

# ROBERT GAGNON'S *THE BIBLE AND HOMOSEXUAL PRACTICE* TEN YEARS AFTER : A NON-THEOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

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A specialist of the New Testament who devotes his career to what amounts to a crusade against the acceptance of homosexuality as a behavior in Church and society, Assistant Professor Gagnon has long stirred a fuss, on the internet, the airs of conservative radios and television networks, or behind the pulpit of Presbyterian churches, promoting his 2001 study *The Bible and Homosexual Practice. Texts and Hermeneutics* as the final word on that topic. He is still relentless in rebuking each and every progressive view which appears in the United States, though he no longer favors academic venues (journals, monographs, etc), unlike his fellow scholars who have no sympathy for his conclusions and have declared as much in their footnotes. His research was never subjected to an in-depth consideration ; more than ten years after, time seems ripe for the files to be reopened <sup>1</sup>, his presentation of the evidence checked and revised, its weak points assessed and, if feasible in a short compass, the flaws in his results removed. Moreover, several objections of no mean value which never crossed his mind should be raised.

As an academic contribution, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice* is not quite balanced. The author blends dogmatic theological exegesis, evangelical science equating homosexuality with a very unfortunate condition to be cured, and pure and simple blackening of GBLT persons through barrister's tricks <sup>2</sup> in order to reach a set of recommendations for the Church which do not command themselves by their moderation <sup>3</sup>. The book tries hard to maintain a veneer of technical scholarship : the

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<sup>1</sup> In accordance with Gagnon's obvious concern for the freshness of his secondary references, showcased by his scholarly apparatus (he deploys 7 titles dating from the year 2000 ; 15 from 1999 ; 20 from 1998 ; 27 from 1997 ; 21 from 1996 ; 28 from 1995).

<sup>2</sup> Viz. faulty inferences, logical circles, and especially Selbstzitat. As for the last, let me adduce an illustration : « as with alcoholism or pedophilia, there is good indication that macro-cultural (society) and micro-cultural (family, peer) influences, as well as incremental choices, can influence the intensity and even incidence of homosexual development (on this analogy, see further Gagnon, *Homosexual Practice*, 460-69 ; Gagnon and Via, 43-44, with online notes ; on the high rates of harm, see Gagnon, *Homosexual Practice*, 452-60, 471-85 ; Gagnon and Via online note 167 » : Gagnon, 'Sexuality', in K. J. Vanhoozer (ed.), *Dictionary for Theological Interpretation of the Bible* (London & Grand Rapids, 2005), pp. 739-748 at 748. So heavy a degree of self-quoting cannot pass muster as standard scholarly protocol.

<sup>3</sup> Even though he operates within an evangelical tradition which has long been noted for its outspokenness to oppose the assimilation of (the practice of) homosexuality with a civil right — as a sample, I shall cite G. L. Bahnsen, *Homosexuality. A Biblical View* (Grand Rapids, 1978), pp. 10, 99-124, with characteristic advocacy of faith-based politics (for example, 124 : « all civil law will be legislated morality, in some sense infringing on someone's freedom. The civil law does not aim to regenerate men but simply to restrain their outward behavior. Such laws are necessary to a social order, establishing the limits of liberty and the public

structure is clear, the style crisp, a bibliographic shorthand and a detailed apparatus of footnotes have been provided, while the most foreseeable objections which could be raised against Gagnon's contentions from the viewpoint of Queer apologetics are addressed in advance. This scriptural commentary on homosexuality intends (p. 37)

« to demonstrate two main points. First, there is clear, strong, and credible evidence that the Bible unequivocally defines same-sex intercourse as sin. Second, there exists no valid hermeneutical arguments, derived from either general principles of biblical interpretation or contemporary scientific knowledge and experience, for overriding the Bible's authority in this matter. In sum, the Bible presents the anatomical, sexual, and procreative complementarity of male and female as clear and convincing proof of God's will for sexual unions. Even those who do not accept the revelatory authority of Scripture should be able to perceive the divine will through the visible testimony of the structure of creation. Thus same-sex intercourse constitutes an inexcusable rebellion against the intentional design of the created order. It degrades the participants when they disregard nature's obvious clues, and results in destructive consequences for them as well as for society as a whole. The consequences include matters of health (catastrophic rates of disease and shortened life expectancy) and morals (unstable and destabilizing patterns of sexual behavior where short-term and non-monogamous relationships constitute the rule rather than the exception. »

