in the contemporary world waits to be seen. In a discussion of whether men want to change, and whether they will, Whitehead notes that marginalized men, gay men and men of colour have been carrying much of the debate forward This is not surprising if one considers how hegemonic models of masculinity have a negative effect upon such men's lives and also the way in which 'normative' masculinities have a habit of making themselves unmarked. Insofar as white heterosexual men are engaging with gender criticism and aligning themselves with feminism, these tend to be 'academics or men with a particular cultural capital' (2002: 81). Whitehead does not see any dramatic shift on the horizon and it is precisely blindness to the marked category of male/masculine that contributes to this: 'For many men their gender, as a key if not determining factor in their life experiences and history, remains unseen if not incomprehensible to them. As Michael Kimmel succinctly puts it, the reason for this continuing gender blindness stems from most men's inability to see themselves as men' (2002: 81, citing Kimmel in Middleton 1992: 11). If men are to do more than make personal adjustments in the arenas of shared finances, childcare and domestic duties, and commit to the vital task—the

'renegotiation of a power relationship' so that they no longer occupy a 'centralist position', in order to be 'jointly peripheral' (2002: 83, 84), they need to engage in that 'self-reflexivity that … is elementary to social transformation and gender equity' (2002: 82). So, if we hope for social and political transformation, the removal of invisibility is absolutely key.

Marking masculinity, then, is a major means of problematizing it, and problematizing it is exactly what Clines does in his paper on the 'He-Prophets', pointing out that the prophets speak in a language permeated by male ideologies that he refers to as Maschlish. Most disturbing is that no one notices; a situation demonstrated by the reinforcement of the text's ideology by any commentator 'who will find his own fulfilment in recapitulating the ideals and experiences of the prophet' (2002: 324).[9] If interpreters continue to be ignorant that they are reading a Masclish discourse there is a problem: 'How can a "message" that comes in male attire, standing tall and girded with a sword, lifting high its standard yet fearful for its precarious honour, hope to speak to a world that is 53 per cent female (to say nothing of the men in the other 47 per cent who are troubled about traditional masculinity)?' (2002: 325). These important questions are, however, left for others to unpack.

Feminists, of course, may well respond to Clines that they have been noticing for a very long time that the Hebrew Bible is written, almost entirely, in Maschlish. This has been one of the founding rationales of feminism. They have also been noting that its reception history has, until relatively recently, been similarly written in Maschlish. But it is gratifying to see the recognition dawning across the discipline.

To Let the Culture-Specific Constructions and Performativities of Masculinities in Ancient Israel Speak for Themselves

Jennifer Glancy queries how far reception history has been coloured by modern expectations and assumptions. She notes how 'tendencies in the late nineteenth and twentieth century thinking about gender' have 'overdetermined' the ways in which we have approached ancient texts [1994: 34]). This is a matter taken up by Clines in more detail. If we are to see ancient masculinities more clearly, the task is for scholars to take 'a step of critical distance as best they can from their own culture and their personal scripts, to bring back into the foreground the otherness of the familiarized' (1995: 243). At present, he argues, interpretations of David's story have been coloured by male commentators' views of what manliness is all about and what constitutes the successful man. This skews the data we actually

9. As examples, he cites J. L. Crenshaw (1987) and H. Wildberger (1991).

have in the text and leads to suppression of his less favoured attributes. Such 'gender-based hero-worship' means that commentators 'can, and must, excuse his faults and crimes because he is at bottom a man after their own heart—which is to say, their own image of masculinity' (1995: 235). Accordingly, 'everything questionable, distasteful and gross about David has been swallowed up by the modern myth of masculinity: if he is a real man, he has to be successful' (1995: 237). Uncomfortable features, such as David's killing sprees, disconcerting references to male beauty, the relationship between him and Jonathan, David's polygamy, the rape scenes within the David narrative, are all subject to containing strategies so that overall 'the representation of masculinity in the text is harmonized to our modern consciousness' (1995: 243).

But exactly how one goes about letting ancient masculinities speak for themselves is a thorny issue. Clines excavates textual references in order to find out how ancient biblical narrators' ideas of masculinities inform their work. He recognizes that there is not necessarily a connection between these texts and the lives of the men they purport to describe, but, as he plausibly suggests, the literature with its constructions of masculinity did not come out of nowhere but probably 'reflects the cultural norms of men of the author's time' (1995: 216). Perhaps so. But it is always healthy to inject a dose of realism now and then, and admit that we are trying to reconstruct a model of masculinity from a limited, relatively small and elite corpus of material of uncertain date and context, which gives no more direct access to the authentic lives of men than it does to women. And feminists have long known that there is no easy elision to be made between the textual representations of biblical women and the realities of historical women's lives. Always there was a keen consciousness that we would only be mapping male narratives heavily loaded with ideological scripts. Feminists expose how images of women serve androcentric and phallocentric interests and detach from them, concerned about the messages they perpetuate. So while second wave feminism has initiated a great deal of salvage work in an attempt to reconstruct the lives and voices of ancient Israelite women, it is well known that biblical texts take us only so far in that work.

Maybe the detachment has come easier to feminists. Clines's comments above are a useful reminder of the benefits that might accrue to contemporary male readers in aligning themselves with the scriptural text. The fact that a model of hegemonic masculinity is an ideal type no (real) man can achieve does not detract from the fact that elements of it probably remain *desirable*. But when asking why no one has ever considered hegemonic models of femininity, the answer is obvious: Who would want to? The biblical representations of women are hardly desirable in the same way.

However, the feminist search for ways in which 'woman' might have been actually performed in ancient Israel and studies in masculinity have this in common: the dearth of source material and the inability to conduct fieldwork. While archaeology might tell us of the accoutrements of gender and provide examples of some representations of masculinity, it is mute when it comes to telling us how masculine norms were actually lived. We are thrown back onto anthropological studies that reconstruct the ancient world lying behind biblical texts via reference to tribal societies that can be observed today. But it is not at all clear whether comparative ethnography could be helpful when it comes to gender, because norms of masculinity shift sometimes quite radically across times and cultures. Stephen Whitehead, for example, points out the difference between modern conceptions of masculinity and Aristocratic Renaissance man, typified by King Henry VIII, who embodied a masculinity that was 'ruthless and at times brutal' but who also

> danced, played instruments, sang and composed, and like many men of that period, was apparently not averse to displaying his deeper emotions and feelings. Man as a complex combination of emotion, sentimental, foppish beau and militaristic aggressor reached an apex in the subsequent Elizabethan age, when it was fashionable for males to dress in extravagant, diverse and outlandish garments, eclipsing women in their sartorial splendour (2002: 15).

Even within a shorter historical span of just a few decades, ways of doing masculinity shift. Beynon thus rightly queries if there is any common thread uniting the experience of these men:

> an unemployed former coal miner in his sixties living in the Rhondda, Wales; a successful City of London stockbroker in his fifties; a poor Indian eking out a meagre living off the land in the rural hinterland; a rich, young, gay fashion designer in New York; and a middle-aged, family-oriented school teacher in Bolton, Lancashire. Biologically the same, each is positioned to experience and display their masculinity very differently (Beynon 2002: 12).

Such questions raise an important issue: when it comes to the domain of biblical studies, which cultures would be comparable? Moore, comparing the efforts of NT scholars, who at least have access to a growing corpus of material on Mediterranean masculinities undertaken in the field of Classics, notes 'there does not yet appear to be a monograph or essay collection on ancient Near Eastern ideologies of masculinity per se' (2010: 244).[10]

10. He (2010: 244) notes how contributors use extracts from Cynthia R. Chapman (2004), and the 'now hoary' Hoffner (1966).

But this presupposes that the most comparable material might be found in Assyrian and Babylonian, possibly Egyptian contexts and materials. When the dating of the Deuteronomistic History is so open to a number of possible date ranges—from supposed early source material to redaction during the time of Josiah, or claims that there are affinities between the Deuteronomist and Herodotus, and possibilities even of a Hellenistic date for texts previously considered much earlier—the attempt to find comparable material is fraught. Which surrounding cultures, at which times, had influence for ancient Israelite culture? Do we look to Mesopotamia or to Greece? These things matter when looking at modern non-industrial tribal societies for comparative work.[11]

I thus question how far we can ever do more than engage with textual ideologies; and then I am uncomfortably reminded of Schweitzer's astute observation of the quester who gazes down the well of history to find Jesus, but finds his or her own reflection looking back. This 'vertical' approach, as Moore calls it, will probably always be compromised in this way. One significant value of Clines's work, of course, lies in bringing examples of it to our attention.

To Identify Hegemonic Norms of Masculinity and Map Instances of Alternative, Subordinated, Marginalized Masculinities

Clines identifies six components of masculinity from the David narratives: Men fight,[12] need to be good persuasive speakers, benefit from being considered beautiful, have strong bonds with other males, are musical (notably with stringed instruments), and are womanless in the sense that women are used for procreative purposes but are not the mainstay of men's lives ('a man does not need women, a man is not constituted by his relationship with women' [1995: 227]).

Although he subsequently studied disparate characters and texts, these components have come close to creating a hegemonic model of masculinity. This impression gained weight because, despite making a conscious effort to avoid becoming 'locked into a grid of [his] own devising' (2010a:

11. Susan Haddox (2010), for example, turns to four characteristics of hegemonic masculinity observed in the work of Strathern (1988), Gilmore (1990, 1996) and Chapman (2004), among others, but how far are sources that deal with Melanesian society and the language of warfare in Israelite-Assyrian encounters going to be equally applicable when it comes to understanding the subordinated masculinities of favoured sons in the Hebrew Bible? We need to be very sure that the model of hegemonic masculinity is sound before we can be confident of finding examples of subordinations to it.

12. Though, as he notes, the 'courage' can sometimes be reckless and indeed, as Boer's (2006) study indicates, reckless to the point of comedy.

62), his work on being male in the Book of the Covenant, on Job, the Son of Man, the He-prophets, and Paul produced results similar to those of his first paper on David. Fighting/killing thus become, respectively, 'the fundamental characteristic of a man in Hebrew Bible literature' and 'the quintessential male characteristic') (2010a: 55). It was not Clines's aim to create such a model. He embarked on his project by recommending openness 'to the possibility of a plurality of masculinities' and notes that there will be those who deviate from prescribed social norms and examples of conflicting masculinities (1995: 215).[13] What seems to have happened is that the idea of a hegemonic norm of masculinity has been created by subsequent studies that have taken Clines's work as their departure point, as they examine how other examples of masculinities cohere with the characteristics he outlined. Moore thus rightly notes a tendency for 'a kind of identikit profile of the Israelite man' emerging (2010: 246).

