MULTIPLICITY AND JUDGES 19: CONSTRUCTING A QUEER ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICAN BIBLICAL HERMENEUTIC

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ABSTRACT

This essay suggests that the theme of "multiplicity" can be used in constructing a queer Asian Pacific American biblical hermeneutic. In particular, it focuses upon the narrative of the unnamed concubine in Judges 19, who, like the queer Asian Pacific American, is a radical sexual and geographical outsider. The essay explores four ways in which multiplicity is reflected in the experiences of the unnamed concubine and queer Asian Pacific Americans: (1) multiple naming; (2) multiple silencing; (3) multiple oppression; and (4) multiple fragmentation. The essay concludes with a number of ways in which a queer Asian Pacific American biblical hermeneutic could be applied to other scriptural texts. Paradoxically, a focus on multiplicity results in the preservation of the wholeness and integrity of both the reader and the text.

INTRODUCTION

The narrative of the unnamed concubine who is gang-raped and dismembered in Judges 19 has been the focus of a great deal of biblical scholarship during the last two decades. Scholars have written about this story from multiple perspectives, including feminist perspectives (Trible: 64–91; Bal, 1988:80–93; Bal, 1993; Exum: 170–201) and womanist perspectives (Jones-Warsaw). Other scholars have written about Judges 19 through the interpretive lens of politics (Brettler; Amit), war (Keefe), hospitality (Lasine; Matthews), homosexuality (Stone), sodomy (Niditch), and intertextuality (Penchansky). Still others have focused on close readings of the Hebrew text (Schneider).

Despite the richness of the existing body of critical scholarship on Judges 19, however, little attention has been paid to the unnamed concubine's status as a radical outsider *both* in terms of her sexuality and of her geography in the narrative. Like the unnamed concubine, those of us who are queer (that is, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, intersexed, or questioning) Asian Pacific Americans are also radical outsiders in terms of our sexualities as well as our geographies. Accordingly, this essay

proposes that Judges 19 can be viewed as a foundational text for understanding the experiences of queer Asian Pacific Americans in the United States today.

Specifically, this essay examines the various ways in which the theme of "multiplicity" is reflected in the experiences of the unnamed concubine and queer Asian Pacific Americans. Four dimensions of this theme are explored: (1) multiple naming; (2) multiple silencing; (3) multiple oppression; and (4) multiple fragmentation. This essay concludes with a number of ways in which a queer Asian Pacific American hermeneutic could be applied to other biblical narratives. Paradoxically, a focus on multiplicity results in the preservation of the wholeness and integrity of both the reader and the text.

The Narrative

The narrative of the unnamed concubine who is "[c]aptured, betrayed, raped, tortured, murdered, dismembered, and scattered" (Trible: 65) in Judges 19 has been described as "one of the most distressing stories in the entire Bible" (Schneider: 245). In those days when Israel had no king, a Levite from the hill country of Ephraim took a concubine from Bethlehem in Judah. One day, the concubine "deserted" the Levite—literally, she "played the harlot"—and left him for her father's house in Bethlehem (19:2, NJPS). After four months, the Levite went to Bethlehem to "woo her and to win her back" (v. 3). The concubine "admitted" the Levite into her father's house (v. 3), and the Levite ate, drank, and lodged there for three days. On the morning of the fourth day, the Levite started to leave, but he was persuaded by the concubine's father to stay another night. On the fifth day, after more eating and "dawdling" (v. 8), the Levite refused to stay any longer, even though the day was already "waning toward evening" (v. 9).

The Levite, his attendant, and the concubine left Bethlehem and traveled to Jebus (that is, Jerusalem). As the day was already "very far spent" (v. 11), the attendant suggested that they spend the night there. The Levite refused, because he did not want to "turn aside to a town of aliens who are not of Israel" (v. 12). As a result, they continued toward Gibeah, a city of the tribe of Benjamin. When they arrived in Gibeah, the sun had already set, and they sat in the town square because "nobody took them indoors" (v. 15). Eventually, an old man who also "hailed from the hill country of Ephraim" (v. 16) passed by and, after asking the Levite where he was from and where he was going to, the old man took them into his house, warning them not to spend the night in the square "on any account" (v. 20).