So lofty a statement of purpose, couched in headstrong ethical language and determined by a literalistic reading of Scripture<sup>4</sup>, demands extensive evidence marshaled in such a way that it command assent by people who do not belong to the audience the work has been designed to cater to. If key data are found faulty or the arguments invalid, then *The Bible and Homosexual Practice* will likely only rank as a witness

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standards to which all members of the community must conform. God has infallibly decreed that the prohibition on homosexual relations is one standard and limit on human activity that is to be recognized in the social order and enforced by the state, thereby guarding the creation ordinance of heterosexual marriage ») —, his tough, holier-than-thou, posturing makes more sense in the context of the cultural wars of the eighties and nineties and, in our own age, would rather seem to belong to an ultraconservative fringe than to the mainstream. See K. D. Wald and G. B. Glover, 'Theological Perspectives on Gay Unions : The Uneasy Marriage of Religions and Politics', in C. A. Rimmerman and C. Wilcox (edd.), *The Politics of Same-Sex Marriage* (Chicago & London, 2007), pp. 105-129 at 109-114, 118-120, or W. Cadge and C. Wildeman, 'Facilitators and Advocates : How Mainline Protestant Clergy Respond to Homosexuality', *Sociological Perspectives* 51, 2008, pp. 587-603 at 594-600.

<sup>4</sup> The conjunction of these two traits is a shaky basis to build on and has been extensively denounced in the Far Right's advocacy of stigma : K. McQueeney, "'We are God's Children, Y' All'" : Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Lesbian- and Gay-Affirming Congregations', *Social Problems* 56, 2009, pp. 151-173 at 151-153. That Gagnon's very phrasing echoes the sexually stigmatizing rhetoric of the major anti-gay organizations as advertized online (J. M. Irvine, 'Anti-Gay Politics Online : A Study of Sexuality and Stigma on National Websites', *Sexuality Research and Social Policy. Journal of the NSRC* 2, 2005, pp. 3-21, particularly 6-10) is unsurprising, given his activism, but speaks ill of his commitment to impartiality.

to the cultural anger<sup>5</sup> targeting 'liberals', feminists and GBLT people as the sources of the supposed degeneracy of the United States in matters moral and sexual, and to the moral panic of right-wingers over changing sexual behavior<sup>6</sup>.

First, what about the scientific aspects? The section entitled 'Homosexuality has a genetic component that the writers of the Bible did not realize' (pp. 395-430), which surveys the research on the biological causes of same-sex affect, scores prima facie a positive mark by virtues of its sheer length and attention to detail. Evangelicals usually appeal to science for rhetorical rather than substantive purposes, whether they are mainstream or affirmative of homosexuality<sup>7</sup>; such is not the case for Gagnon, whose gazette at first glance looks neither desultory nor subsidiary. Eleven years after its publication, though, the moving horizon of scientific research allows

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<sup>5</sup> T. Frank's helpful concept: *What's the Matter with Kansas? How Conservatives Won the Heart of America* (New York, 2004), *passim*, most notably pp. 1-6, 160-176.