That said, as more work is published a contrary emphasis is emerging; scholars are engaging with the components of masculinity identified by Clines but revealing significant deviations from that model. In fact, when it comes to male priests, Boer comes to quite a different understanding of what counts as hegemonic (and of how the production of hegemonic models function). If Chronicles could be understood as a Levitical male-only utopia, then the attempt to produce it results in the unlikely image of men begetting men in the genealogies, men becoming pregnant and giving birth—destabilizing the very masculine hegemony they are trying to create. And as for components of masculinity, in this case we are dealing with obsession with correct cultic paraphernalia, ability to sing, to mix spices correctly and produce foodstuffs. Boer is, perhaps, somewhat tongue-in-cheek, but he does ably demonstrate how this masculinity 'is queerer than we might expect', with a 'distinct campiness' (2010: 26).

Nonetheless, the mapping of hegemonies (there may be different models depending on one's function in society, such as priest, king, prophet), is not a bad thing to work on. Once we talked of patriarchy—and rightly so. It was a useful term to discuss the ways in which father-rule permeated the social context in systematic, institutional as well as personal ways, whether speaking of ancient societies or more recent ones. However, it was a blunt tool, justly criticized for its sense of fixity, reductionism, and for its focus on blanket male dominance when, in fact, some women could dominate over other women and men, when power dynamics shift and are more fluid than

13. He also notes, however, that deviation from the norm and fallibility even in its heroic protagonists, 'only serves to inscribe yet deeper the authority of the cultural norms' (1995: 229).

the term indicates, and where the intersections of ethnicity, ability, sexuality, class, also mesh into 'patriarchal' power. If we want to continue being able to talk about the specifics of male power and domination, then exploring hegemonic models might be a more useful tool. It has its weaknesses, as Whitehead (2002: 92-93) notes, but it is more nuanced in its analysis of 'the processes and relationalities of femininity-masculinity and male power', in multiple settings (2002: 90), and it has the benefit of recognizing that there is resistance to the dominant construction. And if we want a way of analysing how male power continually reasserts itself then the study of hegemonic masculinities offers a fruitful avenue, since it 'can be defined as the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women' (Connell 1995: 77). I return to this topic when considering the political agenda for CSM, below.

To Highlight the Constructedness of Both Sex and Gender

In secular CSM, masculinity is widely acknowledged as cultural; not a biologically wired innate way of being. Thus it is a 'cultural space' into which all humans might step. Some are thoroughgoing; John MacInnes, for example, is very frank in his views that 'masculinity exists only as various ideologies or fantasies, about what men should be like, which men and women develop to make sense of their lives' (1998: 2), that biological maleness does not confer masculinity and that the end of masculinity as a gendered identity specific to men is in sight (1998: 77). For him, gender is an ideological construct produced by the 'material struggle over the sexual division of labour' (1998: 2). So, the more interesting question becomes 'What historical conditions encourage men and women to imagine the existence of such a thing as masculinity in order to make sense of their lives in the first place?' (1998: 2-3) and, secondly, why we hold on to the ideology as a kind of

> religious fetish, whereby an external material object comes to be endowed with powers by those who worship it. The origin of the power of a religious fetish lies in the imaginations of its worshippers, although the consequences of these imaginations can be far reaching and very real. So it is with gender. It might be seen as a fetish, the last vestige of enchantment (1998: 10).

Arguing also for dislocating studies of masculinities from men and pointing to the way social materialities produce gender, Matthew Shepherd suggests it is better to regard masculinity as a practice, or a series of power relations rather than as some kind of normative state. And when it is seen in

these terms, as 'an exercise of power that creates, reinforces, and maintains sexual inequalities and sexual oppression' (1998: 177), then it becomes more evident that it is a space that can be occupied by women and men. Our endeavour, therefore, should be to isolate and highlight the ways this power operates; to analyse the '*practical everyday* ways male power is perpetrated', in ways that focus 'neither solely on men nor solely on women, but on gender relations, on power relations that advantage men' (1998: 178).

In biblical studies, what we find is what we also found for feminist biblical studies; that gender is quickly acknowledged as culturally constructed. Clines (1995: 214), for example, writes that 'there is nothing natural or God-given' about masculinity and its associated rules and roles. But when it comes to de-stabilizing sex—the category 'man'—one has to search wider for examples of sex being considered to be just as constructed as gender or, indeed, the corollary of a prior heterosexual imaginary. Whitehead, who favours a poststructuralist approach, bemoans the problematic omnipresence of the categories 'men' and 'women' that abound in the literature 'despite', he says 'the absence of any biological grounding to people's identities' (2002: 217). Reeser also notes that while masculinity is often seen as constructed and subject to change, maleness itself often remains fixed, so that sex at birth is then culturally conditioned into a gender, and desire follows from this. But this linear development 'is not natural, and masculinity does not lead, in any simplistic way, to heterosexual desire' (2010: 73). The penis gets marked as the sign of maleness 'when in fact it is just a piece of flesh hanging between the legs' (2010: 74). He follows Butler in arguing that, if it has already been decided that masculinity is to be defined in terms of active sexual interest, in virility, in penetration, then it is inevitable that significance gets attached to the penis:

> We imagine that maleness is a result of chromosomes, hormones, testosterone, muscularity, the size of the male body ... But in fact, it is our ideas about masculinity that already influence what a man is. We have already decided that strength defines masculinity, so therefore we see the male body's relative larger size as a definitional element of a man. Our gendered perceptions create a certain idea of sex (2010: 74-75).

Resistance to such recognition is wrapped up in fear that maleness is not, actually, the 'exclusive domain of men' (2010: 76), for this affects the maintenance of masculine hegemony. Thus

> a very butch woman can never be a man, since maleness is not open to other sexes. She might be allowed to possess masculine qualities, to be gendered masculine, or to exemplify gender fluidity, but by virtue of keeping sex outside the realm of gender, men can ultimately main-

> tain their hold over a core of maleness and thus the butch woman is unable fully to have masculinity (2010: 76).

Otherwise the whole 'natural order' could be upset. And in one of the very few cases where a non-biblical scholar of masculinities demonstrate the relevance and influence of the Bible, Reeser draws attention to the way its creation myths try to create the original, authentic moment of becoming male. As he memorably says, it is a textual moment during which sex is 'invented and then taken for granted' (2010: 77).

However, when it comes to scholars within biblical studies, the idea that there nothing natural or God-given about sex lies in the largely unspoken shadows. This is where a broader framework, incorporating intersex, trans, and queer theory would have its benefits.

The Political Agenda envisaged for CSM

Feminist work on images of women has always had political import and as studies of masculinities developed there was vision for its concomitant politics. Harry Brod (1987: 45) understood 'Men's Studies' as having its feet grounded in profeminist activism, just as feminism was the grounding for Women's Studies. He argued that this political connection should not be lost in the desire to gain academic respectability for this new field of study:

> Women's studies gains much of its vitality from its connection to the feminist, whereby its feminist commitments have not been minimized or negated in pursuit of an ephemeral goal of apolitical objectivity. Similarly, men's studies should be unabashedly explicit about its roots in the search for progressive, profeminist change in male roles (1987: 45).

What then are the political implications of this discourse on men and masculinities within biblical studies? One of the strategic questions Clines asks when turning up at the text is 'what message do the males and females outside this text receive about how men should "play the man"' (2010a: 54). The significance of posing this question is that CSM puts men and masculinities under scrutiny and the implication is that this will have knock-on effects for understanding how representations of gender are constructed and are influential. Given that the representations occur in scriptural texts, perhaps particularly influential.

To this end, more work could focus on the ways in which hegemonic masculinity is always open to challenge, resistance, contestation; for here lie the seeds to resistance that feminists have been expressing for years in regard to images of women. Noting his debt to Gramsci, Connell defines hegemonic masculinity as 'the configuration of gender practice which

embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women' (1995: 77). His phrase, 'currently accepted', acknowledges its provisional character, its capacity to be overthrown. It appears robustly hegemonic but is actually unstable. Boer (2010) is alert to this. He points out that Gramsci had a political purpose in working out his theory about hegemony. He thought it would facilitate insurrection, used to 'overthrow those in power, to explore how a new, liberating, hegemony might develop' (2010: 21).[14] The relevance of this, for Boer, lies in his view that the Bible can be seen as presenting dominant perspectives but that these are always unstable, running the risk of being undercut from within. His essay thus suggests that the benefit to be had from discerning hegemonic models lies in the capacity to undermine, subvert, undo them.[15]

So, in practice, what does this enable Boer to do with Chronicles? What contestation or transformation is he able to achieve? He is able to demonstrate how the Levitical male-only utopia—the hegemonic ideal—carries within it the seeds of its own subversion. I have already mentioned how it can only be upheld by imagining (womanly) men becoming pregnant and giving birth. And by drawing attention to the cultic obsessions of the text, Boer shows how its male community exhibits a rather queer, comical masculinity. Boer does not overtly acknowledge it, but in bringing out the comedy value of the text, he offers gay male readers a moment of sheer enjoyment. It may well amuse other groups, but for those who have the 'family values' of the Bible used to condemn their same-sex choices, I think it has a particular resonance. There is a contemporary gay-friendly politics in this—Boer is not only contesting the hegemonic masculinity of the book of Chronicles, he is challenging hegemonic views about the Bible and the kind of family relations and masculinities it espouses. I am not associating gay male readers with the masculinities on display in Chronicles, but envisaging an appreciative camp humour at the goings on. And, as Elizabeth Stuart has argued, laughter is a means of subversion and survival, offsetting

14. In Gramsci's case, this related to Mussolini's fascist state.

15. To this he adds the contribution made by Althusser on Ideological State Apparatuses such as 'education, religion, family, politics, the legal system, and culture' which are also 'sites of ideological struggle' (2010: 22) since the State can be resisted and its hold contested. Also, Antonio Negri's understanding of resistance as something creative and constitutive that calls dominant power to re-shape itself in response to its counter movements, can be thrown into the mix. For Boer, the relevance of Negri for studies of masculinities lies in this alertness to the fact that models of masculinities are not powerful, inflexible things, but shapeshift in response to resistance.

the terrorizing way in which texts are used by spokespeople in conservative religious institutions: 'Learning to laugh at texts—to read them with camp humor communally and critically—must become an integral part of queer reading strategies if the Word is to be taken back' (2000: 31).

