

# Compulsory Heterosexuality in Biblical Narratives and their Interpretations: Reading Homophobia and Rape in Sodom and Gibeah

Michael Carden

*University of Queensland*

*Christianity has made the story of Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis 19 a locus of homophobia. This is most dramatically evidenced in the words 'sodomy' and 'sodomite' being applied to male/male homoeroticism. However, rabbinic Judaism has read Sodom and Gomorrah as a locus of cruelty, inhospitality and xenophobia. While critical scholarship has moved from traditional Christian understandings, discussion of Genesis 19 (and its parallel, Judges 19) is still couched in such terms as 'homosexual rape' and 'homosexuality'. The paper argues that readings of Genesis 19 and Judges 19 that highlight homosexuality as an interpretive device ignore the different historical and cultural context behind these texts and the contemporary politics in which these texts are enmeshed. Such readings overlook issues of patriarchy, compulsory heterosexuality and homosexual panic. The paper draws on anthropological literature concerning Mediterranean and Middle Eastern cultures to argue that male rape in Genesis 19 and Judges 19 is an act of homophobic violence signifying the abuse of outsiders and the breach of the community of Israel. Male rape serves to reinforce the heterosexuality of the insiders by inscribing outsiders as queer and queers as outsiders. The paper closes by exploring some implications of this argument in light of issues of racism and xenophobia arising from Pauline Hansen's One Nation and the Wik High Court decision, and of the problem of homophobia, especially in our schools as exemplified by the recent Christopher Tsakalos case in New South Wales.*

## Homosexuality, Politics and Texts of Terror

The story of Sodom and Gomorrah concerning their destruction by the deity, found in Genesis 19, has become, in Western culture, a classic example of what Mieke Bal calls an *ideo-story*, that is a narrative, taken out of context, "whose structure lends itself to be the receptacle of different ideologies" (Bal, 1988:11). For Genesis

19, the ideology is homophobia; the existence of the words 'sodomy' and 'sodomite' testify to its sorry career in Christianity. The fate of these cities is held up by religious conservatives to justify the suppression of non-heterosexual people and to fan hatred of same sex eroticism and gender fluidity. The story represents, for Christianity, a tale "of homophobic genocide" signifying the "culture's desire that gay people *not* be" (Sedgwick, 1993:80, 164).

This reading was first challenged by Bailey who argued that the "story does not in the least demand the assumption that the sin of Sodom was sexual, let alone homosexual" (Bailey, 1955:5) but should be understood solely in terms of breaches of traditional rules of hospitality and abuse of strangers. This position has been adopted by many scholars (eg Matthews, 1992, Parker, 1991) but is not unproblematic. Horner questioned Bailey's position, arguing convincingly that the intent of the Sodomites was "rape... the dehumanization of one human being by another or... others" (1978: 48) due to "an attitude of mind that justified the abuse of one human being by another" (1978:50). However Horner uses the term 'homosexual rape' which, unfortunately, does not aid an anti-homophobic analysis, in that the association of Sodom and Gomorrah with homosexuality and same sex eros is not problematised<sup>1</sup>. Insofar as this connection is maintained, in mainstream biblical scholarship (while not pursuing homophobic agendas), the Christian homophobic pre-text of Genesis 19 keeps surfacing, as the following two examples demonstrate.

D Alan Aycock, employing structuralism to analyse the 'myth' of Lot, can describe the story as beginning "in a society of homosexuals, who by virtue of their (apparently exclusive) sexual preference *cannot* produce children" (Aycock, 1983:115). On the fate of Lot's wife, he further argues that "by virtue of her statuses of wife and mother" she "is anomalous both in the society of homosexuals she has abandoned, and in the incestuous menage a trois which eventuates" (Aycock, 1983:117).

Robert Alter reads Genesis 19 in light of the promises of posterity to Abraham such that Sodom stands as a type of anti-civilisation that serves as a warning of the precariousness of national existence and procreation which must depend on "the creation of a just society" (Alter, 1994:32). This situation is exemplified in the attempted rape of the angels, of which Alter says:

...in regard to this episode's place in the larger story of progeny for Abraham, it is surely important that homosexuality is a necessarily sterile form of sexual intercourse, as though the proclivities of the Sodomites answered biologically to their utter indifference to the moral prerequisites for survival (Alter, 1994:33).<sup>2</sup>

There is a parallel story to Genesis 19 in the Hebrew bible, that of the outrage at Gibeah found in Judges 19-21 which Phyllis Trible (1984) has rightly described as a text of terror for women. Despite this parallel, it has not been until recently that Judges 19-21 has become a locus of Christian homophobia. In this story, a travelling