<sup>6</sup> D. di Mauro and C. Joffe, 'The Religious Right and the Reshaping of Sexual Policy: An Examination of Reproductive Rights and Sexuality Education', *Sexuality Research and Social Policy. Journal of the NSRC* 4, 2007, pp. 67-92 at 71-84, offers a competent, appropriately low-key narrative of the moral panics caused by sexual and reproductive issues since the seventies. F. Fejes' oft-quoted *Gay Rights and Moral Panic. The Origin of America's Debate on Homosexuality*, New York, 2008, is wholly unhelpful here for it focuses on the struggles of 1977-1978 and fails to bring new light on the notion and to properly link this homosexual panic to the contemporaneous one on child abuse and pornography (G. Youmans, in *GLQ. A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 17, 2010, pp. 205-207). Read rather G. H. Herdt, 'Gay Marriage: The Panic and the Right', in idem (ed.), *Moral Panics, Sex Panics. Fear and the Fight Over Sexual Rights* (New York, 2009), pp. 157-204 (on the backside of the reelection of G. W. Bush); R. Becker, *Gay TV and Straight America* (New Brunswick, N.J. & London, 2005), pp. 13-36 (on the anxieties of straight men faced with the questioning of once prominent sexual / ethical mores); and, for the mechanics at play in this puritanism, D. Wagner, *The New Temperance. The American Obsession with Sin and Vice* (Boulder, 1997), pp. 135-165, with the illuminative section on gay rights (157-161).

<sup>7</sup> S. L. Jones and M. A. Yarhouse, 'The Use, Misuse, and Abuse of Science in the Ecclesiastical Homosexuality Debate', in D. L. Balch (ed.), *Homosexuality, Science, and the 'Plain Sense' of Scripture* (Grand Rapids & Cambridge, 2000), pp. 73-120, with their conclusions at 116-120 (« citations of the scientific findings appear frequently, casually, and with great imprecision in ecclesiastical debates about the morality of homosexual behavior. We would argue, based upon our review, that the "findings of science" are not as clear as is commonly assumed, and that the logical implications of the findings of science are far less clear than is casually assumed in ecclesiastical study documents », p. 116). C. E. Gudorf's paper in Balch, 'The Bible and Science on Sexuality', pp. 121-141, somewhat awkwardly juxtaposes an account of the mainstream research (122-131) which, though sound, could not help but be very superficial, with a discussion of what she terms the 'biblical theological themes in Christian ethics on homosexuality' (131-139) which leads to the vaguely conciliatory conclusion that « sin is generally not difficult to recognize, at least by hindsight. Murder and adultery happen all around us, but few need to ask why they are sinful; their usual consequences explain their moral status. But the more likely we are to know homosexual persons, and the more we know about homosexuality, the more likely we are to question the universal sinfulness of every homosexual act », thereby illustrating the validity of Jones and Yarhouse's claim.

one to see where it has aged and what was botched <sup>8</sup>. On the one hand, I would not care to contest the, utterly negative, conclusions raised about the impact of the various genetic components which have been presumed to play a role in the sexual orientation or identity of man, had the quality of Gagnon's data reached reasonable levels and had his judgement been sound enough. This is not the case. Mistakes in basic logic do abound, due to an 'either/or' approach. Thus the seemingly impressive discussion of monozygotic twins (pp. 403-406) is nullified by the declaration on 461 that « if genetics alone accounted for homosexual orientation, then one would never find an instance where identical twins had different sexual orientations ». Sharing one genome cannot be pressed into meaning that both foetuses will grow the same way, if their glands do not produce exactly the same levels of hormones and if these hormones fail to activate their specific receptors in the same way <sup>9</sup>. What is more, Gagnon's selection of scientific papers does not match those of actual experts <sup>10</sup>; the discrepancy is large enough to cause concern as to his grasp of the technicalities. One looks in vain in his book for information on the large body of research concerned with animal sexuality. That the analogization between birds and some mammals which are known to deploy same-sex patterns and the human beings of the homosexual persuasion <sup>11</sup> is fraught with danger, does not mean that this issue shall remain

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<sup>8</sup> Today one should begin, barring the specific studies (a selection of which will appear in the following footnotes), with S. LeVay, *Gay, Straight, and the Reason Why. The Science of Sexual Orientation*, New York & Oxford, 2011, the most satisfactory and complete (XVII + 412 pp.) account to date, determinedly biological in its stance but seldom doctrinaire.