While the old man's guests were eating and drinking inside, the "depraved" men of Gibeah pounded on the door and instructed the old man to bring out the Levite so they could be "intimate" with him (v. 22). The old man offered his virgin daughter as well as the Levite's concubine to the

men of Gibeah, so that they would not "perpetrate this outrage" (v. 23), but the men of Gibeah would not listen to him. As a result, the Levite "seized his concubine and pushed her out to them" (v. 25). The men of Gibeah "raped her and abused her all night long until morning" and let her go only "when dawn broke" (v. 25).

When it was "growing light" outside (v. 26), the concubine came back and collapsed at the entrance to the old man's house. When the Levite got up in the morning, he opened the doors of the house and found his concubine "lying at the entrance of the house, with her hands on the threshold" (v. 27). He ordered her to get up so that they could go, but there was no answer. So the Levite put the concubine on his donkey and went home. When he arrived home, he "picked up a knife" and "cut her up limb by limb into twelve parts" and sent the parts throughout Israel (v. 29). And everyone who saw "it" (v. 30) exclaimed that there had been nothing like this since the day of the Exodus.

Sexual and Geographical Outsiders

Many scholars have acknowledged the outsider status of the unnamed concubine. Phyllis Trible has argued, for example, that the unnamed concubine is the "least" of "all the characters in scripture," because she is "alone in a world of men" and is without "name, speech, or power" (80). Koala Jones-Warsaw has compared the unnamed concubine to African American women, who "often find [themselves] near the bottom of the social ladder" (183). Despite this acknowledgment of the unnamed concubine's outsider status, however, little attention has been paid to the fact that she is a radical outsider *both* in terms of her sexuality as well as her geography. It is to this issue of multiple outsider status that we now turn.

The unnamed concubine is an outsider with respect to her sexuality. She transgresses the norms of her society by deserting, or "playing the harlot" against, the Levite (v. 2). The Hebrew root used to describe her action is *znh*, and commentators have spent much energy debating whether the unnamed concubine prostituted herself outside of marriage (Schneider: 249–50). Whether or not she actually engaged in physical fornication in this context, however, is "almost irrelevant" (251) to her outsider status. The real issue is that she dared to assert ownership over her body and to assert control over her own sexuality. Because the act of leaving the Levite was an "offense against the social order" and "the patriarchal system itself," the unnamed concubine receives "narrative punishment for claiming sexual autonomy" (Exum: 179, 200). Specifically, she is "gang-raped" and "her sexuality is mutilated" (200).

The unnamed concubine is also an outsider with respect to her geography. Throughout the narrative, there is constant geographical tension

between the unnamed concubine, on the one hand, and her father and the Levite, on the other. From the outset, the unnamed concubine tries to move in a *southerly* direction. She is originally from the south (that is, Bethlehem in Judah), and she asserts her autonomy by returning to the south at the beginning of the narrative (v. 2). By contrast, the unnamed concubine's father and the Levite try to move her in a *northerly* direction. Her father initially sends her to the north to live with the Levite in the hill country of Ephraim. Later, her father sends her to the north again, after the Levite comes to "woo her and to win her back" (v. 3). The Levite takes her back north, refusing to stop even at Jebus (that is, Jerusalem), until they reach Gibeah. At Gibeah, they stay at the home of the old man, who is also from the north, and it is there that she collapses after being gang-raped all night. This geographical tension between south and north is analogous to the tension that people from Africa, Asia, and Latin America experience when they immigrate to the United States and they face marginalization on the basis of their countries of origin. Indeed, Koala Jones-Warsaw makes this analogy explicit by comparing the experience of the unnamed concubine to that of African American women (183), who have been exiled from their ancestors' geographical homes for nearly four centuries.