Levite and his concubine stay the night in the Benjamite town of Gibeah. They are given hospitality by an old man who hails from the Levite's home town. During the course of the night the old man's house is besieged by a group of townsmen demanding the Levite be given over so that they might 'know' him. The old man offers his daughter and the concubine in lieu of his male guest. The story then takes a different turn from Genesis 19 in that the Levite pushes the concubine out to the mob who pack rape her through the night. In the morning the Levite finds her (dead?) body at the doorway which he takes back to his home town and cuts into twelve pieces using them to summon the gathering of the assembly of Israel. The story ends in a civil war between Benjamin and the rest of Israel in which the Benjamites (including the people of Gibeah) are nearly wiped out (only 600 men remain).

When biblical scholars compare the two stories, the same problems of interpretation with Genesis 19 arise. After discussing the siege of Lot's house in Sodom<sup>3</sup>, Weston Fields turns to the outrage at Gibeah, saying that there

...sexuality takes a somewhat different twist... it is both the unsuccessful attempt to engage in homosexual relations, as at Sodom, and, *as a substitute for that frustrated urge, rape* (Fields, 1992:28-9, my italics).

Elsewhere he can describe the men of Gibeah as "so bent on homosexual relations that they would forcibly abuse strangers" (Fields, 1997:126).

Ken Stone's anthropological reading of Judges 19 (1995), foregrounds 'homosexuality' as an interpretive device. Stone acknowledges the relationship of Judges 19 and Genesis 19, describing them as each being one of the few "clear references to homosexuality in the Hebrew Bible" (Stone, 1995:98). In his terminology, Stone uses the word 'rape' seventeen times, mostly to refer to the rape of women by men. He uses terms such as 'homosexuality', 'homosexual contact' and 'homosexual intercourse' thirty seven times, many of which are in contexts of the rape of men by men. He uses the term 'homosexual rape' another eight times to also refer to the rape of men by men.

Perhaps, given the compulsory heterosexuality that underlies mainstream discourse, what is needed in approaching these stories is a reading perspective that foregrounds homosexuality in the reader's experience rather than as an issue in the narratives. It is this queering approach, in my own study of both these narratives and their subsequent reception, that I have employed. Under this approach, I resist the temptation by which "(h)omosexuality becomes the marked category" while heterosexuality "recedes into the background, normalized and naturalized" (Stein and Plummer, 1996:138). In line with the development of literary, reader-oriented biblical exegesis, a queering approach recognises that "(t)heory is always to a degree autobiography" (Downing, 1989:93), that "what it takes... to make the description "queer" a true one is the impulsion to use it in the first person" (Sedgwick 1993:9).

My intent is to detoxify Genesis 19 and Judges 19-21 as texts of terror for queer people and develop an anti-homophobic reading. Exploring the interplay of

issues of hospitality, gender and sexuality, I ask what is the sin of Sodom, what do the men of Sodom and Gibeah want to convey to the angels and the Levite and why is Israel impelled to an almost genocidal civil war by the outrage at Gibeah. Rather than identifying homosexuality as the issue, I identify a structure of patriarchal compulsory heterosexuality based on misogyny, phallocentrism and homosexual panic leading to sexual violence. The only 'homosexual' issue evidenced in these stories for me is that of homophobia.

## Hospitality, Homosexuality and Reception

I believe it is important here to consider briefly the reception history of both these stories so as to relativise the homophobic reading of Genesis 19 which Christianity developed. This reading remains dominant today and is now being applied to Judges 19-21 in response to counter-readings of both the narratives by non-heterosexual people.

A very different picture of Sodom is found in Rabbinic Judaism. For the rabbis, Sodom was the cruel city that abused the poor and the outsider and not a hotbed of male/male eroticism. Thus we find in the Babylonian Talmud the statement that

(t)he men of Sodom waxed haughty only because of the good which the Holy One, blessed be He, had lavished upon them... They said: ...why should we suffer wayfarers, who come to us only to deplete our wealth. Come, let us abolish the practice of travelling in our land (*Sanhedrin* 109a).