<sup>9</sup> The conditioning of the fetus through hormones eludes Gagnon entirely — on this complex phenomenon, cf. C. E. McCurdy and J. E. Friedman, 'Early Foetal Programming of Hepatic Gluconeogenesis : Glucocorticoids Strike Back', *Diabetologia* 49, 2006, pp. 1138-1141 (particularly 1138-1139); the follow up by S. P. Burns and R. D. Cohen in the same issue of this review, pp. 2809-2810; W. J. Kovacs and N. J. Olsen, 'Sexual Dimorphism of RA Manifestations : Genes, Hormones and Behavior', *Nature Reviews. Rheumatology* 7, 2001, pp. 307-310. In her comprehensive if a trifle bit overenthusiastic *Evolution's Rainbow. Diversity, Gender, and Sexuality in Nature and People* (Berkeley, Los Angeles & London, 2004), the late J. Roughgarden offers a sensible, if too lightly referenced, account of the cardinal role played by hormones in the maturation of the human being from the womb down to adult age (pp. 215-221, with the endnotes on 436); see also LeVay, index, s.v. 'Hormones'.

<sup>10</sup> Compare, e.g., the standard anthology edited by G. Einstein, *Sex and the Brain* (Cambridge, Mass. and London, 2007), pp. 689-790. Other omissions of Gagnon's include the powerful study by E. M. Miller 'Homosexuality, Birth Order, and Evolution : Toward an Equilibrium Reproductive Economics of Homosexuality', *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 29, 2000, pp. 1-34, which postulates that some genes downplaying the process of masculinization in the male fetus may well lead, eventually, to homosexual men (see 5-11). This claim has only been disproved in 2009, by P. Santtila, A.-L. Högbacka, P. Jern, A. Johansson, M. Varjonen, K. Witting, B. von der Pahlen and N. K. Sandnabba, 'Testing Miller's Theory of Alleles Preventing Androgenization as an Evolutionary Explanation for the Genetic Predisposition for Male Homosexuality', *Evolution and Human Behavior* 30, pp. 58-65, especially 62-64.

<sup>11</sup> As pioneered in the large B. Bagemihl, *Biological Exuberance. Animal Homosexuality and Natural Diversity*, New York, 1999, quite a mixed bag incorporating huge masses of sound

unheeded. Its omission by Gagnon is unfortunate, since research in animal biology indeed seems to show that sex/gender differences<sup>12</sup> are already encoded in the cells, an interim conclusion which, if it comes to be validated, will firmly root in facts the vastly popular GBLT slogan ‘born that way’<sup>13</sup>. The conclusion which springs to the mind is that *The Bible and Homosexual Practice* carefully weighs the evidence so that it bolsters its case, eschewing whatever does not fit. Indeed, Gagnon’s scientific gazette lacks fairness in that it signally fails to tackle a few primary issues : sexual

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data and ill-judged attacks on evolutionary biology or the paramour necessity of reproduction, but nonetheless a milestone in the refutation of the heterosexist bias according to which homosexuality is a trademark of man. The work provoked such a big ruckus within conservative circles in America that the chances of Gagnon’s not knowing it come close to zero. We are fortunate to have on our desks A. Poiani’s much sharper *Animal Homosexuality. A Biosocial Perspective, With a Chapter by A. Dickson*, Cambridge, 2010, including one of the most comprehensive bibliographies ever canvassed in the field of sexual studies (pp. 443-533, on twin columns). Here are his main conclusions : « homosexual patterns of behaviour occur more frequently among the Old World anthropoids (Cercopithecoidea, Hominoidea) than in New World monkeys (Ceboidea) and have rarely been reported in the prosimian primates. Although same-sex sexual body contacts are varied in primates, not all of these contacts have a strictly sexual origin or function. Thus caution is required when interpreting such behaviours. Homosexual behaviour in primates is at least partly concerned with the ritualised expression of sexual patterns, which serve a variety of social functions. Pleasure-seeking is one potential function of same-sex sexual behaviour, especially among the Old World anthropoids. Humans retain a significant potential for bisexual behaviour, a trait shared with the rest of the Old World anthropoids » (pp. 399-400).