But as I argued in Chapter 1, it is often left for the reader to tease out these implications rather than them being overtly drawn out and discussed. If we are really to believe that feminist theory and politics can justly be celebrated as one of the most significant informing disciplines, then we need to see how feminism's political vision and commitment is taken up within CSM.[16] So how far does a feminist consciousness and political commitment currently inform CSM in biblical studies? In the latest, arguably primary, text on masculinities and the Hebrew Bible (Creangă 2010), there are moments where one wonders how deep the consciousness goes. In his discussion of the (failed) masculinity embodied by the Pharaoh compared with that of Moses, DiPalma notes how Pharaoh is emasculated as, in one scheme after another, women operate successfully against him. Women, however, *aid* Moses: 'If Moses were detached from women in the first four chapters of Exodus, he would be dead. Thus, the text significantly challenges assumptions about masculinity that would suggest detachment from women ... is a masculine ideal for Moses. Indeed, these chapters intimate the exact opposite.' (2010: 46). The political import of Di Palma's essay is potentially good, for it challenges any idea that violence is a useful or effective means of conflict resolution. Rather, the story of Moses reveals that it is reliance upon women and being willing to intervene on behalf of targeted others that are the workable and valued traits (2010: 51). This is true, but what a feminist consciousness brings to the surface is that the women in the Moses story are praised precisely because they comply with the male

16. 'It is feminism ... that has put the critical study of men and masculinities on to the agenda. Any attempt, therefore, on the part of men to engage in such studies must be working within, and sometimes against, this context established by women and feminism' (Morgan, 1992: 2). Morgan goes on to claim: 'All the studies written by men and about men and masculinities in the recent decade have underlined the importance of feminist research, scholarship and critique in stimulating their own studies' (1992: 6). 'Feminism provided the context, the overall set of assumptions within which the current studies of men and masculinities are being conducted (1992: 6). He notes that feminism was not the only informative theory, influence also came from 'the experiences and writing of gay men' but feminism 'remains, the major influence' (1992: 6). He footnotes a range of examples. And he also notes that feminism's influence has not only been intellectual and theoretical, it has stemmed from feminism's social and political activism and the historical and structural changes in society that have occurred as a result.

agenda. So, while it might seem to feminist advantage to grasp the positive portrayals of women in the early chapters of Exodus, it is not. What is needed are reading strategies which 'expose and critique the ideology that motivates the biblical presentation of women' (Exum 1996: 82), that recognize how 'Honor and status … are rewards patriarchy grants women for assent to their subordination and cooperation in it' (1996: 94). Affirming women already praised in the text is only reifying the (hetero)patriarchal agenda. So, perhaps the political import of DiPalma's intriguing and helpful essay lies in a further critique of the script this biblical text provides for dependence of males upon apparently superior values of supportive women: a script that has dogged women for years.

Mark George's exploration of how Deuteronomy constructs a dominant, hegemonic ideal of Israelite masculinity (even while its author acknowledges variables) is also informative, but I have concerns about the discussion points the study *doesn't* have. For instance, the Israelite male's duties in regard to marriage and children, and the men's relation to space are two the five areas he considers. On space, he notes that men can occupy land, fields, the cities of refuge and so forth. However while it is assumed that 'all this space ... is presumed to be space a male can occupy and safely pass through' women can be subject to rape in the fields (2010: 79). On marriage, he notes how men 'are expected and encouraged to get married' but that anxieties accompany this. What of the other males who want to have sex with one's wife, and the possibility that 'the woman may *want* to have sex with another man' (2010: 74), as implied in the stoning rule for the engaged woman and the other man who have sex without her crying out, and in the laws relating to the testing of virginity (Deut. 22.13-21)? His essay, of course, is focused on the construction of masculinity, and these things are all relevant, but it is open to the feminist accusation that when CSM furrows its own path, the concerns of feminism get left behind. There is no room made available to express concern for the raped women, or the fact that the Deuteronomic construction of masculinity appears to incorporate, integrally, a fear of female sexuality. George is no doubt restricted to a word count, and his aim was to map how Deuteronomy's commands and ordinances address men and instruct 'Israelite men on what it means to *be* a man in Israel' (2010: 67). But the compelling question remains: to what end do we put this knowledge? What is its significance? In my view, the political edge of research is left wanting. In a return to Chapter 1's discussion, I am reminded of those fears that a shift to Gender Studies will dilute the politics that has characterized Women's Studies. This particular study in masculinities will not take us very far *without* a feminist push to see the political significance of what is being discussed.

It is not only feminist concerns that need to be voiced, but also concerns about the impact of studies of marginalized masculinities. Its all very well noting examples of failed men if one is writing from the vantage point of a heterosexual commentator who manages his male performances successfully. What does it mean if you are a marginalized man looking at biblical examples of males marginalized or stigmatized for choices or behaviours you might yourself share? The example of David and Jonathan has already been referred to above and it is a good one with which to illustrate the point. The precise nature of their relationship has long been under scrutiny, with some writers, such as Tom Horner (1978), keen to own its homoerotic aspect. For Horner 'There can be little doubt … except on the part of those who absolutely refuse to believe it, that there existed a homosexual relationship between David and Jonathan' (1978: 20). However, in talking about those who are *willing to believe* Horner concedes that much depends on the reader and his or her willingness/ability to see this dimension. Countering that, in a recent study addressing the masculinities on display in the David and Jonathan narrative, Peleg argues that we are seeing a feminization of Jonathan while David plays the man; not a scene permeated with homoerotic content. Peleg thus argues that, in an attempt to justify David's access to Saul's throne, Jonathan is deliberately undermined via a manipulation of gender. Jonathan is 'placed in the inferior and subservient role of a woman, whereas David assumes the superior and dominant role of a man' (2005: 189). David's steady womanizing of Jonathan does not backfire on him since the text stresses David's virility, his association with several women and his considerable military prowess against the Philistines, whose foreskins he delivers to Saul. Jonathan, in contrast, is drawn as a 'mama's boy' (2005: 184). For Peleg 'the gender flux exhibited in the David and Jonathan story seems aimed at destabilizing the former arrangement made between God and Saul in order to reaffirm God's new choice, David as husband and father for the nation' (2005: 189).

This all seems very persuasive; but it is also very handy for those who do not want to associate David with homosexuality. Here is a reading that accounts for the erotic bonds between the two men without having to surmise that they were involved in mutual physical expressions of love—instead they are deemed to be performing the roles of a woman and a man. Peleg is notably driven to this stance because he is unwilling to concede that the narrator of 1 Samuel would have intentionally portrayed the relationships between 'Israeli's most illustrious heroes as "homosexual"' (2005: 174), given the laws against male penetration in Lev. 18.22 and 20.13. However, I would suggest that Peleg's reading is only very persuasive if one is similarly 'unwilling to believe'. Other readers might be offended by the

distance Peleg seems keen to create between the character of David and homoerotic connotations. If one is a gay reader, the idea of some intentional display of 'homosexuality' would not be such an anathema. Having the door firmly closed on the glimmer of such a possibility in a text where same-sex homoerotic relationships *are* so easily found is not only disappointing, but rather telling. Again we come back to Clines's point that commentaries on David often reflect the ideologies of masculinities in the mind of the reader and this issue of willingness to believe. Peleg *cannot* believe, and this blindsides him to the ways in which narrative texts often undermine prescriptive laws,[17]—a factor which might undo his assumptions. Horner *can* believe, but this blindsides him to the deliberate womanizing of Jonathan by a politically-motivated biblical author. The point I wish to make is that scholars specializing in CSM need to take ethical responsibility for exegesis and seeing the political implications of their work, not only feminist implications, but queer ones too. Peleg's gender critical essay argues that the feminization of Jonathan is a way of casting a very negative slur on the descendants of Saul. This is not particularly good news for the gay reader who might want to celebrate the relationship between David and Jonathan, rather than meeting yet another reifying stigmatizing view of effeminate men. A text that had once been one of the few that the gay community could celebrate[18] thus becomes, in Peleg's hands, a potential text of

17. David Biale demonstrates how laws of the Hebrew Bible are often suspended or undermined by the narrative sections. Even if the laws post-date these narratives, he rightly points out that we are dealing with an author/editor who chose to leave these narratives intact. He therefore concludes that the contradictions served 'an important cultural function' (1997:17). Commenting specifically upon the laws against homosexuality, Biale argues that it is prohibited because it does not serve the interests of procreation. But as in his other examples, the laws are there, it seems, to be broken. He goes on to note that God does not intervene in these transgressions. Rather, 'God's absence implicitly *sanctions* these inversions and subversions' (1997: 31, emphasis added).

18. The relationship between David and Jonathan has been invoked in popular lists of 'great homosexuals from the past' which typically include such figures as Plato, Sappho, Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci and Emily Dickinson. Their inclusion served the interests of pre-twentieth century homophile apologetic movements which aimed, in Rictor Norton's words, to offer a 'historical argument for the decriminalization and destigmatization of homosexuality' (1997: 217). Thus, in response to the question 'What is the "Love that dare not speak its name"?' posed at the trial of Oscar Wilde (opened in 1895), he replied 'The "Love that dare not speak its name" in this century is such a great affection as an elder for a younger man as there was between David and Jonathan, such as Plato made the basis of his philosophy, and such as you find in the sonnets of Michelangelo and Shakespeare' (Miller 1995: 49).

terror. Maybe Peleg is right; his argument is persuasive. But the *import* of his argument needs to become part of the overt discussion rather than, as seems to be the case, reinforcing via gender criticism a negative association of homoeroticism with effeminacy.

