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Editors Teresa J. Hornsby and Ken Stone have collected a stunning array of provocative and insightful essays in *Bible Trouble: Queer Reading at the Boundaries of Biblical Scholarship*. This book addresses the boundaries of sex, gender, race, culture, and class in order to examine the intersection of those issues with biblical studies. The essays span the range of the canon (with the exception of the Apocrypha), and the authors’ methodologies range from redaction criticism to postcolonial theory to a host of other approaches.

After a brief preface by the book’s editors, the volume opens in earnest with Ellen Armour’s “Queer Bibles, Queer Scriptures? An Introductory Response.” Serving as both an introduction to the volume as well as a response to its contents, this essay provides a discussion of queering and its contexts.

Deryn Guest’s “From Gender Reversal to Genderfuck: Reading Jael through a Lesbian Lens” offers a provocative reading of Jael’s gender characterization in Judg 4–5. The “genderfuck” aspect of Guest’s essay highlights the problematic binary construction of gender that is implicit in the use of “gender reversal” terminology. The “lesbian lens”
aspect suggests both points of resonance for lesbian readers and areas in which caution may be advisable.

The contribution by Erin Runions, “From Disgust to Humor: Rahab’s Queer Affect” (originally published in *Postscripts* 4.1 [2008]: 41–69), uses Josh 2 as an illustration of the way in which biblical texts themselves produce disgust, especially for racialized nonheteronormative practices. As an antidote to this disgust, Runions proposes to probe the text instead for humor. Runions suggests that the tale of Rahab may be the result of two textual layers being combined and that the story as it now stands reflects Deuteronomistic revisions of an originally light-hearted tale about the free-spirited Rahab.

The following two essays engage disciplines beyond biblical studies. Bringing together biblical scholarship and cinema, Ken Stone’s “Queer Reading between Bible and Film: *Paris Is Burning* and the ‘Legendary Houses’ of David and Saul” engages both the 1991 documentary about New York City drag balls and the text of 2 Sam 3. Stone contends that in both the film and the text, competition over manhood takes place in relation to sex, gender, and kinship. In her “Penderecki’s Iron Maiden: Intimacy and Other Anomalies in the *Canticum canticorum Salomonis*,” Heidi Epstein engages the work of New Musicologists in order to “read” Kryzysztof Penderecki’s musical rendition of the Song of Songs alongside the biblical text. This interpretive strategy allows Epstein to understand the Song apart from its usual heteronormative interpretations.

As a brief interlude, S. Tamar Kamionkowski’s “Queer Theory and Historical-Critical Exegesis: Queering Biblicists—A Response” provides some succinct comments primarily on the preceding essays by Stone and Guest along with passing references to the essays by Runions and Epstein. While the essay itself provides a fitting response to the preceding contributions, its placement not even halfway through the volume seems odd, especially given that the only other response is the volume’s final chapter.

Teresa J. Hornsby’s contribution, “Capitalism, Masochism, and Biblical Interpretation,” examines the interplay between capitalism, sexuality, and biblical studies. Hornsby suggests that the efficiency of capitalism has reduced the number of heterosexual bodies needed for labor and thus opened up space for more queer bodies to fill the void. However, Hornsby also notes that a valorization of both submission and masochism (as evinced in works such as Mel Gibson’s *Passion of the Christ*) attends this shift, and thus the erotic and the economic ultimately mix.

Offering a unique reading of Jesus’ raising of Lazarus in John 11, Jione Havea’s essay “Lazarus Troubles” records the insights of prison inmates with whom Havea discussed
this Johannine pericope. Havea’s findings reveal a dark underside of the Lazarus account in which Jesus fails to support his beloved, Lazarus’s family neglects his care, and Lazarus himself became a target for future harassment.

Two essays engage the text of Acts 8:26–40. Sean D. Burke’s “Queering Early Christian Discourse: The Ethiopian Eunuch” examines the potential of eunuchs to be queering figures who disrupt typical constructions of masculinity. Burke suggests that the eunuch is a queering figure in the whole of the book of Acts insofar as he challenges the notion of a binary between insiders and outsiders. Likewise, Manuel Villalobos’s “Bodies Del Otro Lado Finding Life and Hope in the Borderland: Gloria Anzaldúa, the Ethiopian Eunuch of Acts 8:26–40, y Yo” explores the tale of the eunuch as a border-crossing event for not only the eunuch but for the tale’s main actor, the Holy Spirit, who both transgresses and redefines borders.