<sup>12</sup> On which I. Vanwesenbeeck, ‘Doing Gender in Sex and Sex Research’, *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 38, 2009, pp. 883-898 at 883-889, is very illuminating, perhaps more so than LeVay, pp. 98-106, on gay versus straight gender characteristics. Cf. also T. Sandfort, ‘Sexual Orientation and Gender : Stereotypes and Beyond’, *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 34, 2005, pp. 595-611 at 598-607 (cf. 607-609, beyond masculinity and femininity).

<sup>13</sup> See, of late, D. Zhao, D. McBride, S. Nandi, H. A. McQueen, M. J. McGrew, P. M. Hocking, P. D. Lewis, H. M. Sang and M. Clinton, ‘Somatic Sex Identity is Cell Autonomous in the Chicken’, *Nature* 464, 2010, pp. 237-243, cf. on 240-241 : « these studies demonstrate that avian somatic cells possess a cell autonomous sex identity. Our results support and extend previous findings that showed that differences between male and female zebra finch brains were a result of endogenous genetic differences in the brain cells themselves. Our analysis of lateral gynandromorph birds, showing that they are male : female chimaeras, and our experimental generation of embryos with mixed-sex chimaeric gonads, together indicate that male and female somatic cells possess a sex identity. These observations indicate that there is a molecular mechanism functioning in every cell that confers a sex-specific identity that influences how individual cells respond to developmental and hormonal signals. We propose that cell-autonomous sex identity is dependent on sexually dimorphic gene expression resulting from the “dosage compensation” system that operates to equalize the phenotypic effects of characteristics determined by genes on the Z chromosome. Recent evidence has shown that this system in birds is not chromosome-wide and results in a large number of gene expression differences between male and female cells. » LeVay, pp. 129-219, details an impeccable overview of the genetic / biological putative roots of same-sex attraction.

differentiation<sup>14</sup> gets very short shrift, behavioral endocrinology is omitted<sup>15</sup>, and the sociological study of children's play at school<sup>16</sup>, though a basic tenet for someone, like Gagnon, who obsesses about postnatal factors, did not seem relevant. On the other hand, disproportionate attention is paid to the methodologically suspect research from N.A.R.T.H. participants, while a few more recent studies run counter to some of our section's most staunch denials<sup>17</sup> — something Gagnon could hardly anticipate but which serves as a necessary corrective to his nihilism. One thus gets a strong feeling of partisan scholarship. Proof that such must be the case comes from Gagnon's uncompromising insistence on issues of nurture instead of the interplay of biological and sociological factors. The absence of balance between physiology (pp. 396-408) and psychology (408-430, for it also informs the section on the capability of homosexuality to be changed / cured) in his account underscores the bias of the book. Now, the poor quality of the psychological views marshaled is obvious : too many tenets have been allowed to stay offstage, not excluding the infamous Gender Identity Disorder of Childhood (GIDC)<sup>18</sup> ; the considerations on the gender devel-

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<sup>14</sup> Its very latest book-length treatment, by sociologists H. Martin and S. E. Finn, *Masculinity and Femininity in the MMPI-2 and MMPI-A*, Minneapolis & London, 2010, clearly explains most the basics on pp. 6-30 and then proceeds to unravel the history of modern research on 32-59. Their own contribution needs a very discriminating attitude, as stated by S. V. Rouse, 'Assessing Masculinity and Femininity, Without the Jingle or Jangle', *Sex Roles* 66, 2012, pp. 149-151 (they notably incline to reduce the importance of the social construction of genders, witness pp. 209-212). See also Vanwesenbeeck, pp. 892-895.

<sup>15</sup> Even though it is a branch mature enough, as evinced by the sensible account of N. Neave (a psychologist), *Hormones and Behaviour. A Psychological Approach*, Cambridge, 2007, pp. 125-129 of which focus on the hormonal approach to homosexuality (he incidentally corroborates the interim conclusion that 'female homosexuality is no a simple 'mirror image' of male homosexuality' [p. 129]), cf. 133-134 for a survey of the neurohormonal theories).