Like the unnamed concubine, queer Asian Pacific Americans are radical outsiders in terms of both our sexualities and our geographies. We remain outsiders, particularly in the theological academy, despite the fact that several important anthologies of queer Asian Pacific American writings have been published in recent years (Bao and Yanagihara; Eng and Hom; R. Leong, 1996; Lim-Hing; C. Tsang), as well as a number of works relating to queer Asian Pacific American spirituality (Cheng; R. Leong, 1998; Lim; Liu, 1992, 1995, 1998; Realuyo, 1993a, 1993b). With respect to our identities as *sexual* outsiders, we face seminaries, divinity schools, and departments of religion that have a "disdain for gay/lesbian related scholarship," which is "clearly seen as 'not real scholarship'" (Clark: 73). Along those lines, we also face barriers in the homophobic hiring and publishing practices of many churches and church-affiliated institutions (Clark: 71–72). With respect to our identities as *geographical* outsiders, we remain on the margins in terms of the small number of Asian Pacific American theologians, biblical scholars, and church historians in the academy (Phan and Lee: xii). Despite the fact that our ancestors have been present in the United States since the mid-1700s (R. Lee: ix), Asian Pacific Americans are still "not fully acknowledged as American" (Matsuoka: 1), and thus we remain as people in diaspora.

In sum, the unnamed concubine and queer Asian Pacific Americans are radical and multiple outsiders, in terms of *both* sexuality and geography. We now turn to a more detailed examination of how "multiplicity" is present in the experiences of the unnamed concubine and queer Asian Pacific Americans. In particular, four dimensions of this theme are explored: (1) multiple

naming; (2) multiple silencing; (3) multiple oppression; and (4) multiple fragmentation.

Multiple Naming

The first way in which the unnamed concubine and queer Asian Pacific Americans experience multiplicity is through *multiple naming*. In the space of a single chapter, the unnamed concubine is described by four different Hebrew nouns: (1) *pîlegeš*, or "concubine" (vv. 1–2, 9–10, 24–25, 27, 29); (2) *naʿaʿrâ*, or "girl" (vv. 5–6, 8–9); (3) *ʾāmâ*, or "maidservant" (v. 19); and (4) *ʾiššâ*, or "woman" (vv. 26–27). This multiplicity is compounded by the fact that biblical scholars have used a variety of English names to refer to the unnamed concubine. Many, like Phyllis Trible, simply call her the "concubine" (66). However, others have invented names for her. For example, Mieke Bal calls her "Beth" by playing on the Hebrew words for "house," "daughter," and "Bethlehem" (1988:89–90). J. Cheryl Exum calls her "Bath-sheber" or "daughter of breaking," which is what the men of Gibeah and her husband do to her (176). Tammi J. Schneider calls her the *pîlegeš*, or the Hebrew word for "concubine" (247). As a result of this multiplicity, the unnamed concubine is rendered powerless. The absence of a uniform signifier encourages the reader "not to view her as a person in her own right" (Exum: 176). That is, multiple naming can be viewed as a "textual strategy for distancing the reader from the character" (ibid.).

We queer Asian Pacific Americans also experience multiple naming in our lives. With respect to our sexual identities, there has been much internal debate over when to use the terms "homosexual," "gay," or "queer" to describe ourselves (not to mention "lesbian," "bisexual," "transgender," "transsexual," "intersexed," and "questioning"). With respect to our geographical identities, there has also been much debate over when to use the terms "oriental," "Asian," "Asian American," "Asian Pacific Islander," or "Asian Pacific American" to describe ourselves (not to mention "South Asian," "Southeast Asian," "East Asian," and "Pacific Islander"). As a result of this multiplicity, there is no consensus as to what to call us. We have been called gay Asian Pacific Islanders (GAPIs), queer Asian Pacific Islanders (QAPIs), gay Asian Americans (GAAs), queer Asian Americans (QAAs), gay Asian Pacific Americans (GAPAs), Asian Pacific Islander lesbians and bisexuals (APILBs), and queer Asian Pacific Americans (QAPAs). To further complicate matters, there are many other non-English words that have been used to describe our queer siblings in Asia: *tongzhi* and *nü tongzhi* (China); *gei* and *mem-bah* (Hong Kong); *bo-li quan* (Taiwan); *sakhiyani* (India); and *doseiai* (Japan) (Chou: 1, 79–80, 82, 146; Thadani: 66; Summerhawk, McMahill, and McDonald: 6). As in the case of the unnamed concubine, this multiple naming and lack of a uniform signifier renders queer Asian Pacific Americans powerless within the dominant culture.