Nahmanides (1194-1270) is even more explicit. He says of the Sodomites that

...they continued provoking and rebelling against Him with their ease and the oppression of the poor ...In the opinion of our Rabbis, all evil practices were rampant among them. Yet their fate was sealed because of this sin - ie that they did not strengthen the hand of the poor and needy - since this sin represented their usual behaviour more than any other... there was none among all the nations who matched Sodom in cruelty (Nahmanides, 1971:250).<sup>4</sup>

Of the siege of Lot's house, Ibn Ezra (1080-1164) says that the Sodomites here sealed their fate "in that they even tried to prevent another from showing hospitality" (Freedman, 1947:90). A similar portrait of the cruel, outsider-hating Sodom can be found in *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer* XXV (c. 9th century).

In contemporary Orthodox Judaism, Munk says that the Sodomites "practised xenophobia to such an extent that even people of that time, who themselves were little aware of humanitarian principles, were frightened of them" (Munk, 1980:387). Similarly, Scherman describes Sodom as the first society to institute anti-immigration laws (Scherman, 1986:595).

From my research, it is also evident that what I call a homophobic reading of Genesis 19 doesn't emerge in Christianity until about the third century CE. While I

believe that the influence of Philo (the first person I regard to have read this story homophobically) is important in this, it is noteworthy that Origen specifically avoids a homophobic interpretation and focuses on hospitality. Even more striking for me is that John Chrysostom, while accepting male/male eroticism as being rife in Sodom, still foregrounds the issue of hospitality in his reading of the story.

On turning to Judges 19-21, what strikes me is how this narrative has not been utilised to promote homophobia. In fact, three early writers, Pseudo-Philo (Ps-Phil 45), Josephus (*Ant.* V: 136-49) and Ambrose of Milan (in his letter to Syagrius, Ambrose, 1954:163-74), change the story in such a way that male rape is eliminated as a feature of the story. All three also foreground hospitality as an important issue in their reading. It strikes me that it is only recently that the story of Gibeah is being marshalled to justify Christian homophobia (cf Lovelace, 1979:101, Webb, 1994:78). I believe that this is in response to the move to undermine the homophobic reading of Genesis 19 by highlighting the anomalies of Christian reception of both stories and engaging in comparative readings to promote a non-homophobic reading of Genesis 19 (eg Bailey, 1955, McNeill, 1977, Horner, 1978 and Boswell, 1980; also, most recently, Wilson, 1995). In effect, Judges 19-21 is being homosexualised, especially by fundamentalism, in response to a queer exegesis aimed at “detoxing or demythologizing the “texts of terror”” (Wilson, 1995:94).

## Gender, Sexuality, Rape, Homosexual Panic

Carol Delaney’s work is very insightful in understanding gender processes in Mediterranean cultures, the world out of which comes the biblical narratives. Crucial for her is the concept of monogenesis, her term for an understanding that “it is men who give life, women merely give birth” (Delaney, 1987:39). Procreation is understood in terms of seed and soil and thus the “male role is to plant the seed; the female role is to transform and bring it forth” (Delaney, 1987:38). Women are thus fields that must be fenced in and possessed by their men. This male control means that

(i)f the boundary of what is his has been penetrated or broken by someone else, he is put in the position of a woman and is therefore shamed... Since the seed carries the essential identity of a man, it leaves an indelible imprint which no amount of washing can erase. A woman who has sexual relations with any man other than her husband becomes physically polluted, and, through her, her husband’s honour is stained (Delaney, 1987:40, 42).

While Delaney bases her arguments on her observations of Anatolian village life, she points out that images of monogenesis run through the sacred texts of the three monotheistic religions. It is also the basis of Aristotelian biology and although “Galen held that male as well as the female contributed substance... male substance was still held to be generative and formative” (Delaney, 1987:46).<sup>5</sup>

It strikes me that, according to this system, phallocentrism is the defining mechanism of gender. It is not surprising, then, that phallocentrism is also central to constructions of male same sex eroticism in the same cultural milieu. The male who allows himself to be penetrated by other men is stigmatised (to use our parlance, is the queer). Thus in ancient Athens “the male who breaks the rules of legitimate eros detaches himself from the ranks of male citizenry and classifies himself with women and foreigners” (Dover, 1978:103). Greenberg concludes his discussion of male same sex eroticism in the ancient Middle East by pointing out that, outside “of a cult context, adult male, effeminate homosexuality was generally scorned as incompatible with the comportment expected of male citizens” (Greenberg, 1988:183). He also notes that male rape was often employed as a form of punishment (Greenberg, 1988:181, see also Dover, 1978:105-6).