Critical studies of masculinities need to the make the political relevance of their work clear. At the moment, the ideological commitments of scholars of masculinity often remain under-stated and blurry, leaving the potential for transforming effects inadequately explored, or, at worst, simply not there. Passion—that is what is needed, argues Clines—not mere intellectual curiosity. His call to arms in this regard is worth citing in full:

> I want to urge that there is an injustice, damaging to women and men alike, in the Hebrew Bible's assumption of the normativity of masculinity. The people who should be noticing it, writing about it, and protesting against it, are biblical scholars. No one else [is] in such a good position to speak with understanding and discernment about the situation. Our first task, as it was with the feminist movement, is consciousness raising. Our second task ... is apology; we are doing a lot in our professional lives to keep the biblical books alive, and it is our duty as academics to distance ourselves from unlovely aspects of what we teach and research, and not to give the impression that because we are experts on these texts we subscribe to them warts and all. Our third task is to constantly refine what it is about masculinity that is objectionable. Masculinity is not a vice, and it is no part of a proper study of the subject to smear all expressions of masculinity with the wrongs and excesses of some of its manifestations (2010b: 238-39).

Clines argues 'it should not be possible to remain "objective" about the issue of masculinity in the Hebrew Bible. It is a political matter, and a refusal to speak out about it is a dereliction of our moral duty' (2010: 239). I quite agree. And I believe that the way to bring the passion into the debate is by moving CSM into the broader framework of a genderqueer analysis. Feminist theory would remain a primary (though not always privileged) critical tool, and the pre-existing work of feminists would continue to be a required basis. The critic would be required to engage in a more thoroughgoing way with the various constructions and manipulations of gender, but also with the constructions of gender-liminal, or gender-ambiguous characters, avoiding the temptation to talk merely of gender reversals which have the effect of reifying gender, and would be prepared to move into the territory of genderfuck (see Guest 2011).

So, for example, Ela Lazarewicz-Wyrzykowska might do more to resist the suggestion that a dishonoured man 'either through an erotic defeat, or

"an equivalent social submission"... can be considered as "lacking in manliness"' and the way he associates this with 'sexual reversal' or 'feminization', the male becoming a woman (2010: 173, citing Gilmore 1987: 11). Such views contribute to a recurrent tendency to think in terms of gender reversals rather than consider how the erotically defeated male may be better understood in liminal terms as gender indeterminate or gender non-category. Of course there is always the danger that inserting more liminal categories will simply reify rather than subvert or break the binary, but it is a better way forward than concentrating solely on gender reversals which do not question the two-sex, two-gender fiction. For, after all, while Samson might, symbolically, become a woman in the scenes of him being shaved, subdued, grinding at the mill, and having eyes gouged out,[19] his death restores his honour as he is rehabilitated into his sphere of masculinity, achieved by one huge act of violence that surpasses those done to him. There is, as we pause the narration, a moment in which Samson is neither one gender nor the other, but rather an ambiguous figure who confounds our gender categories—a being who can traverse from one gender to another and back again. I would like to see a trans critique of this story. Such an account might be labelled a study in masculinity, but it will be so much more for it will come from a place informed by feminist, queer, trans theory that takes into account the sexual dimensions of the journey and sees its contemporary political import. It begins to be there in Lazarewicz-Wyrzykowska's paper where, at the end, she acknowledges the gender instability of Samson—an instability 'which undermines the popular perception of biblical masculinity as a uniform, secure and stable feature of biblical men' (2010b: 185). But the potential to explore this instability or liminality in further depth is not quite reached.

Embedded in a genderqueer approach, I would not envisage studies in masculinities to be a distinct field of study. Given that there is no 'method' for studies of masculinity, unlike feminism, this makes sense. Let feminism be an enabling and informing discourse (as proponents of such studies widely acclaim) but let the insights of individual critics who might identify variously as gay male, queer masculine, lesbian, transgender and so forth be the means by which theory develops and through which new insights are gained. Within a genderqueer framework, masculinity studies would look at examples of female masculinity as part of its remit and subvert the all-too-easy connection between masculinity studies and men.

19. For Lazarewicz-Wyrzykowska, the eyes being gouged out are suggestive of castrated testicles (2010: 180).

A Return to the Pornoprophetic Debate

Chapter three asked what might happen if, instead of moving swiftly to the effects upon women, we chose to stay in the rather uncomfortable territory of feminized men and a dominant male deity. The focus then shifts to a homoerotic scene where the prophets portray an alpha dominant male stripping, battering and raping his wayward male underlings who, for the purposes of this scene, have been imaged as adulterous women. What have the critical studies of masculinities had to say about this? Regrettably, the answer is: very little.

Even in the latest collection of essays on masculinities and the Hebrew Bible by Creangă, Moore's reflections rightly note how the masculinity of Yhwh is 'curiously underexamined in this volume' (2010: 252). Clines similarly notes that Yhwh is the 'elephant in the room, the quintessence of masculinity' who 'incorporates the masculinity of Hebrew culture' (2010b: 239) and yet remains strangely absent. He issues a plea to get on with this work. Certainly, the performance of masculinity by Yhwh is certainly in need of detailed exploration from a CSM perspective. Perhaps it has not happened because, as Clines observes, 'If we once begin to seriously unpick the masculinity of Yhwh, we might well wonder what will remain' (2010b: 239). That does not deter him. Unpicking this is, in his view, 'a fundamental task for the history of religion, theology, Jewish self-identity, Christian worship, and everyday popular religious belief and practice. What language exists that can be used about Yhwh that is non-masculine, or at least not offensively masculine?' (2010b: 239). He suspects this is the task for a new generation of scholars, who might change the landscape of the academic guild of biblical studies.

Moore's essay on the hypermasculinity of Yhwh offers a way in. He concentrates mainly on the descriptions of the deity's physique, but when it comes to the question of how/why Yhwh is so *gigantic*, also touches upon his violent temper. Moore's examples (Num. 16.20-35, 44-49; Deut. 29.19-28; Josh. 7.25-26; 1 Sam. 6.19; 2 Sam. 6.6-7; 24.1, 15; Isa. 63.3-6) do not include the pornoprophetic texts but his references to 'Yhwh's frequent outbursts of fury and accompanying acts of violence' (1996: 108) are relevant, as is his observation that with temper comes paranoia. In passing, he notes Ezekiel 23 which refers to the Egyptian paramours, hung like donkeys, with emission like stallions. At this point Moore is pondering Yhwh's insecurity in regard to the surrounding deities, suggesting that Yhwh's physical hypermasculinity might be understood as a reaction to a lack of self-confidence.

Feminists have readily been able to see how Yhwh's characterization has been informed by a narratorial male insecurity writ large. Irrationality,

jealousy, competitiveness, lashing out, battering and rape, bursts of physical and verbal rage, followed by periods of calm and reassurance: these characterize women's stories describing their experiences of domestic abuse. If it is indeed the case that male scholars bring to the commentarial table an insider view of things, then their own self-critical analyses of the texts might contribute explanations of why threat to male honour, threat to a husband's exclusive access to women, female sexuality and male competitiveness, produce such violent outbursts.[20] This is, I think, what Exum (2000) has in mind when she talks about how she would like to see masculinity studies dialoguing with feminist studies to demonstrate how and why male readers might see things differently. This has the benefit of turning the spotlight on the male hermeneut himself, makes masculinity a marked category and encourages readers to look to self-interrogate the male stakes involved in reading these texts.

Such scholars might, then, fruitfully consider the notion of the insecure deity, raised by Moore, and perhaps explore how the political context of domination by surrounding empires impinges upon the portrayal of Yhwh in these, and other texts. The possibility that political context influences models of masculinities is raised by Susan Haddox in her discussion of why God chooses men who do not exhibit traits of hegemonic masculinity when their rivals—Ishmael and Esau for example—perform far more robust versions. She draws two conclusions from this: one is that norms of hegemonic masculinity are inappropriate when it comes to relationship with the deity because 'that position is left to God' (2010: 15). The other is that Israel has, throughout its history, had to negotiate political relationships with stronger nations. In doing so, adopting subordinate masculinities as seen in the stories of Joseph, Daniel and Esther is the more successful strategy, for if Israel acted 'according to the norms of hegemonic masculinity, thinking it

20. When Morgan asks himself 'what can men say or write about men that has not already been said by women, or could not be said by them in the future?' (1992: 189), he identifies access to male insider knowledge as one possibility. Thus, when it comes to men-only institutions such as the Freemasons or informal spaces such as 'work groups, drinking groups, even toilets' and also the thoughts that circulate in men's '"inner" lives (particularly, say, around areas to do with sexuality and fatherhood)', men could consider 'acting as ethnographic moles, releasing information which might not otherwise be available' (1992: 198). Much depends, he argues, on how one understands the gender order. If one puts the focus on power and domination/subordination then men's role is to 'understand their role as oppressors' and to do something about it and 'their "insider" knowledge might be particularly valuable in alerting women to the difficulties they may expect to encounter or to weaknesses in the systems dominated by men' (1992: 191).

was powerful, it was crushed by nations in a position of real strength, such as Assyria' (2010: 16). The question arises: What happens to national male self-esteem when faced with ineffably and unmistakably superior overlords? Does Yhwh display the insecurities of his devotees writ large? Where do the males of the nation go with that sense of inferiority and how is it reasserted? Is there overspill into their private lives? What happens in the private sphere when male honour is thwarted in the public sphere? These are questions that seem to have been on Renita Weems's mind when, in her discussion of the marriage metaphor, she notes a link 'between the anxiety that sex typically arouses in an audience and the profound disease, instability, uncertainty and ambiguities that lay at the heart of Israel's struggle for a national identity' (1995: 70).

To this end, I also suggest that scholars who write about masculinities in biblical texts could learn much from applying the work being done in non-biblical domains. In part, the whole 'masculinity in crisis' debate has been prompted by feminist work on men and violence and disturbing crime statistics. Accordingly, male violence has been one of the main preoccupations of secular CSM.[21] This could lead to some productive two-way dialogue, for scholars of masculinities in other disciplines rarely mention biblical texts in their work or see the import of biblical texts for contemporary life.

