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Sexuality, Ideology and the Bible: Antipodean Engagements

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Sexuality, Ideology, and the Bible: Antipodean Engagements offers a collection of innovative essays loosely organized around the two categories named in the title, sexuality (encompassing sexual acts, sexual violence, the sexed body, and so on) and ideology. The subtitle gestures at another theme uniting the essays: all are written by contributors from New Zealand and Australia, with the sole exception of a response by Hugh S. Pyper. In this way the work resembles another recent geographically oriented collection: the *Semeia Studies Bible, Borders, Belonging(s): Engaging Readings from Oceania*, edited by Jione Havea, David J. Neville, and Elaine M. Wainwright (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2014). However, as Robert Myles suggests in his introduction and as Pyper's response draws out, the "Antipodes" are not simply a geographical location but also function queerly. The antipodean presents the queer inverse or perversion of the global north as well as "center." Accordingly, various forms and formulations of queerness animate the essays in this volume and add another degree of coherence beyond the provenance of the contributors.

After a brief introduction by Robert Myles, the volume opens with Deane Galbraith's "The Perfect Penis of Eden and Queer Time in Augustine's Reading of Paul" (1–19). Galbraith's essay has a number of components: Gen 2–3, Augustine's reading of Genesis, Augustine's *Confessions*, the Augustinian theological tradition, queer temporality in several iterations (including the work of Elizabeth Freeman and José Esteban Muñoz), and Giorgio Agamben's discussion of messianic time in and around Paul. Holding these various pieces together is the notion of the Adamic "perfect penis," which, like the hand, is totally under the control of the subject. Galbraith concludes that any serious consideration of Augustine's theological ideas must acknowledge "the manner in which they were developed hand-in-hand with Augustine's contemplation of his penis" (18). Galbraith's is not the only reading to emphasize the genitals and their significance to the reading of religious text. Roland Boer, in "The Matriarch's Muff" (56–68), chronicles the vagina in the Hebrew Bible. As in his previous study of the male genitals (or, in Boer's preferred parlance, "the patriarch's nuts"), he emphasizes "the earthiness of biblical language, an earthiness that continues to make the polite among us squirm" (57; see Boer, *The Earthy Nature of the Bible: Fleshly Readings of Sex, Masculinity, and Carnality* [New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012]). Adopting a maximalist vaginal reading, Boer finds the vagina in a wide range of texts, often arguing that prior reading practices have suppressed the sexual and reproductive terms used by the text itself. Boer's emphasis on the vagina is refreshing, especially given the explosion of masculinity studies in the discipline, but there is also something disconcertingly straight and slightly licentious in this emphatically masculine reading of the female sex organs.

Other essays adopt an explicitly feminine perspective. Yael Klangwisan's "Promethea's Song of Songs" (131–43) brings the Song together with Hélène Cixous's *Promethea* to draw out a bisexual reading of the text in a poetic female voice. Caroline Blyth and Teguh Wijaya Mulya, meanwhile, offer "The Delilah Monologues" (144–62), a revisionist account of Delilah that foregrounds the ways in which she has been ill-served by patriarchal traditions. Both contributions experiment with form: Klangwisan offers two parallel texts, one of which presents a poetic first-person narrative, while Blyth and Mulya, writing together, craft a single first-person monologue.

Queering sexual difference and gender performance is a concern of several of the essays collected here as well as of Pyper's response. Alan H. Cadwaller ("Paul Speaks Like a Girl: When Phoebe Reads Romans," 69–95) explores how Paul's choice of Phoebe to read his letter destabilizes his presentation of masculinity. Cadwaller offers four possible ways to read this relationship, without choosing between them; the effect is an opening of the textual representation of masculinity more broadly. In "Imagining the Body of Christ" (35–55), Christina Petterson discusses the representation of Christ's body as both male (possessing a penis) and female (treating the wound in Christ's side as a figuration of the

vagina) among the Moravian Brethren, an eighteenth-century German religious movement. In particular, Petterson traces how Zinzerdorf, the community's leader, deployed this image to distinguish between the community's collective body and the specific body of Christ. Her reading, while historically positioned, also queries the issue of the "collective body" in ways of interest to scholars of any time period.

The relation between sexuality and the environment is another theme in several of the essays. "Come upon Her': Land as Raped in Jeremiah 6.1–8," by Emily Colgan (20–34), begins with a close textual analysis of the named passage to open a larger exploration of how sexual and environmental violence are mutually signified and reinforced. In "Queer[y]ing the Sermon on the Mount" (114–30), Elaine M. Wainwright explores the boundaries of the animal and the human to offer a "queer ecological reading" (126) of the text that attends to its material and organic specificity. Wainwright's engagement with Donna Haraway's work on companion species grounds her reading theoretically while also pushing the significance of her (and, by extension, Colgan's), claims.

Many of the essays in the volume, including Pyper's response, touch on the political and the personal (thus Pyper makes much of his own sociopolitical and personal location in the "antipodes of the antipodes"). This engagement with the personal and political is perhaps most pronounced, however, in Gillian Townsley's "'We're Here, We're Queer—Get Used to It!': Exclamations in the Margins (Eudoia and Syntyche in Philippians 4.2)" (95–113). Townsley interweaves an account of her own gradual emerging awareness of Eudoia and Syntyche as a queer presence in Philippians with a discussion of debates over marriage equality in New Zealand.

As even this brief overview should show, the essays assembled here cover a broad array of texts and approaches. A real strength of the volume is that the essays share a general orientation (sexuality, ideology, the "Antipodes" as place and phantasy) without appearing overly similar. Reading through the book, there is a pleasing variety in topics and methods from essay to essay. The more unconventional formal choices (Klangwisan's Cixousian reading, Blyth and Mulya's monologue) are balanced by the traditional texts they engage (the Song of Songs, the Samson narrative). Conversely, a more atypical biblical studies engagement (Boer's inventory of vaginas) is counterbalanced by the piece's traditional and text-critical methods. If there is a complaint to be levied, it is that some of the pieces feel too brief; queer temporality, for example, could have been more fully described and integrated into Galbraith's reading of Augustine, and Cadwaller could perhaps have argued in favor of one of the four readings he set forth. Still, to be left wishing for more is hardly the greatest fault for a collection of essays, and *Sexuality, Ideology, and the Bible* left me excited to see more work by both its careful editors and its insightful contributors.