This pattern continues in much of the (Moslem) Middle East. Schmitt states

...the most normal thing is fucking boys. For the man, the buggerer, it is perfectly normal, if he is married and a father. For the boy it is best to do it for extra-sexual benefits... But he must stop at about the age of 16. The longer he continues... the worse for his reputation. A man should not allow others to bugger him. Otherwise he loses his name, his honour... (Schmitt, 1992:7).

There is no shame for a male to bugger other men, his sexuality is not suspect. But for the man who is buggered it is different. Sofer quotes an Arab informant from East Jerusalem:

I was never fucked, and I will never let anyone fuck me... Men who let themselves get fucked are not men. They have lost their respect... I know of another man, whose father was fucked before getting married. When the son first heard of it, he immediately cut off contact with his... 60-year-old father... We naturally never talked about the subject in his presence, but in conversations he was sometimes referred to as *Ibn al manyak* ie, son of the fucked one (Sofer, 1992:119).

In some Middle Eastern societies, men who are buggered become a third gender associated with women (Wikan, 1977) or become transgendered such that they are almost equivalent to women (Janssen, 1992).<sup>6</sup>

From my perspective, I find it hard to regard men who bugger men in this structure as in anyway equivalent to our term homosexual (Schmitt argues “that it is not possible to take homosexuality as a starting point” (Schmitt, 1992:2) in understanding this dynamic). However, as a queer, I find the most equivalence with the men who are buggered. In fact, it strikes me that, using our parlance, in this structure of male same sex sexuality, there is one sure way for a man to make another man queer (and thus identify who is the queer) and that is by buggering him. In other words, the heterosexuality of a man is not challenged by his buggering other men. It is, paradoxically, confirmed because male heterosexuality is defined by

penetrating. Male 'homosexuality' is confirmed by being penetrated. Although Western society has constructed sexuality on grounds of orientation, this phallogentric construction of sexuality still persists, most notably in male prison environments.

Rape should be understood as sexual violence grounded in issues of power and anger (Groth et al, 1977:1242). For the purpose of this essay I will focus more on the power issues of rape. In terms of power, rape of women by men is a means "in the subjugation of women" (Higgins and Silver, 1991:1) to male needs and male privilege. But rape of women is also a means by which men struggle for power over each other. Women can be fields where men plant their seed but women can also be bloodied fields of male contest (most recently exemplified by events in Bosnia).

However, women do not need to be the surrogates in these male struggles. Men are also raped by men. This is already implicit in what I have already cited earlier from Delaney about perceptions of adultery's impact on the husband in Mediterranean cultures. Studies of Western society show that male rapists (ie men who rape men, McMullen, 1990:51-2) are also primarily heterosexual men (McMullen, 1990:118). In many cases the perception that a man is gay/queer makes him a target of rape (McMullen, 1990:49). Because many male rapists set out to bring about ejaculation on the part of their victim, the effect of rape on heterosexual men leads them to doubt their sexuality (Goyer and Eddleman, 1984:578; Groth and Burgess, 1980:808-9; Kaufman et al, 1980:223). Both anecdotally and in my own experience much anti-queer violence also contains an element of sexual aggression. In Western society, then, male rape seems to reinforce the heterosexuality of the rapist while casting that of the victim in doubt. It echoes that earlier phallogentric construction of sexuality rather than the current, Western construction based on orientation. It could be argued that male rape is another context where Western society allows male heterosexuality to include (violent, terrorising) sexual expression with other males.

At this point, it is necessary to turn to the concept of homosexual panic, a term employed by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick to denote a social dynamic by which

(n)ot only must homosexual men be unable to ascertain whether they are to be the objects of "random" homophobic violence, but no man must be able to ascertain that he is not (that his bonds are not) homosexual. In this way a relatively small exertion of physical or legal compulsion potentially rules great reaches of behaviour and filiation... So-called "homosexual panic" is the most private, psychologized form in which many... western men experience their vulnerability to the social pressure of homophobic blackmail (Sedgwick, 1985:88-9).

Elsewhere she highlights two results of this double bind

...first, the acute *manipulability*, through the fear of one's own "homosexuality", of acculturated men; and second, a reservoir of potential for *violence* caused by the self-ignorance that this regime constitutively enforces (Sedgwick, 1994:186).