<sup>16</sup> S. A. Berenbaum, C. L. Martin, L. D. Hanish, P. T. Briggs and R. A. Fabes, 'Sex Differences in Children's Play', in J. B. Becker and others (edd.), *Sex Differences in the Brain. From Genes to Behavior* (Oxford & New York, 2008), pp. 275-290, will serve as a decent introduction to this topic. One of their conclusions runs as follows : « all three primary causal explanations for the development of sex-differentiated play have received some empirical support. Although early sex hormones, parent and peer socialization, and gender schemas have often been pitted against each other, these influences almost certainly act together, and the key question concerns how that happens » (p. 286).

<sup>17</sup> K. Alanko, Santtila, N. Harlaar, Witting, Varjonen, Jern, Johansson, von der Pahlen and Sandnabba, 'Common Genetic Effects of Gender Atypical Behavior and Sexual Orientation in Adulthood : A Study of Finnish Twins', *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 39, 2010, pp. 81-92, argue that « in sum, we found genetic effects on GAB and sexual orientation for both men and women. The genetic correlation between GAB and same-sex sexual orientation was substantial for male and moderate for female participants. The findings indicate a shared genetic influence for the traits » (p. 91). In other words, *dies diem docet*.

<sup>18</sup> Classic expositions in K. J. Zucker and S. J. Bradley, *Gender Identity Disorder and Psychosexual Problems in Children and Adolescents*, New York, 1995, especially pp. 11-77, and P. T. Cohen-Kettenis and F. Pfäffin, *Transgenderism and Intersexuality in Childhood and*

opment of children, which take pride of space, are little more than a collection of conservative commonplaces evincing little familiarity with the field and no great lucidity<sup>19</sup>; last but not least, an uncritical report of the 'ex-gay' movement (pp. 420-430 'Can homosexuals change?') serves as evidence for the non-innate character of homosexuality<sup>20</sup>. The rehearsal of that one canard which dies hard among evan-

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*Adolescence* (Thousand Oaks, CA, 2003), pp. 1-84, 105-129; for a fair examination of this psychiatric diagnosis along with its early research and the debates it has stirred in the last decade or so, read K. Bryant, 'Making Gender Identity Disorder of Childhood: Historical Lessons for Contemporary Debates', *Sexuality Research & Social Policy* 3, 2006, pp. 23-39. As Bryant remarks on 35, « (...) revising or eliminating the diagnosis becomes secondary as to the more immediate (and I would argue more important) task of developing new models of mental health support for gender-variant children ». Cf. LeVay, pp. 83-88.

<sup>19</sup> One does look in vain, in Gagnon, for references to the Child Behavior Checklist, a very widely-used standardized measure for evaluating maladaptive behavioral and emotional problems (the basics e.g. in P. J. Frick, C. T. Barry and R. W. Kamphaus, *Clinical Assessment of Child and Adolescent Personality and Behavior. Third Edition* [New York, 2010; first ed. in 1996], pp. 156, 158-162; useful figures with a survey of previous literature in Zucker, Bradley and M. Sanikhani, 'Sex Differences in Referral Rates of Children with Gender Identity Disorder: Some Hypotheses', *Journal of Abnormal Child Psychology* 25, 1997, pp. 217-227 at 219-221), or to such a basic concept as the 'core gender identity' coined by R. J. Stoller as long ago as 1968 (in *Sex and Gender. The Development of Masculinity and Femininity*, New York, pp. 29-30, 33-34 and *passim*) to denote the fundamental sense of being male, female or of undetermined sex that the child develops between 18 and 30 months and that seldom changes afterwards. Neither does Gagnon pursue the links between gender atypicality in children (identity as well as behavior) and adult homosexuality, even when some data are at hand that seem to corroborate his assertions — the study by D. P. VonderLaan, L. M. Gothreau, N. H. Bartlett and P. L. Vasey, 'Recalled Separation Anxiety and Gender Atypicality in Childhood: A Study of Canadian Heterosexual and Homosexual Men and Women', *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 40, 2011, pp. 1233-1240 at 1239-140, claims that « there appears to be some support for the hypothesis that elevated childhood separation anxiety is generally associated with elevated female-typical childhood behavior and identity. That is, the hypothesis seems to apply with respect to homosexual men. As a group, they exhibited elevated childhood femininity as well as elevated childhood separation anxiety, and increases in the former were associated with increases in the latter. » Read also Alanko, Santtila, Harlaar, Witting, Varjonen, Jern, Johansson, von der Pahlen and Sandnabba, 'The Association Between Childhood Gender Atypical Behavior and Adult Psychiatric Symptoms is Moderated by Parenting Style', *Sex Roles* 58, 2008, pp. 837-847, who find out, at 843-844, that over-control or coldness by parents play a crucial role. All of this, combined with the extraordinary omission of the GIDC (on which see further B. Möller, H. Schreier, A. Li and G. Romer, 'Gender Identity Disorder in Children and Adolescents', *Current Problems in Pediatric and Adolescent Health Care* 39, 2009, pp. 117-143, cf. 117-130 for an overview on research and treatment) makes one question the competence with which Gagnon worked his way through the maze of psychological data at hand and ask whether, as a researcher, he grew any eye for what is crucial.