A second major contribution that could be made is to consider the alpha maleness of Yhwh. If the Israelite male is always in a subordinated position, then to what extent does the marriage metaphor reflect the experience of being a victim? Feminists have always drawn attention to the fact that it is female imagery that is used and, to the extent that the medium is the message, women are the real victims of these texts. But studies in masculinity give us reason to pause for a moment, not denying the feminist critique or ignoring it, but allowing the focus to come back on to the male addressees. What, then, does the text tell us of the male experience of being on the receiving end of a deity's punitive rage, especially when the husband metaphor co-exists with a strong Father metaphor in biblical texts? What is it to be positioned as a dominated male, subjected to the violent outbursts of a somewhat erratic deity? Weems notes how a marriage metaphor was particularly suited to this, 'rooted as it was in the capriciousness of marital love … Without the analogy of marital love, the interpreters of Israel's theological traditions were hard pressed to explain what sometimes must have felt like the unpredictable abusing side of God' (1995: 71). She continues: 'The metaphor of Israel as wife may have allowed the prophets to

21. See, for example, Archer (1994), Bowker (1998), Dobash *et al.* (2000), Hearn (1998), and Stoltenberg (2000).

capture Israel's depraved and fickle behaviour; but … also permitted the prophets to capture the inexplicably menacing, dark side of God's dealings with Israel' (1995: 76). And the reasons why feminists return again and again to these troubling texts can be extended to a rationale for scholars of masculinities: If one of the feminist motivations is to discontinue the hold it wields over our thinking so as to avoid the situation where 'women find themselves casually accepting the ways in which they are demonized and victimized' (Weems 1995: 101) then scholars of masculinities might also wish to dislocate themselves from the sexual aggression and violence displayed by this divine husband who also doubles up as Father—especially for example, in Malachi.

Eilberg-Schwartz offers us a third way in to the debate. His book *God's Phallus* was noted above as one of, perhaps the first interventions into masculinity studies and the Hebrew Bible. And, as Exum expected, his focus on men and masculinities takes him in an interesting, different direction from feminists. Feminists, he notes, have long explored the effects of having male deities, not least in the way they sanction male authority. He does not underestimate the importance of this. But while he agrees with some feminist contentions that a divine male sanctions human male domination, he wants to point out how it simultaneously problematizes it, for 'if we do not conflate human and divine masculinities, if we examine them as two separate and sometimes conflicting symbols, another story emerges. The divine male can be seen to compete with and threaten the role of human males' (1994: 140). He notes, for example, how the theme of the barren wife plays into this. The matriarchs cannot be made pregnant by their husbands until God has prepared the way. So, God's maleness 'had two simultaneous effects: On the one hand, it established male authority. On the other, it threatened to make human masculinity redundant' (1994: 142). The corollary for women is noted. In a heterosexual frame of reference,[22] 'Israelite women theoretically should have been the appropriate objects of divine desire' (1994: 138). Removing this threat of being second placed opened up a new avenue for denigrating women—using her supposed cultic impurity to exclude her from 'competition with men for divine affections. Women's impurity, in other words, arose in part from attempts to

22. Eilberg-Schwartz recognizes fully that heterosexual is a category with a recent history and is anachronistic when applied prior to its 20th century invention. However, 'the emphasis on procreation and fathering children was central to the definition of masculinity, as they [ancient Jews] construed it. And male-male sex acts were considered an abomination. The best translation of this image of masculinity is the modern term "heterosexuality."' (1994: 243 n. 3).

shore up men's access to the sacred … They had to be excluded from the cult because they challenged the male connection with God' (1994: 142). We will return to this subject of male competitiveness below.

But his more detailed point is that the maleness of God poses anxieties for men: notably the fear of homoerotic connotations. The denial of that homoerotic potential takes two significant forms: first, the assiduous veiling of the body of God. 'The image of the father God's body must be prohibited or veiled so that it does not provoke homoerotic desires ... In this view, God turned his back to Moses ... to prevent Israelite men from facing ... the maleness of the father God they loved' (1994: 38). Second, the feminization of men, arguably most evidently seen in the sensual marriage metaphor which put the male addressees into the wife position. He is one of the very few scholars who has seen how the heterosexual imaginary produces this latter effect. When homosexuality is scrutinized through a heterosexual imaginary then the effeminization of men is a common corollary. It is a tendency Eilberg-Schwartz resists, noting it is 'not true: homoerotic desire occurs in men who by all criteria are as masculine as heterosexual men' (1994: 37). But the complimentary heterosexual framework cannot cope with desire between men whose masculinity remains firmly intact.

What is noteworthy about Eilberg-Schwartz's study is his unflinching focus on the sexual repercussions of the marriage metaphor. And in his close attention to this, he brings a dimension to the pornoprophetic debate not widely discussed in feminist critiques. His work helps readers see homoerotic potential as an inherent tension within the text, not something that has been imported as part of a latest fad by queer theorists. His work also helps explain why feminists have spotted a commentarial readiness to adopt, quickly, the divine perspective because of the discomfort of being associated with a male community that is both feminized *and* homoeroticized.[23] The connections between homophobia and misogyny are yet to

23. In her essay Julia O'Brien notes how commentators ignore, minimize or emend problematic gender shifts in Mal. 2. 10-16. Here, a wayward Judah is scolded as a disrespectful son who has married the daughter of a foreign god, yet Judah is also referred to in 2.11 as 'she' who has acted treacherously. She notes how the feminine verb is simply emended in BHS and how GKC provides the 'standard response' of explaining away the gender shift by recourse to the notion that 'since the name Judah is itself grammatically feminine and since countries were often considered the mother of their inhabitants the feminine verb is not surprising' (1996: 247). This seems to be another example of reception history reading what it wants to read and finding strategies to disassociate from the more discomforting features of the text. Rather than ignoring or deflecting these odd gender changes in Malachi 2, O'Brien commendably lets them stand, noting

be mapped in detail, but I suspect there these are interactively enmeshed within these texts.

Conclusion

There is much work to be done. Studies of masculinities have not yet broken the surface within biblical studies. But before they proceed any further, we need to consider seriously how this field of study defines itself and how it relates to studies of gender and sexuality, rather than letting it continue carving out a semi-independent path. What needs to be broken straight away is the assumption studies of masculinities are 'a province solely of males, many of whom look to (female) practitioners of feminism for inspiration, attempting to appropriate feminist strategies of interpretation and redeploy them for critical study of masculinity' (Moore 2003: 2). For, as Moore goes on to say, this 'is a gross oversimplification of a complex terrain' (2003: 2). In his view, 'much of the work that falls under the rubric of masculinity studies itself invites description simply as a further exercise in feminist studies rather than as an attempt to hijack, or even "appropriate," certain features of feminist analysis and utilize them for other, nonfeminist ends' (2003: 2). So, for Moore, feminist studies are not left behind in this venture, not overtaken. Rather, they are swept into the new avenues for research that have opened up for those interested in gender criticism. He is aware of the frictions this notion[24] has created, but points out that, far from a new field of interpretation furrowed solely by men, it is a place for feminist practitioners to exercise their skills, and he cites Sedgwick's (1985) *Between Men* as being 'frequently seen as a kind of charter document of an amplified feminist studies that invites the label "gender studies" because of the highly productive ... symbiosis that it stages between feminist studies and gay-male studies, in the process yielding an exceptionally challenging model for masculinity studies' (2003: 3).

'Amplified' is an interesting term. It raises the prospect of CSM being located within the field of feminist studies as part of *its* wider remit, rather

how they 'leave Judah in a liminal state: both male and female, both God's existing wife and his son who has married someone else's daughter' (1996: 248).

24. He refers to Gardiner (2002), Hogan (1992), Schor (1992) and notes Amy Richlin's (1991) observation: work on 'ancient Greek sex and gender produced by David Halperin and John Winckler... while appearing to acknowledge their debts to feminism ... manage nonetheless to erase earlier feminist work' (2003: 21). Further, in a later essay, he notes Tania Modleski's objections to 'the turn toward masculinity in the critical study of gender, coupled with the rise of "male feminism" among academic men' (2010: 242).

suggesting a shift in feminist studies to the new nomenclature of gender criticism. Indeed, that seems to be the direction in which biblical studies is slowly moving. Thus it is that essays on masculinity appear in Rooke's largely feminist (2009) collection. And I might have argued in favour of this if we could be sure that amplified feminist studies would be inclusive of intersex, trans, gay and lesbian voices and have extended interest in the construction of sexualities. The concept seems workable, but I don't think it is in reality. For one thing, feminists have concerns about dilution and loss of political edge when its remit is so widened. For another, male scholars have raised queries about being free to criticize feminist positions. Both these matters would inevitably raise niggly turf wars and theory-driven irritations, running the risk of losing sight of the project in methodological and ideological squabbles. There is also the possibility that, without change of nomenclature, feminist biblical scholarship will not be adequately challenged to account for its heteronormative framework. If feminist biblical scholarship remains its own independent discourse, to what extent would it be challenged to be more inclusive of the newer critical voices emerging from trans and intersex studies? And to what extent would the construction of heterosexuality, and more importantly the apparatus of heteronormativity and the heterosexual imaginary, become an object of critical study? Another consideration is that methodological collections include separate entries for feminist approaches and gender approaches; this appears to be running in an opposite direction to 'amplified'.

So, at the time of writing, we are at a moment of flux. There is no crisis point; no sense of being at a crossroads. Arguably this book is producing a sense of urgency that is not overtly present. CSM is a relatively newly hewn pathway that might be part of an on-going and amplified feminist highway, or it might run alongside it doing its own thing, with or without engagement with feminist studies. Apart from the odd questioning such as provided by Brenner, studies in masculinity are not really rocking any boats. However, I believe Brenner's observations are significant and that now is the time to think critically about the relationship between feminist biblical studies and those that are being labelled as studies in masculinities. Moreover, as part of that evaluative work, it is time to identify the benefits that would accrue from a thoroughgoing overhaul of both approaches, in favour of a three dimensional approach that links studies in sexuality with these interests in gender.

CONCLUSIONS

From the F-Word to the G-Spot

In the broader academic world, Gender Studies has become a multidisciplinary home in which feminist studies, LGBTI/Q studies and the critical study of masculinities generally belong. However, in biblical studies the terminology shift has not been towards Gender Studies, but rather to a specific methodological approach called gender criticism. This label does not name an ideological position as do, for example, feminist, womanist or postcolonial criticism and is therefore not directly comparable to them. It does not indicate what kind of ideological perspectives or political theory inform its study of gender. Rather, the name indicates simply that gender is the object of study. In many ways the term 'Gender Studies' makes better sense, if we understand Gender Studies as a home in which a range of theoretical positions might find residence, rather than the name of a critical approach *per se*. Gender criticism sounds as if it might be some kind of 'theory of Gender Studies', but to my knowledge no one has defined it as such.