While Sedgwick is speaking of Western society and its construction of sexuality based on orientation, I believe this dynamic also exists in a phallogentric construction of sexuality. Sofer reports the following experience of an Egyptian Jew with an Arab man he picked up in Tel-Aviv

... he was going to fuck me... but he could not keep a hard-on... after a while I got tired and I wanted to stop the whole thing. He could not come while fucking me. He directed me to suck him off, but still he did not come. I then decided to put a finger in his ass hole, and he came almost immediately. He was very insulted and angry... Then I apologised. I said I didn't intend to do that, that it was a stupid thing to do, also telling him how masculine and manly he was. Telling him how much I enjoyed being fucked by such a real man. That I prefer to go with Arab men, like him, because they were good fuckers and real men. His anger then tempered (Sofer, 1992:110-1).

I read this report as an incidence of homosexual panic with a very real potential for homophobic violence. Because it occurs in a situation of male to male sex this understanding might not be clear to many readers but that is because the Western construction of homosexuality obscures it.

Sedgwick points out that homosexual panic works in Western society because all men must form relationships with each other which can then be subject to suspicion (Sedgwick, 1994:186). But in a society where heterosexual men are allowed certain sexual relationships with other men those relationships are just as fraught with homosexual panic. In these situations it revolves around guarding the anus (and the mouth) of the man who buggers. I believe, also, that much homophobic violence arises out of homosexual panic because of the desperate need to identify someone else as the queer. As I said earlier, in a world where only the man who gets buggered is queer then the queer is identified by buggering him. But if that man doesn't want to be buggered then the final resort is to rape him. The action alone is sufficient to define the queer.

## **Hospitality, Rape and Homosexual Panic in Sodom and Gibeah**

It is clear from reading Sofer that, in Israel, it is Jewish (non-Arab) men who are buggered by Arab men and not the reverse. We have seen above how in ancient Athens a man who is buggered is associated with foreigners. Male prostitutes in ancient Athens were generally foreigners. Male rape could even be employed to signify the victory over foreign enemies in war (Dover, 1978:105). In other words, there appears to be a Mediterranean tradition of associating receptive anal intercourse with male foreigners.

In Genesis 19 the reader is forewarned about the evil of Sodom and Gomorrah but not the nature of the evil. It is not until the men of Sodom besiege Lot's house

that we have an inkling of this evil. The evil is not homosexuality but abuse of strangers. As Dover points out, in ancient Athens

anal penetration is treated neither as an expression of nor as a response to... beauty, but as an aggressive act demonstrating the superiority of the active to the passive partner (Dover, 1978:104).

Thus, even if the angels had been consenting, it is wrong to read the Sodomite's demand as anything else but an act of abuse of outsiders. The threatened rape of the angels is an attempt to inscribe outsiders as queer and therefore not real men. It is not surprising that misogyny then surfaces through Lot's offer of his daughters in place of his guests. The laws of hospitality demand that Lot protect the male honour of his guests. But in offering his daughters, Lot is revealed as subscribing to the same ideology of the men of Sodom. (It is interesting to note that the rabbinic tradition has been highly critical of Lot as no better than the Sodomites and has consistently condemned his offering his daughters to the mob).

But in attempting to inscribe the outsider as queer the Sodomites are also attempting to inscribe the queer as outsider. Thus the tensions of homosexual panic amongst the men of Sodom are relieved in a way that confirms their own heterosexuality. Rather than reading the attempted rape of the angels as an instance of homosexual violence I believe it should be more accurately read as an instance of homophobic violence.

In Judges 19, the process is similar but with some interesting differences. While the reader is not forewarned about any evil in Gibeah, once the Levite arrives there it becomes clear that this is not a hospitable town. The Levite only receives hospitality from a resident hailing from the Levite's own country. It is because of this, I believe, that the narrative only requires some men to besiege the old man's house. The reader has already discovered that Gibeah is an unfriendly town. The other changes serve to highlight, for me, the complicity of the old man and the Levite in the injustice. Thus the old man is like Lot in that he offers women in place of his guest. However, in this case it is his daughter and the Levite's concubine who are offered. The offer of the concubine confirms for me Tribble's suspicion that the Levite has offered her in return for the old man's hospitality (Tribble, 1984:72). As the offer is rejected the Levite then throws the concubine to the mob who pack rape her (to death?).

The rape of the concubine serves to show, more clearly, that the intent of the mob is not homo/sexual. The concubine serves the mob's intentions just as well as the Levite (also demonstrating the blurred boundaries between homophobia and misogyny). To put it bluntly, the Levite is made queer by the rape of his woman.

Hubris caught up with the Sodomites in that Lot's guests were angels. Hubris catches up with Gibeah in that their intended victim is a fellow *Israelite*. I believe it is this that leads to the civil war in Judges 20. The men of Gibeah are treating fellow Israelites like foreigners.