Multiple Silencing

The second way in which the unnamed concubine and queer Asian Pacific Americans experience multiplicity is through *multiple silencing*. In Judges 19, the unnamed concubine never speaks for herself. Instead, her own voice is repeatedly silenced by the voices of the various men who surround her. For example, we never hear the unnamed concubine's response to the Levite's attempt to "woo her and to win her back" (v. 3). She is silenced by her father, who allows her to leave with the Levite on the fifth day. Similarly, we never hear the unnamed concubine's response to the attendant's suggestion of spending the night in Jebus on the way back to Ephraim. She is silenced by the Levite, who insists that they travel further to Gibeah, where she is brutally gang-raped. We never hear what must have been the unnamed concubine's horrified response to the old man's offer to turn her over to the men of Gibeah for their "pleasure" (v. 24). Again, she is silenced by the Levite, who seizes her and pushes her out of the house to the men. Finally, after being raped all night long, the unnamed concubine collapses on the threshold of the old man's house, unable to answer the Levite's command to "get up" (v. 28). At this point, she is silenced forever.

In addition to the various ways in which the unnamed concubine is silenced by the men who surround her, there are also multiple silences *within* the narrative of Judges 19 itself. Why exactly did the unnamed concubine leave the Levite? Why did the Levite need to "woo" and "win" her back (v. 3)? Why was he subsequently "admitted" to her father's house (v. 3)? Did the unnamed concubine actually prostitute herself (Schneider: 249–51)? Or was she simply acting in accordance with the customs of patrilocal marriage (Bal, 1988:83–89)? Was the unnamed concubine dead when she collapsed on the threshold? Or did the Levite ultimately murder her (Trible: 80)? What exactly was "it" that so shocked the tribes of Israel (Trible: 81)? The rape? The dismemberment? The unnamed concubine herself? The text is provocatively silent on these and other questions.

Multiple silencing is also experienced by those of us who are queer Asian Pacific Americans. Like the unnamed concubine, our voices are repeatedly silenced by the communities that surround us. Again, this silencing is particularly acute in the theological academy, despite the fact that in recent years queer Asian Pacific Americans of faith have begun to find our own theological voices. We have done so by organizing queer Asian Pacific American Christian fellowship groups (for example, GRACE-PACTS at the Graduate Theological Union); by forming queer Asian Pacific American Christian denominational caucuses (for example, the Queer Asian Fellowship of the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches); and by creating queer Asian Pacific American Christian online discussion groups (for example, QueerAsianFellowship and QAPAX on Yahoo! Groups).

Despite the emergence of our voices as queer Asian Pacific Americans of faith, however, we continue to be silenced by Asian and Asian Pacific American theologians. For example, an informal survey of the indices of books by prominent theologians such as Kosuke Koyama, Jung Young Lee, Fumitaka Matsuoka, and C. S. Song reveal no mention of "homosexuality" or "sexual orientation." (Notable exceptions include books by Asian and Asian Pacific American feminist theologians such as Kwok Pui-lan [120–22], Chung Hyun Kyung [46], and Rita Nakashima Brock [Brock and Thistlethwaite: 177], but these works refer largely to queer *Asians* and not queer Asian Pacific Americans.) Similarly, our voices are silenced by queer theologians. An informal survey of the indices of books by prominent theologians such as J. Michael Clark, Gary Comstock, and John McNeill reveal no mention of "Asians" or "Asian Pacific Americans." (Notable exceptions include writings on comparative religion by Robert Goss [passim] and Carter Heyward [38], as well as works by queer theologians of color such as eliyahou farajajé [formerly elias farajajé-jones; see farajajé-jones: 330] and Renée Hill [147], but these works refer largely to *Asians in the Two-Thirds World*, and not queer Asian Pacific Americans.) In sum, we queer Asian Pacific Americans are largely invisible, even within the Asian Pacific American community and the queer community. Although these larger "communities" purport to speak on behalf of us, our voices are ultimately silenced.