I have argued that feminist biblical studies, which has a fairly well earmarked 'home', is not up to the contemporary task before us. What is needed is a new critical approach that incorporates the multidisciplinary toolbox capable of tackling issues of both gender and sexuality (understanding that these categories are always intersected by others that locate individuals differently, such as class, ethnicity and disability). I envisage it operating in a similar way to feminism, i.e. it will use a range of methodologies but bend these in order to pursue its commitments, and it will be prepared to voice those political commitments openly. It is not an umbrella home under which those methodologies work semi-independently. Rather, I am calling upon feminist biblical scholars to tool up and become even more expansively theory-rich, able to bring the critical studies of masculinities, queer studies, trans studies, intersex studies, and lesbian and gay studies into negotiation with feminist theory without necessarily privileging what have been, to date, stalwart feminist positions. The methods need to combine creatively in order to produce a more three-dimensional approach

to the interpretation of biblical texts. It may be that at times one method will be more suitable and have greater priority for the specific task in hand, but this should not be to the neglect of other theoretical negotiations. To keep the feminist edge alive, feminist theory must continue to inform what I am calling a genderqueer approach, but feminist theory must also be interrogated by voices that have previously been in an antagonistic relationship with feminism. Some of feminism's sacred cows may well have to be reconsidered for sacrifice in this endeavour, but feminist theory still has a vital part to play within genderqueer criticism and indeed, genderqueer criticism could not have emerged without it. Changing the terminology so that the word 'feminist' no longer appears may well be a step too far for some readers. I did consider ways of incorporating it, but ultimately, I wanted to pioneer a new way forward that has openness to all the voices discussed in this book and the proposed new name is meant to be inclusive. In my view, 'genderqueer' works because it is a name that carries punch. Feminists in the 1980s were right to argue that 'Gender Studies' sounds so neutral, quite inoffensive—not at all in the face, like the F-word. But tack queer onto gender and we return to a more subversive terminology that I believe has potential to ruffle feathers as did the F-word. It is not about diluting feminist politics, it brings them to the fore and requires that the hermeneuts of queer readings and studies of masculinities likewise voice the effects of their work. It does, however, challenge the blind spots of feminism and bring it into dialogue with other commitments. In this book I have been keen to stress the politics that pertain to LGBTI concerns, but there would of course need to be further consideration of the politics of race, ethnicity, class, (dis)ability, that inevitably intersect.[1]

In this concluding chapter, I turn the spotlight away from theories and texts and on to the hermeneut, in order to think through what this means for biblical scholars themselves. If it is desirable for feminist and profeminist biblical scholars to embrace this new landscape and redesign their work into a genderqueer model, then how do feminist biblical scholars, or scholars of masculinities, who do not own any positionality as gay, lesbian, intersex, transgender or bisexual, become equipped to carry out genderqueer analyses? The first section considers the notion of 'queer straights', providing an example of how one heterosexually identified feminist crosses the boundary between straight and gay to engage with lesbian theory. The second section examines how male scholars cross a different boundary when

1. On the intersections of race and class see, as examples, Bettie (2003), Collins (1991, 2002, 2004), Nagel (2003), Ward (2008) and the 'Sexualities and Class' edition of *Sexualities* published in 2011.

they identify as profeminist and how their work can be seen as disinheriting masculinity, in a positive sense. Of course these boundary crossings are neither easy nor uncontroversial and some cautions and caveats are discussed in the third section.

Vantage Points, Mobility and Queer Straight Feminists

In existing biblical and theological studies there is, arguably, an assumption that one has to 'be', in some way gay or lesbian in order to write from that vantage point. Thus, nods towards inclusion of lesbian voices encourage recognition of *difference*: Fiorenza writes that feminist discourse should acknowledge the multiplicity of women including the 'black, poor, colonial, lesbian, or working women' and in so doing 'take care not to portray one group of women, e.g., lesbians, as monolithic, essentialist, and undifferentiated with no competing interests, values, and conflicts' (1992: 131). The onus, however, appears to be on those groups to contribute their voices in order to create the *ekklēsia* as a place of 'polyglot discourses' (1992: 131). So while there is a welcome space being made available for lesbian perspectives, there seems to be an assumption that it will be lesbians who provide them.

I agree, to an extent. I do think there remains justification for 'writing from that space' because those who have been positioned as lesbians, or who choose to self-identify as such, have experiences and ways of looking that derive from that. If we raise our eyes from the confines of feminist biblical scholarship we see that there are many essays on lesbian-specific engagement with all manner of cultural media, including literature, film, and music.[2] Sally Munt writes:

> we are particularly adept at extracting our own meanings, at highlighting a text's latent content, at reading 'dialectically', at filling the gaps, at interpreting the narrative according to our introjected fictional fantasies, and at foregrounding the intertextuality of our identities. If we accept that language is unstable, then within its heterosexuality we must also be able to find its homosexual other. A lesbian reader's literary competence brings to the text a set of interpretative conventions for decoding and encoding which is rich in its own historical, cultural and linguistic specificity (1992: xxi).

2. For examples of work on the lesbian gaze see Boffin and Fraser (1991), Burston and Richardson (1995), Doty (1993, 2000), Farwell (1996), Griffin (1993), Hamer and Budge (1994), Lynch (1990), Stacey (1994).

Munt's concept of lesbian sensibility, however, is grounded in an awareness of postmodern critical theory, not in any notion of the lesbian being innately 'born that way'—a problematic idea because it gives the impression that there is an unchanging fixity about the signifier.[3] In such a view, the lesbian is not a woman in the process of becoming, but one contained by the category. When scholars do think of lesbians as being essentially lesbian in some innate way, then it is understandable that it might be left to 'lesbians' to produce their own work, since they are thought to have an *inherently* different viewing angle on texts, with their sexual orientation influencing the way they write, read and think. In practice, this means that their work is 'marked', in a way other feminist work is not. Of course, feminist biblical scholarship that is *not* thus marked also bears the imprint of its ideological sexual position, yet how often does one see a feminist article that is subtitled 'A heterosexual view'? But more significantly, the idea that only lesbians can speak for themselves inhibits recognition that alternative forms of knowledge are available to mobile theorists.

Jacqueline Foertsch is a good example of such a theorist: a Professor of English, identifying as heterosexual, but one who writes (about) and also could be said to *write* lesbian theory. She knows that this is a provocative act, raising as it does the question of who has permission or the credentials to write lesbian theory, and she knows she can be accused of appropriating a voice to which she has no right. But she argues that we could think more openly and productively about permeable boundary markers, and envisages a space where scholars partake of some kind of lesbian existence when they write and engage with lesbian theory. Indeed, she suggests that one can write from inside that body of material, yet also be non-lesbian.

This might seem a new and radical move. But in reality, the opening of such a space happened back in the second wave feminist movement. Rich (1987) argued that all women exist on a lesbian continuum, which incorporates rich histories of political support and a spectrum of ways in which women demonstrate their primary connections with each other. In positing such a space, Rich wanted to 'sketch, at least some bridge over the gap between *lesbian* and *feminist*' (1987: 24), opening a welcome space for heterosexually identified women to engage with lesbian theory and politics. True, Rich acknowledged that this would demand certain things of them.

3. Munt is sympathetic to the view that there is no 'external lesbian essence', but as she says, 'this strictly intellectual definition wouldn't stop me *feeling*, and sometimes behaving, as though the total opposite were true. We need our dream of a lesbian nation, even as we recognise its fictionality.' (1992: xviii). For further discussion of why ideas of 'innate' lesbian reading positions are problematic, see Guest (2005: 11-19).

In order for feminists to 'find it less possible to read, write, or teach from a perspective of unexamined heterocentricity' (1987: 24), some critical distance was required. Distance from the heterosexual imaginary according to which women are inevitably attracted/drawn towards men, and views that hetero-sex is 'normal', women *need* the social-economic protection of men or need men for 'psychological completion', the heterosexual family is the basic social unit, non-heterosexual women are man-haters and lesbianism is a 'mere refuge from male abuses, rather than an electric and empowering charge between women' (1987: 64).

And Rich's essay was just one in a broader second wave call for a political occupation of lesbian space by non-lesbian feminists. In a context where 'lesbian' had been described from within the movement as a 'purple menace' and where, from without, all feminists were being 'tarred' with a lesbian 'smear', some second wave feminists showed their solidarity by adopting labels such as 'political lesbian' and by using the slogan 'feminism is the theory lesbianism is the practice'. Sheila Jeffreys, for example, talks about how some second wave heterosexual feminists wore badges identifying them as lesbian, so that lesbians in the movement could not be isolated and picked off. 'All feminists, it was reasoned, should be prepared to say that they are lesbians, assumed to be lesbians. In fact in the seventies, a badge that most of us were wearing, it seems to me, was "how dare you presume that I am heterosexual?" and that was also on posters in everybody's kitchens. It was everywhere'.[4]

To what extent it really was 'everywhere' is difficult to say. How far outside Jeffreys's immediate network had this queering (for want of a better word) of heterosexual identity spread? And if there was such a widespread allegiance with lesbian feminism and a claiming of solidarity, what happened to these things? How is it that the idea of queer straights now appears new and its comparatively recent history has been forgotten? There are a number of reasons. First, I think we lost momentum partly because close attention to differences in third wave feminism re-opened the gap between lesbian theorizing and straight feminist theorizing. Attention to race and class in particular threw into sharp focus how 'woman-identified' was often a white able-bodied, middle class kind of solidarity that eschewed the so-called working class practices of lesbian living. The sex wars (referenced in Chapter 2) were part of the reaction to this and they re-created the fissure between straight and lesbian feminism. Second, there was a sense that

4. These words come from her televised lecture on Kate Millet for the Key Thinkers seminar series, 2009, University of Melbourne: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gg0LrEcDC4w

strategic or 'political lesbianism' did not do justice to the homophobic pressures faced by those who were overtly in lesbian sexual relationships. It was feared that the strategy might dilute the meaning of lesbianism, by absorbing it into a continuum of gender solidarity, when in fact lesbianism is, for many, about sexual desire and practice, with complex relationships to gender. Given that lesbians are only acceptable to some religious institutions as celibate individuals, we cannot afford to marginalize the erotic dimensions of lesbian relationships and we should not be too quick to soften the most taboo aspect of the signifier by brushing its sexual dimension under the solidarity carpet (see Guest 2005: 28-35). Third, the strategic occupation of lesbian space was lost partly because some firmly believed that one could not or should not glide easily into political lesbianism. Rich's concept of the lesbian continuum was inclusive of heterosexual women so long as they examined heterosexuality critically, but others, for instance Sue-Ellen Case (1993) were not so optimistic, expressing far more serious reservations about their ability to claim a lesbian position, however strategically.