## Conclusion - Redefining Sodomy

Nearly, two millennia of homophobic readings of Genesis 19 have left us with the words *sodomy* and *sodomite*. Any attempt to take the text out from under the ideology must address the redefinition of these words.

It is worthwhile to reflect on the Jewish understanding of Sodom as a place where outsiders and the weak are abused. This tradition could be partly due to Leviticus being sufficient basis on which to build homophobia. But could it also be due to Jewish experience of being outsiders in Christendom, always abused and hated? Jews, unlike Christians, have had little opportunity to read their Bibles 'at home'. I will remind readers of Scherman's portrayal of Sodom as the archetype of an anti-immigrant society. By that reading, xenophobia would have to count as sodomy and, in Australia of the late 90s, One Nation would fit well the label 'sodomite'. Genocide and attempted genocide would also have to count as ultimate acts of sodomy.

But it is not only foreigners who become the victims of such sodomy. In Australia, the indigenous people have been dispossessed and made outsiders in their own land. Surely, they and other indigenous peoples have been subjected to sodomy by the colonialist invaders. Those who promote hatred of the dispossessed indigenous peoples must also be considered modern sodomites, as, too, those who will not countenance any acknowledgment or redress of that dispossession. I would suggest that, in Australia, by that reading, One Nation are not the only ones promoting sodomy but that sodomy is thriving in our state and federal governments.

However, there is a further application for the struggle against homophobia in redefining sodomy. Nancy Wilson suggests that we consider the angels who come to Sodom as the "only potentially gay characters in the story" (Wilson, 1995:211)<sup>7</sup>. She argues that what happens to them in Sodom, being threatened with rape, parallels what happens to many gay and bisexual men at the hands of straight men (especially in prison). She consciously develops this image to equate homophobic violence with what happened in Sodom. I would agree with Wilson both because her position accords with my reading and because it transforms Genesis 19 into a text of queer power rather than a queer text of terror. It is also a position with which I have a strong resonance as I reflect on my own experience ("we must distil theory from the "texts" of our lives" (Omosupe 1991:110)). For a number of years at school I was subjected to a climate of harassment and violence (including sexual assault) because I was perceived to be not straight. That was over 30 years ago and my experience was not unusual then and, as the recent (1997) case of Christopher Tsakalos in New South Wales indicates, it is not unusual now. Generations of queer kids have been subjected to such homophobic abuse. Real sodomy is institutionalised in our schools and applied against anyone who is not straight (or not perceived to be straight).

I will close by asking who is the sodomite - the drag queen or butch dyke who flaunts it or the fundamentalist bigot who wants to see them dead? Who is the sodomite - the queer activist fighting for liberation or the pope (or the church assembly) who

proclaims homophobic theology? It is the queer basher, not the queer, who is most truly the sodomite?

## Notes

1. Of the term 'homosexual rape', Richie McMullen, a rape victim himself, argues, in his study of male rape, that the term is both misleading and generates homophobia and, thus, should be replaced by the term 'male rape' which is a more accurate description (McMullen, 1990:51-52).
2. Interestingly, queer theorist Jonathan Goldberg accepts Alter's reading as inherent to the narrative and uses Alter's essay to open the anthology, *Reclaiming Sodom* (1994). Goldberg had previously (1992) explored the fear of 'sodomy' and its interplay with the precariousness of early American colonial experience, especially that of the Puritan colonists. One could ask, therefore, whether Alter is replaying an ongoing white American (male) anxiety and whether Goldberg has been taken in by it.
3. He describes this episode as a "violent confrontation between the entire sex-crazed, homosexually inclined male population of Sodom... and the innocent guests and their protector Lot" (Fields, 1992:28).
4. Similarly, Josephus says of the Sodomites that they "showed themselves insolent to men and impious to the Divinity, insomuch that they... hated foreigners and declined all intercourse with others" (*Antiquities*, I:194).
5. It is also through Aristotle and the Bible that monogenesis still operates as a sub-text in Western culture.
6. For a similar pattern of sexuality outside the Mediterranean, but Mediterranean influenced, see Lancaster (1988) on the cochones of Nicaragua.
7. Interestingly, Josephus places great stress on the boyish beauty of the angels, a beauty that awakens uncontrolled desire on the part of males (*Ant.* I:200). Thus angels are like epebes.