Multiple Oppression

The third way in which the unnamed concubine and queer Asian Pacific Americans experience multiplicity is through *multiple oppression*. As Trible has written, the unnamed concubine is the woman "most sinned against" (81). The graphic image of the concubine "lying at the entrance of the house, with her hands on the threshold" (v. 27) represents her social location in the midst of the various forces of oppression that surround her. On one side of the door are the men of Gibeah, who gang-rape her and abuse her all night long. On the other side of the door is the old man, who initially offers her to the men of Gibeah for their "pleasure" (v. 24), as well as the Levite, who ultimately pushes her outside of the house. The unnamed concubine is caught between sexual objectification by geographical strangers, on the one hand, and rejection by her "family," on the other. Indeed, as Bal has noted, the bodily position of the unnamed concubine at the threshold of the old man's house is symbolic of her status as a "liminal figure" or an "embodiment of transition" (1993:221). This experience of liminality is reinforced by the repeated use of Hebrew words like *delet*, "door" (v. 27), *sap*, "threshold" (v. 27), and *petaḥ*, "entrance" (vv. 26–27) in the narrative, which are used elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible to separate one space from another, particularly with respect to the tent of meeting (Num 3:25) and the temple (1 Kgs 6:31–34; 2 Chr 3:7; Ezek 41:23–25).

Similarly, queer Asian Pacific Americans experience multiple oppression from the various communities that surround us. On one side of the metaphorical door is the racism of the predominantly white queer community. We are simultaneously erased and sexually objectified by this community, in the same way that the unnamed concubine is erased and sexually objectified by the men of Gibeah. With respect to *erasure,* queer Asian Pacific Americans remain largely invisible in mainstream queer magazines, newspapers, bookstores, videos, and other media, despite the fact that we have been a part of the queer liberation movement for over three decades (Cornell; C. Tsang). With respect to *sexual objectification,* we are often faced with "rice queens" within the white queer community who "fetishize Asian men" and engage in the "predatory consumption" of queer Asians as "boy toys" (Cho: 1–3). Similarly, we are objectified as the exotic "other" by the predominantly white queer community whenever it is convenient for purposes of fundraising and entertainment. For example, in 1991, a major queer institution—the Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund (LLDEF)—held its annual fundraiser at the Broadway musical *Miss Saigon,* despite the angry protests of the queer Asian Pacific American community in New York City, which saw the musical as "perpetuating a damaging fantasy of submissive 'Orientals,' self-erasing women, and asexual, contemptible men" (Yoshikawa). LLDEF refused to cancel the fundraiser. Nearly ten years later, in 2000, another major queer institution—the Hotlanta River Expo—held a gay male circuit party called the "Year of the Dragon" that used stereotypical and highly offensive images such as "Fried Rice" and "China Doll" for the themes of its events. When faced with angry protests by queer Asian Pacific Americans in Atlanta and across the nation, the president and board of directors of Hotlanta River Expo agreed to take certain remedial steps, including apologizing for their actions, but later "violated every tenet" of a negotiated agreement, according to local queer Asian Pacific American activists (A. Leong).

The oppression experienced by queer Asian Pacific Americans is not limited to racism within the predominantly white queer community, however. On the other side of the metaphorical door is the homophobia of the predominantly straight Asian Pacific American community. We are betrayed and rejected by our very own families, in the same way that the unnamed concubine is betrayed and pushed out of the door by the old man and the Levite. For example, in 1999, thousands of members of evangelical Asian Pacific American churches in Southern California were mobilized by their pastors to sign petitions that would have prohibited any public entity from "endorsing, educating, recognizing or promoting homosexuality as acceptable, moral behavior" (C. Lee: 61). Asian Pacific American pastors began their sermons by condemning homosexuality as a "sin" and a "crime"