In a return to this debate, Foertsch acknowledges Case's reservations but, notwithstanding, upholds the subject mobility of the theorist. She recalls de Lauretis's view that existence *within* the heterosexual contract does not provide ideal leverage for a critique of heteronormativity. That leverage needs to come from 'elsewhere'. Musing aloud about where 'elsewhere' might be, Foertsch says it must be a place where hegemonic heterosexist norms and values do not have priority, for example within lesbian space. She notes how de Lauretis keeps the idea of these two places in dynamic engagement, arguing 'that answers to gender questions can only be found by "crossing back and forth of the boundaries" that construct "sexual difference(s)"' (Foertsch 2000: 52 citing de Lauretis 1987: 25). Thus, in order to practise feminism effectively and keep feminist work on gender from being hopelessly caught up in the heterosexual imaginary, there needs to be an on-going crossing of permeable boundaries. Flitting to this different space is vital if there is to be a place from which to look at and critically evaluate the hegemonic. Foertsch thus recognizes that her presence within the heterosexual contract means that she probably cannot fully challenge or escape its ideology, but it is necessary to inhabit the 'elsewhere' space at least temporarily, in order to provide a valid critique. She drives the point home plainly:

> If heard as threat, certain of these gender theorists are saying that straight women should simply stay away from gender studies, especially lesbian studies, because their position is always reinscriptive of heterosexual hegemony and too essentially different from that of lesbians for them to ever entertain notions of crossing over. Worse yet, straight women, unsalvageable victims of the heterosexual contract,

> should unburden themselves of the illusion that they can be feminists at all, should recognize that lesbian theory, with the newfound articulation of its insightful and subversive political strength, is not just the new feminism but the true feminism, the discussion that has at long last ejected the violence and inequality (but also the unacknowledged desirability) of the phallus from its main field of inquiry. Yet if heard as invitation, as I indeed do choose to hear it, do I not find myself approaching the neighborhood of that very 'psychic excess' that Butler warns (or promises) is lying just beneath the surface of my crazily assembled heterosexed worldview? (2000: 54).

Towards the end of her essay, Foertsch turns to Walter Benn Michaels's (1992) argument that the essentialism of identity politics lies not in the 'I am this' kind of statement but rather in the activism that follows. Taking her cue from this and other studies, she argues (2000: 55) that her interaction with lesbian theory creates a position that is not constrained by 'who she is' but dictated or influenced more by the activist direction of her work. So when she is occupying lesbian space we should derive her identify from what she does while in it, and in her view this identity is no longer that of a straightforwardly heterosexual feminist.

Foertsch concedes that detractors will always be able to accuse her of being a lesbian *in theory* without the voice of lesbian lived experience. However, she stands by her view that her 'position as straight feminist inside lesbian texts will be a "lesbian experience" nonetheless' (2000: 56). And furthermore, that what she is usefully doing is 'attesting … the tenuousness—might we say absurdity?—of the boundary constituting the hetero/homo binary in ways lesbians reading lesbian texts never could' (2000: 56), i.e. her 'transgression' lies in being willing to argue for a space or a voice within lesbian studies that does not need, indeed *cannot include*, 'the perspective, input, and presence of sexually practicing lesbians' (2000: 56). In no way is she wanting to silence 'much-needed lesbian voices' (2000: 56) but she is creatively arguing that straight feminists need the mobility to occupy the 'elsewhere' place if they are to take up the critical dynamic engagement with compulsory heterosexuality that Rich called for in 1987 and that they will then have something very distinctive to say.

Overall, this is an intriguing and useful argument. It has the benefit of opening up a genderqueer approach to feminists of whatever sexual preference, so long as they are committed to reading widely and deeply in lesbian critical theory, aware that it is this corpus that grants them mobility. There continues to be a vital need for those who self-identify as lesbian to talk about the way their lives are circumscribed and to discuss the strategies and effects of the 'lesbian gaze', but I argue that this should not be done in isolation.

Profeminist Gender Traitors and Queer Straight Men

Male scholars have also been thinking about what is required of them if they are to engage fully in feminist-inspired critiques of masculinity. The hows and whys of adopting a profeminist identity, for example, have been hotly debated in CSM literature as male scholars take up the tools of feminist theory. Ever since CSM emerged, the balancing act between being supportive of—or indeed *being*—feminist while simultaneously respecting women's space and the rights of feminists to define and safeguard their own boundaries has been difficult to manage. This chapter, however, is not the place to explore the varying stances taken by individual scholars of masculinities. What is more relevant to note is how the profeminist identity involves some kind of deliberate gender betrayal, or disinheriting of masculinity, for it is this that resonates most with my desire to open a genderqueer place for mobile hermeneuts.[5]

Certainly, profeminist men seem to lay themselves open to the accusation of gender betrayal. Michael Kimmel writes of how profeminist men tasked, among other things, with 'making feminism comprehensible to men' and being 'its cheerleaders, its allies, its foot soldiers' must do this knowing that they risk rejection and 'our own membership in the club of masculinity' (1998: 68). In another example, Holmgren and Hearn's (2009) Swedish study on how men become recognized as profeminist notes that some such men can encounter problems when engaging with their fathers, friends and brothers, and no longer feel 'normal':

> participants talk about being the boring member of the family, especially in relation to brothers and fathers. Dennis keeps giving his father and brother challenging 'unmanly hugs' and says: 'you notice that the jokes aren't funny anymore. And you, yourself aren't that funny either, there isn't much you say that feels comfortable'. Sven describes it as 'you have become boring, and that's the thing—that we are *not normal* any more' [our italics]. Hemming tells about his father and how there is always something that exerts a pull on him to comply with demands that constitute a gendered relationship between father and son. At the same time he is eager, when looking for a job, to participate in 'male-' or men-dominated environments in order to meet non-feminist men and make a difference as a (pro)feminist man. It becomes difficult to pass as normal at family gatherings as well

5. Landreau (2001) thus talks about disinheriting masculinity, a terminology similar to those found elsewhere. Michael Flood, for example, talks about adopting 'traitorous social locations and identities' (2011: 149) in order to write from a profeminist standpoint.

> as in certain homosocial contexts such as the workplace or among friends. There are several stories in the material of unavoidably losing contact with old friends and feeling estranged at work (Holmgren 2007). Occasionally the feminist perspective makes it nearly impossible keeping those friends or fitting in without compromising personal beliefs (2009: 410-11).

This sense of discomfort is addressed in a rather different way by John Landreau, whose essay confirms Kimmel's observation that there is an age-old tactic of questioning the heterosexuality of men who support feminism, in order to challenge their 'standing in the world of men' (Kimmel 1998: 67). In Landreau's case, his sexuality gets called into question because he teaches on a Gender Studies programme. In an engaging self-critical autobiographical essay, he ruminates on how and why his employment within Gender Studies throws him into several situations where he is compelled to admit this fact or be evasive. One of the anecdotes he shares is a conversation with a roofer, who asks to be reminded what it is that Landreau teaches—Spanish, he answers, knowing that this is indeed what he was teaching last time the roofer enquired. Asking himself what was gained and lost in this partial deception, he acknowledges that it costs something to queer oneself (and to admit to teaching Women's and Gender Studies is, in his view, tantamount to that). 'I instantly chose to stay within the familiar comfort zone of straight masculinity ... I took a potentially queer situation and refused it for the inherited comfort of straight masculinity. As with any doxa, the chief instrument of heteronormativity here is silence' (2011: 159). He recognizes that this enabled both their lives to continue uninterrupted: 'nothing was dislodged, nothing moved from its familiar heterosexual place' (2011: 160). What *was* lost, however was 'the opportunity to be honest about myself, to embody a queer heterosexuality that, in other contexts, I embrace wholeheartedly' (2011: 160). Adopting a queer heterosexual masculinity therefore risks 'unrecognizability, rejection, and hostility from others. It can be accompanied by all of the psychological risks of an orientation in which you are not—perhaps cannot be—at home: feelings of solitude, anxiety, disequilibrium, alienation, and anger' (2011: 161).

A queer heterosexuality is thus something that is, to some extent, thrust upon the profeminist scholar. In Landreau's view, the general public is not surprised that issues relating to gender and sexuality interest women or gay men. But Gender Studies is 'not the proper concern of straight men', for 'to be straight and to be interested in such topics is to make ... a public spectacle out of the cornerstone of heteronormative culture, namely, the ideologies and institutions of straight privacy that presuppose its coherence and stability' (2011: 156). Drawing on Berlant and Warner (2003) he

argues that heterosexual anxiety lies at the root of this. When straight men are interested in gender studies, they expose and undermine the pretence that straightness is an inherent, stable fact of life and any sense of a mutually agreed, private and silent consensus about this. Landreau, by virtue of teaching Gender Studies, breaks rank. This makes those who belong to that club anxious—about the identity of the person breaking rank, and also about the foundations of their own assumptions.

Landreau returns us to the work of Ahmed (2006), discussed in Chapter 3, since she writes about orientation being something we are habituated to. Her work is relevant because she talks about how a queer orientation 'puts one out of line with the directionality of culture' (2011: 158). Queer straight feminists and profeminist men are asked to step aside from, or deliberately disinherit themselves from, the more normative or privileged aspects of their identities.