The essays by Joseph A. Marchal (“The Corinthian Women Prophets and Trans Activism: Rethinking Canonical Gender Claims”) and Gillian Townsley (“The Straight Mind in Corinth: Problematizing Categories and Ideologies of Gender in 1 Corinthians 11:2–16”) offer queer readings of 1 Corinthians. Marchal juxtaposes Paul’s treatment of the female prophets in Corinth with medical discourse on transsexuality in order to examine how the dominant scripts (whether biblical or medical) create a hierarchical structure that invests power in some (Paul, medical professionals) while withholding it from others (female prophets, transsexuals). Townsley takes a different approach by using Monique Wittig’s gender theory to read 1 Cor 11:2–16 and to “lesbianize” the men whom Paul addresses by undermining heteronormativity.

Jay Twomey’s essay, “The Pastor and His Fops: Gender Indeterminacy in the Pastor and His Readers,” offers a study in the reception history of the Pastoral Epistles. Beginning with the church fathers, Twomey examines interpretations of the Pastoral Epistles that have the effect of destabilizing the epistles’ gender categories and thus queering the text.

In “Gazing at the Whore: Reading Revelation Queerly,” Lynn R. Huber offers a “queer-lesbian” reading of the Whore in which she suggests that the Whore may be attractive not only to males but also to lesbians who desire to be viewed in return. This identification with the Whore through the lesbian gaze has the effect of creating for the reader both satisfaction at the destruction of the empire and uneasiness given the way in which the Whore invites the reader’s association.

Jeremy Punt’s “Queer Theory, Postcolonial Theory, and Biblical Interpretation: A Preliminary Exploration of Some Intersections” proposes that queer theory and postcolonial theory are similar insofar as both are concerned about the politics of identity.
Painting in broad strokes, Punt offers some suggestions about the use of queer theory and postcolonial theory in interpreting both Pauline theology and Jesus’ notion of the household as it appears in the Gospels.

The final essay, by Michael Joseph Brown, “What Happens When Closets Open Up? A Response,” offers some summarizing remarks on the volume. Brown suggests that, despite the diversity of biblical texts, methods, and themes appropriated by the volume’s contributors, they may be held together by the phrase “Be careful.” Focusing attention primarily on the essays by Hornsby, Havea, Burke, and Huber, Brown suggests that growing acceptance of LGBT individuals may present both a moment for celebration and for caution.

This volume deserves praise on several counts. For the student who is new to queer approaches to biblical interpretation or for the researcher who is seeking additional information, the rich bibliographies at the end of each chapter provide a bountiful supply of relevant resources. Additionally, the interdisciplinary nature of many of the essays takes the reader on an enjoyable journey through studies of art, film, music, and literature. This engagement with fields outside of the boundaries of biblical and theological studies is to be commended.

However, one wonders how well the book succeeds in its stated goal: “to help close that gap [between queer theory and biblical studies] by bringing together a series of essays that engage queer theories and styles of reading for purposes of biblical interpretation” (ix). There is no doubt that these essays succeed in engaging queer theories in the interest of biblical interpretation, but have they made progress in closing the gap? Although the authors’ sheer creativity in the combination of biblical scholarship with queer theory witnesses to some closure of this gap, the juxtaposition of the two also serves to highlight just how wide the gap really is. As Stone observes, “‘genderfuck’ is not a term that will be found in many methodological handbooks for biblical studies” (77). Indeed, the most accurate measure of the gap is perhaps not the extent to which “genderfuck” is a part of the accepted vernacular for biblical scholars. Rather, the degree to which a volume such as this will be adopted by those who, like the critic Villalobos mentions, are accustomed to “the rigor of the historical-critical method” (213) may be a better gauge of the book’s success, and by this measure, only time will tell whether the book has accomplished its goal.

Nonetheless, this volume makes significant contributions not only to the intersection of queer theory and biblical studies but also to the interpretation of the Bible in an interdisciplinary context that embraces various fields of the arts and humanities. Readers
from numerous disciplines will undoubtedly find this volume to be both stimulating and informative.