to the choruses of "Amen" from their large congregations (ibid.). The real sin and crime, however, is the tremendous suffering inflicted upon numerous young queer Asian Pacific Americans by their very own families and pastors, which can lead to suicidal thoughts, wishes, and acts (Lim: 328–31). For many Asian Pacific Americans, "being Asian and being gay are mutually exclusive.... 'it' is a white disease" (Wat: 76). Sadly, these families and pastors are blinded from the truth that homosexuality has always existed within their communities and that many of their own children and family members are queer. In sum, we queer Asian Pacific Americans—like the unnamed concubine—are trapped between forces of oppression from both sides of the metaphorical door. We are "run over at the intersection of racism and homophobia . . . [and] forever left in the middle of the road, unacceptable to those at either side of the street" (Wat: 79).

Multiple Fragmentation

The fourth way in which the unnamed concubine and queer Asian Pacific Americans experience multiplicity is through *multiple fragmentation.* The narrative of the unnamed concubine ends with the Levite cutting the concubine "limb by limb into twelve parts" (v. 29) and scattering her body throughout the territory of Israel. Many commentators have focused upon this gruesome imagery in their readings of Judges 19. Trible, invoking a traditional christological image, has noted that the unnamed concubine's body was "broken and given to many" (64, 81). Exum has written that the multiple fragmentation serves to "desexualize Bath-sheber [that is, the unnamed concubine] by violently opening up the mystery of woman and diffusing her threat by scattering the parts" (191). Jones-Warsaw has noted that the multiple fragmentation symbolizes the many ways in which the Black woman is scattered in "every field and dumping ground," and how she must "gather together all the pieces of herself . . . and stand before God and humanity—as a whole black woman" (185). Indeed, the theme of multiple fragmentation is central to many contemporary readings of Judges 19.

Multiple fragmentation is also experienced by queer Asian Pacific Americans. We are constantly forced to choose as to which "part" of ourselves is operative in a given context. Are we queer? Are we lesbian, gay male, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, intersexed, or questioning? Are we Asian Pacific American? Are we South Asian American, Southeast Asian American, East Asian American, or Pacific Islander American? Or are we simply American? The answer always varies, depending upon whether we are with queer families, Asian Pacific American families, churches, friends, co-workers, or acquaintances from Asia and other parts of the world.

It is no surprise, therefore, that images of multiple fragmentation can be found in queer Asian Pacific American writings. For example, Cambodian

American lesbian poet Peou Lakhana draws a connection between her queer Asian Pacific American identity and the "butchering" of one-third of the Cambodian population. In reflecting upon her fragmented identity, Lakhana writes that "the next time you look into a mirror / the person you will see / contains pieces of me" (41). Queer Chinese American poet Timothy Liu also uses images of multiple fragmentation in his work. In one poem, he writes about "resting my chin / on a stump where the head has been. / Limbs severed / above the elbows the hips, its mutilated sex, testicles / hanging in a stone sack" (1992:45). Finally, queer Chinese American writer Eric Wat documents the brutal queer bashing of Vietnamese American immigrant Truong Loc Minh in 1993 on a Southern California beach. Early one morning, Minh was "beat[en] ... to a pulp" by three young white men, and his fragmented face "was so disfigured that they could hardly determine his race" (77–78).