Critics involved in matters of gender and sexuality are thus already experiencing mobility; the kind that requires one to stand to one side of one's given identity, to step outside the comfortable and known into another place. However, this is not something that can happen easily, swiftly or without repercussions. I have already indicated how second wave political lesbian seems to have floundered, not least because the travelling between one (straight) space to the other (lesbian) space demands certain things of the traveller. This is why it cannot be swift—it requires immersion in the work of those who occupy that space. Thus while Ann Loades finds a place for men within feminism, she cautions that this will exact prolonged attention:

> A feminist will seek change for the better in terms of justice for women, and this requires detailed, unremitting attention to women's perspectives. Such attention is needed to dislodge the androcentrism which defines males and their experience as the normal or neutral standard and females and their experience as a variation on or even deviation from that norm (1991: 81-82).

Some scholars of masculinities are well tuned in to this. Hearn and Morgan recognize that mobility involves the support and development of feminist scholarship, not as some abstract principle but as 'something which involves concrete actions, including the recommendation of and use of feminist texts in teaching and research, and the vigorous institutional support for a defence of women's studies programmes, whether they be whole degrees or parts of other courses' (1990: 203). It involves 'the obvious need to read feminist writings and scholarship and the need to study men in terms of the impact of men's power upon women' (1990: 203). This is why it cannot happen without practical repercussions. Hearn and

Morgan speak of the need for 'a positive political relationship with feminism, including men's support for feminist initiatives and political projects' (1990: 204). And this will have demonstrable effects: 'notably self-criticism and the critical attempt to change other men, to encourage others to turn their attention to feminist scholarship, to review their reading lists, and so on' (1990: 204).

Cautions and Caveats

The heterosexually identified scholar engaging in genderqueer criticism enters a queer-informed landscape not of their making. As I said at the beginning of this chapter, the work of those who identify as lesbian, gay, transgender, intersex and bisexual has an important part to play in defining the issues and recognizing what needs to happen. Annette Schlichter concurs and places a justified value on the activism of the minorities that inspired queer discourses in the first place:

> the queer project could not exist without the identity politics of sexual minorities inside and outside the academy. As 'the latest institutional transformation' of gay and lesbian studies, queer studies cannot shed the political strategies that have been necessary to establish it as a field of scholarship. It is an outcome of this history that those participating in the field and its (limited) resources are politically pressured to legitimize themselves as viable critics—which seems particularly urgent in the case of the representatives of the dominant sexuality who migrate into queer territory. What, however, is the basis on which to determine a queer critic's legitimacy? (2004: 554 citing Jagose [1996: 2]).

Schlichter thus acknowledges a dilemma—that of wanting queer projects to be available to those who belong to the hegemonic sexuality, yet not wanting to lose queer's integral connection with the lesbian and gay sexualities that helped prompt its emergence. I believe this dilemma is open to a workable solution. Just as profeminist men have to work hard to digest the history and complexities of feminist theory and be prepared to pay the costs associated in disinheriting masculinity, so straight-identified critics can endeavour to learn from the history, experiences and discourses of their LGBTI counterparts. And this benefits both parties: scholars who identify variously as LGBTI need straight allies, while queer straights can demonstrate that heterosexuality is not a monolithic category, for there can be dissenters and queer practices with its fold. I agree with Schlichter's (2007) view: it is possible that 'straights, who are engaged in a critique and subversion of heteronormative theories and practices, can become potential affiliates of a queer project' (2007: 193). Note however that they become

affiliates—there is an 'us', a core 'we' to whom these queer straights might affiliate themselves.

But, as I have already indicated, this will not be an easy mobility and further cautions and caveats need to be mentioned.

Like Adrienne Rich before her, Schlichter (2004: 545) notes how mobility demands a rich understanding of the material realities that affect the lives of sexual minorities and an effort to ensure that lesbian visibility and difference continues to be recognized. In addition, the dangers of co-option must be avoided. But more significantly, heterosexuality and heteronormativity need to come under scrutiny. So, the main aim is not to identify transsexual moments or homoerotic scenes without blanching; or to identify failed or marginalized masculinities: it is to make visible the invisible. Thus, commenting on the personal stories of contributors in Thomas (2000), Schlichter is troubled by circumvented discussion of the sexual aspect of some contributors' lives. This silence lends itself to the 'heteronormative privilege to privacy', in that the normal and 'right' does not need to be explained. She does not necessarily want queer straights to start waxing lyrical about their sexual lives (since the confessional can actually be a method of control). Her concern is rather that 'straight silence on sexual matters ... reproduces a normative and privileged position of speaking that queer straights had intended to subvert' (2004: 551).

Mobility is not about adopting a cool, hip, academic identity, it is about embarking upon serious, detailed work on heteronormativity and the heterosexual imaginary. The focus needs to stay on the work to be done rather than on celebrating queer straightness as something problem-solving in and of itself. Schlichter identifies circular logic at work in Thomas's use of his own 'disloyalty to heteronormativity, which in turn inscribes his status as a critical queer' (2004: 552) while 'Foertsch's attempt to deconstruct her straight identity through queer identification is overshadowed by the need to be recognized as transgressive' (2004: 553). She accordingly cautions us to avoid 'slippage from the queering of heterosexuality to heterosexual claims to queerness' (2004: 554). Schlichter's observation, that there is more energy spent on self-representing as queer than on the 'denaturalization of a straight hegemonic identity' (2004: 553), is an important and timely caution. In a later essay, she notes how the notion of the queer straight has occurred at a time in academic history when queer theory has gained 'some academic clout' (2007: 196). It is important to remember that it was not always thus, and one of the caveats she interjects into the discussion is that the straight intellectual's self-queering must not be devoid of the 'former critical edge of lesbian, gay and queer interventions' (2007: 196). In fact, if such caveats are not taken seriously, then 'the utopian enthusiasm of some

queer straight writings, which seem to assume that the intellectual and/or sexual queering of straightness could in itself transform the heteronormative apparatus, have to be taken with a grain of salt' (2007: 196). She therefore suggests that when straights use the term 'queer straight' they see this as marking their 'affiliation with and of intellectual indebtedness to a specific political and intellectual project' (2007: 196).

Schlichter also calls for more understanding of how the mobility actually happens. Both Thomas and Foertsch need to describe how disloyalty for privileged positions is facilitated, how that crossing into queer is enabled. There is emphasis on trangressiveness but not sufficiently on the effect that has for the remaining universal position/space. The one identified as a sexual minority does not have this privilege. How is it that the heteronormative matrix can give its privileged members flexibility to make these unruly identifications without it, itself being unduly destabilized? What are the 'conditions of possibility' that render the concept of the straight queer possible? Schlichter cautions that this is precisely what we never get at, because so much time is spent on the straight queer's transgressions (which legitimize their existence). Thus 'the conditions of possibility of their performative crossings into queer, however, remain largely undisturbed' (2004: 555).

The Way Forward

For all Schlichter's important cautions, I believe the genderqueer hermeneut is identified not by who one *is,* but what one *does* with biblical texts. Perhaps one of the most surprising challenges of a genderqueer analysis is that its practitioners need to put their energies into the critical examination of the heterosexual imaginary, rather than the 'others' that keep it stable. One might have imagined genderqueer criticism to have LGBTI concerns at its forefront and to have nothing to do with 'us' where 'us' = heterosexually identified critics. But it is genderqueer's work on the biblical construction of heterosexuality as an institution, as an apparently divinely sanctioned identity position, and, more importantly, as an apparatus of heteronormativity, that, I believe, is its most valuable contribution. Drawing out the way biblical texts function as heteronormative technologies of power for members of contemporary society across the globe is its vital ideological agenda. As Landreau notes, this 'involves a *turning towards* that what disorients us in a way that does not insist on setting things straight, that does not insist on realigning the misalignments, but rather allows things to remain askew, strange, unhoused, unfamiliar' (2011: 158).

Changing the agenda of biblical studies and its heteronormative framework is not only a matter of theory and its application, it is also a practical

matter of individual, disparate, situational politics. What this means is that its practitioners will, perhaps at personal cost, be prepared to recognize and expose presuppositions and heteronormative orientations. This might include speaking up at a conference; responding to students; commenting in department meetings on curricula reviews, and rethinking the ways in which teaching biblical studies carries with it the need for ethical responsibility. Practitioners will, as Warner has it, 'exude some rut' (1993: xxvi).

Scholars in the UK are now being compelled to do this anyway by virtue of the Equality Act 2010. This legislation compels academic institutions to reconsider how they deal with the needs of students who belong to sexual minorities, and/or who are transgendering, intersexed or differently abled. It requires that the needs of such constituencies are anticipated and that we think through how we might enhance our Higher Education provision with them in mind. In my view this is particularly relevant for Theology and Religion departments. The controversial debates concerning religion and homosexuality have now been raging for decades, yet show no sign of abating. It is not unlikely that lesbian and gay students, whose only experience of the Bible is to have it wielded against them, might come to our university departments. Transgendering students similarly might not expect religious discourses to be entirely favourable when it comes to understanding their experiences let alone putting their discourses centrally on the discussion table as a way of interrogating dominant voices on religion, gender and sexuality. In biblical studies we are in the enviable position of being the experts on the very texts currently used to both uphold and challenge current religious/state policies on adoption, marriage, civil partnerships, who can serve as ministers, and so forth. We cannot imagine that our teaching of biblical texts exists in some kind of objective, detached way from these controversies. When we run modules on biblical ethics, the contemporary interpretation of biblical texts, the Bible in the modern world, the Bible and the ancient world, or whatever, we are not dealing with ancient texts that are on a par with those of, say, Plato or Herodotus. We are dealing with texts that are absolutely foundational for religious institutions and which provide ammunition for policy-making in both church/synagogue and state. These texts, and the use of them, affect the actual lives of LGBTI citizens, often profoundly.

This legislation requires us to consider, before we put our modules together, that sitting in our classrooms are LGBTI students, that what we say as scholars matters to them, that writing an essay on, say, Paul's ethics, is not going to be a detached exercise. If nothing I have said in this book convinces readers to adopt a genderqueer approach to interpreting biblical texts, then this Act compels us to ensure that our LGBTI students are

treated with dignity and respect, with a courtesy that goes beyond that of empathetic listening to one that interrogates dominant discourse from the position and politics of LGBTI critical observations and theories. It obliges us to ask what we can do to ensure that biblical studies embraces equality for all, not just for the privileged few. I argue that the adoption of gender-queer criticism provides the way forward for this agenda.

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