## Bibliography

- Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer (The Chapters of Rabbi Eliezer the Great): According to the Text of the Manuscript Belonging to Abraham Epstein of Vienna*, Trans, and annotated with Introduction and Indices by Gerald Friedlander, New York: Sepher-Hermon Press, 1916
- Sexuality and Eroticism Among Males in Moslem Societies*, Eds Arno Schmitt, Jehoeda Sofer, New York et al: The Haworth Press, 1992
- The Babylonian Talmud*, Ed. I Epstein, London: The Soncino Press, 1961
- Alter, Robert, "Sodom as Nexus: The Web of Design in Biblical Narrative", *Reclaiming Sodom*, Ed. Jonathan Goldberg, New York and London: Routledge, 1994:29-42
- Ambrose of Milan, *Letters*, Trans M. M. Beyenka, New York: Fathers of the Church Inc, 1954
- Aycock, D Alan, "The fate of Lot's wife: structural mediation in Biblical mythology", *Structuralist Interpretations of Biblical Myth*, Eds Edmund Leach & D Alan Aycock, Cambridge et al: Cambridge University Press, 1983:113-9

- Bailey, Derrick Sherwin, *Homosexuality and the Western Christian Tradition*, London et al: Longmans, Green and Co, 1955
- Bal, Mieke, *Death and Dissymmetry: The Politics of Coherence in the Book of Judges*, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1988
- Blok, Anton, "Rams and Billy-Goats: A Key to the Mediterranean Code of Honour", *Man* (N.S.) 16, 1981:427-40
- Boswell, John, *Christianity, Social Tolerance and Homosexuality: Gay People in Western Europe from the Beginning of the Christian Era to the Fourteenth Century*, Chicago & London: University of Chicago Press, 1980
- Brownmiller, Susan, *Against Our Will: Men, Women and Rape*, Harmondsworth et al: Penguin Books, 1976
- Delaney, Carol, "Seeds of Honour, Fields of Shame", *Honor and Shame and the Unity of the Mediterranean*, Ed. David Gilmore, Washington DC: American Anthropological Association, 1987:35-48
- Doty, Alexander, *Making Things Perfectly Queer: Interpreting Mass Culture*, Minneapolis & London: University of Minneapolis Press, 1993
- Dover, K J, *Greek Homosexuality*, London: Gerald Duckworth & Co, 1978
- Downing, Christine, *Myths and Mysteries of Same Sex Love*, New York: Continuum, 1996 (1989)
- Fields, Weston F, "The Motif "Night as Danger" Associated with Three Biblical Destruction Narratives", '*Sha'arei Talmon*': *Studies in the Bible, Qumran, and the Ancient Near East Presented to Shemaryahu Talmon*, Eds E Tov & M Fishbane, Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1992:17-32
- Fields, Weston F, *Sodom and Gomorrah: History and Motif in Biblical Narrative*, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997
- Freedman H, "Commentary Compiled on the Book of Genesis", *The Soncino Chumash: The Five Books of Moses with Haphtaroth*, Ed. A Cohen, London: The Soncino Press, 1947:1-316
- Gilmore, David, "Introduction: The Shame of Dishonor", *Honor and Shame and the Unity of the Mediterranean*, Ed. David Gilmore, Washington DC: American Anthropological Association, 1987:2-21
- Goldberg, Jonathan, *Sodomities: Renaissance Texts, Modern Sexualities*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992
- Goldberg, Jonathan, "Introduction", *Reclaiming Sodom*, Ed. Jonathan Goldberg, New York and London: Routledge, 1994:1-22
- Goyer, Peter F, Eddleman, Henry C, "Same-Sex Rape of Nonincarcerated Males", *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 141:4, April 1984:576-9
- Greenberg, David F, *The Construction of Homosexuality*, Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1988
- Groth, Nicholas, Burgess, Ann Wolbert, Holmstrom, Lynda Lytle, "Rape: Power, Anger and Sexuality", *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 134:11, November 1977:1239-43
- Groth, Nicholas, Burgess, Ann Wolbert, "Male Rape: Offenders and Victims", *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 137:7, July 1980:806-11