In a thought-provoking article, Santa Clara University law professor Peter Kwan has written about the connections between queer Asian Pacific American identity and the murder of fourteen-year-old Konerak Sinthasomphone by serial killer Jeffrey Dahmer. Konerak, an Asian Pacific American immigrant from Laos, had been abducted by Dahmer, who tried to make him a "zombie" by drilling a hole in his head. Somehow, Konerak managed to escape—naked, bleeding, and disoriented—into the street. When questioned by the two police officers who found Konerak, Dahmer told them that Konerak was his nineteen-year-old lover who had drunk too much and had wandered into the street. The police officers believed Dahmer, and they returned Konerak to him. Shortly thereafter, Konerak was strangled to death by Dahmer. In his law review article, Kwan argues that Dahmer's imposition of a queer Asian Pacific American identity upon Konerak created "a fantasy scenario that posited [Dahmer] firmly as the dominant party ... [that was] so powerful as to foreclose a recognition" by the police officers of Konerak's plight (Kwan: 1290), and it literally resulted in Konerak's multiple fragmentation. The connections between this tragic real-life story and the "betrayal, rape, torture, murder, and dismemberment" (Trible: 65) of the unnamed concubine in Judges 19 are chilling. In sum, the multiple fragmentation and scattering of queer Asian Pacific American identities—in both literary and literal terms—diffuse the threat of our radical outsider status. The challenge for queer Asian Pacific Americans, therefore, is to attain wholeness and integrity in terms of our queer Asian Pacific American lives.

Applications to Other Scriptural Texts

Of course, a queer Asian Pacific American biblical hermeneutic of multiplicity would not be limited to the narrative of the unnamed concubine in Judges 19. Such a hermeneutic could also be applied to a number of different

scriptural texts. These might include texts that involve the multiple naming of characters and places such as God/Lord/El Shaddai/Ehyeh-Asher-Ehyeh, Abram/Abraham, Sarai/Sarah, Jacob/Israel, Jethro/Reuel/Hobab, Mount Sinai/Mount Horeb, and Saul/Paul. Other texts might include narratives of multiple silencing, such as the mysterious Nephilim in the book of Genesis who never speak and who are wiped out by the Lord (Gen 6:1–7), and the naked young man in the Gospel according to Mark who is without either a history or a voice (Mark 14:51–52). Still other texts might include narratives of multiple oppression, such as Jesus' simultaneous oppression by both the political and religious authorities (Luke 23:13–25), and the Letter to Philemon, in which Onesimus is oppressed by both Paul and Philemon (Phlm 11–15). Finally, these texts might include narratives of multiple fragmentation, such as the shattering of Sisera's skull by Jael (Judg 4:21; 5:26–27), the trampling of Jezebel's body by horses (2 Kgs 9:33), and Ezekiel in the valley of dry bones (Ezek 37:1–14).

A queer Asian Pacific American hermeneutic of multiplicity would also look to theological sources *outside* of the Bible for connections to ultimate reality that reflect our queer Asian Pacific American identities. Some examples of these sources might include Kuan Yin (the transgender Chinese *bodhisattva* of compassion), Qu Yuan (the queer Chinese shaman-poet), Ardhanarishvara (the transgender Hindu deity that is linked with androgyny and homoeroticism), and Amaterasu Omi Kami (the cross-dressing sun goddess of the Japanese religion of Shinto) (Conner, Sparks, and Sparks: 52, 67, 208, 275–76). By juxtaposing the Bible with these cross-cultural images of the divine, queer Asian Pacific American readers could develop creative new biblical readings that would reflect our experiences as radical outsiders both in terms of our sexualities and our geographies.

Conclusion

In sum, a queer Asian Pacific American biblical hermeneutic is committed to preserving the complexity and multidimensionality of scriptural texts. It resists the tendency of readers to reduce such narratives into one-dimensional stories or lessons. In particular, such an approach is committed to uncovering the various ways in which "multiplicity" is present in the Bible. Like the unnamed concubine who is gang-raped and dismembered in Judges 19, queer Asian Pacific Americans are radical sexual and geographical outsiders who experience multiplicity in a number of ways, including multiple naming, multiple silencing, multiple oppression, and multiple fragmentation. Paradoxically, a focus on multiplicity in reading the Bible results in the preservation of the wholeness and integrity of both the reader and the text. It is time that we queer Asian Pacific Americans acknowledge our experiences of multiplicity. In the words of Lani Ka'ahumanu, who is a bisexual,

biracial, Hawaiian-American feminist writer, poet, organizer, and activist: "It is time to nurture the organic radical integration process. / Differences recognized and appreciated give a sense of the whole.... / Assimilation is a lie. / It is spiritual erasure" (452).

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