- Higgins, Lynn A, Silver, Brenda R, "Introduction: Rereading Rape", *Rape and Representation*, Eds Lynn A Higgins and Brenda R Silver, New York: Columbia University Press, 1991:1-11
- Horner, Tom, *Jonathan Loved David: Homosexuality in Biblical Times*, Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1978
- Janssen, Thijs, "Transvestites and Transsexuals in Turkey", (Trans Peter op't Veldt), *Sexuality and Eroticism Among Males in Moslem Societies*, Eds Arno Schmitt, Jehoeda Sofer, New York et al: The Haworth Press, 1992:83-91
- John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Genesis 18-45*, Trans R.C. Hill, Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1990
- Josephus, "Jewish Antiquities", *Josephus in Nine Volumes: Loeb Classical Library Vols II-IX*, Trans H St J Thackeray, London & Cambridge, Mass: William Heinemann & Harvard University Press, 1967 (1930)
- Kaufman, Arthur, Divasto, Peter, Jackson, Rebecca, Voorhees, Dayton, Christy, Joan, "Male Rape Victims: Noninstitutionalised Assault", *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 137:2, February 1980:221-3
- Keefe, Alice A., "Rapes of Women/Wars of Men", *Semeia* 61, 1993:79-97
- Lancaster, Roger N, "Subject Honor and Object Shame: The Construction of Male Homosexuality and Stigma in Nicaragua", *Ethnology*, Vol XXVII No 2, April 1988:111-25
- Lovelace, Richard F, *Homosexuality and the Church: Crisis, Conflict, Compassion*, London: Lamp Press, 1979
- Matthews, Victor H, "Hospitality and Hostility in Genesis 19 and Judges 19", *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 22, 1992:3-11
- McMullen, Richie J, *Male Rape: Breaking Silence on the Last Taboo*, London: Gay Men's Press, 1990
- McNeil, John, *The Church and the Homosexual*, London: Darton, Longman & Todd, 1977
- Munk, Elie, *The Call of the Torah: an Anthology of Interpretation and Commentary on the Five Books of Moses; Volume 1: Genesis Part 1*, Trans E S Moser, Jerusalem & New York: Feldheim Publishers, 1980
- Nahmanides, *Commentary on the Torah*, Trans C B Chavel, New York: Shilo, 1971
- Omosupe, Ekua, "Black/Lesbian/Bulldagger", *Differences* Vol 3, No 2, 1991:101-11
- Origen, *Homilies on Genesis and Exodus*, Trans R.E. Heine, Washington DC: Catholic University of America Press, 1982
- Parker, Simon B, "The Hebrew Bible and Homosexuality", *Quarterly Review* 11/3, 1991:4-19
- Reeves, Peggy Sanday, "Rape and the Silencing of the Feminine", *Rape: An Historical and Cultural Enquiry*, Eds Sylvania Tomaselli and Ray Porter, Oxford, UK and New York: Basil Blackwell, 1989:84-101
- Scherman, Nosson, "An Overview - Sodom", *Bereishis: Genesis - A New Translation with a Commentary Anthologized from Talmudic, Midrashic and Rabbinic Sources; Volume 1(a)*, Brooklyn, NY: Mesorah Pub'ns Ltd, 1986 (1995):593-8
- Schmitt, Arno, "Different Approaches to Male-Male Sexuality/Eroticism from Morocco to Usbekistan", *Sexuality and Eroticism Among Males in Moslem Societies*, Eds Arno Schmitt,

Jehoeda Sofer, New York et al: The Haworth Press, 1992:1-24

Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky, *Between Men: English Literature and Male Homosocial Desire*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1985

Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky, *Tendencies*, Durham: Duke University Press, 1993

Sedgwick, Eve Kosofsky, *The Epistemology of the Closet*, London et al: Penguin Books, 1994

Sofer, Jehoeda, "Testimonies from the Holy Land: Israeli and Palestinian Men Talk About Their Sexual Encounters", *Sexuality and Eroticism Among Males in Moslem Societies*, Eds Arno Schmitt, Jehoeda Sofer, New York et al: The Haworth Press, 1992:105-119

Stein, Arlene and Plummer, Ken, "'I Can't Even Think Straight: "Queer" Theory and the Missing Sexual Revolution in Sociology", *Queer Theory/Sociology*, Ed. Steven Seidman, Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 1996:129-144

Stone, Ken, "Gender and Homosexuality in Judges 19: Subject-Honor, Object-Shame?", *JSOT* 67, 1995:87-107

Trible, Phyllis, *Texts of Terror: Literary-feminist Readings of Biblical Narratives*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984

Webb, Barry G, "Homosexuality in Scripture", *Theological and Pastoral Responses to Homosexuality*, Ed. B G Webb, Adelaide: Openbook Publishers, 1994:65-103

Wikan, Unni, "Man Becomes Woman: Transsexualism in Oman as a Key to Gender Roles", *Man* (N.S.), 12, 1977:304-19

Wilson, Nancy, *Our Tribe: Queer Folks, God, Jesus and the Bible*, San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1995