<sup>20</sup> A path riddled with scandals (most of its prominent advocates having come under fire for issues of personal honesty and a fair number of famous former homosexuals being known as influence-peddlers), it pertains more to politics than to science: C. Burack, *Sin, Sex, and De-*

gelicals and conservatives, that there exists a direct relation between homosexuality and pedophilia <sup>21</sup>, brainwashes the reader into seeing GBLT Americans as persons inclined to a most abject crime ; for Gagnon goes to the length of speaking, on p. 480, of ‘homosexual pedophiles’ in a general manner that is totally unwarranted in a scientific inquiry. Such rhetorical devices serve to conceal the fact that the only thing scientists seem to agree on is the absence of consensus in their midst regarding a biological influence on the development of homosexuality <sup>22</sup> ; Gagnon’s focus on cognitive and developmental issues in his scientific gazette at the expense of hard-core genetics, biochemistry, endocrinology and so forth, far from being a howler, is another clue to his strategy of obfuscation. Things being so, with ten years worth of scientific research to integrate now, it stands to reason that very little authority shall be attached to that part of *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*.

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*mocracy. Antigay Rhetoric and the Christian Right* (Albany, 2008), pp. 67-97 ; though dated, the collective ‘Peer Commentaries on Spitzer (2003)’, *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 32, 2003, pp. 419-468, preserves a fair sample of reactions to the claims of reparation therapy to some success, many of these commentaries wary of the biases of its advocates (pp. 421, 423, 426-427, etc). Read further J. M. Serovich, S. M. Craft, P. Toviessi, R. Gangamma, T. McDowell and E. L. Grafsk, ‘A Systematic Review of the Research Base on Sexual Reorientation Therapies’, *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy* 34, 2008, pp. 227-238, which concludes that these therapies lack rigor and pale in the face of their theoretical shortcomings. Briefly put, the main objection to ex-gay ministers is that though they advertize their ability to change the sexual orientation of gay men, they only, if at all, manage to induce shifts in these men’s sexual attraction — not quite the same result. As for the huge deal of ideological special pleading embedded there, it is sampled in L. Gerber, ‘Nature, Creation, and Queerish Ex-Gay Experiments’, *Nova Religio. The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions* 11, 2008, pp. 8-30 at 21-26 (cf. 14-21 for the attacks on nature as the source of gender essentialism).

<sup>21</sup> Cf. as to the contrary M. C. Seto, ‘Pedophilia and Sexual Offences Against Children’, *Annual Review of Sex Research* 15, 2004, pp. 321-361 at 345-346. Gagnon will not listen, who equates ‘true identity’ with anatomic gender conformity (*contra*, H. F. L. Meyer-Bahlbur, ‘From Mental Disorder to Iatrogenic Hypogonadism : Dilemmas in Conceptualizing Gender Identity Variants as Psychiatric Conditions’, *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 39, 2010, pp. 461-476, particularly 461-462) in his ideologically-driven ‘Scriptural Perspectives on Homosexuality and Sexual Identity’, *Journal of Psychology and Christianity* 24, 2005, p. 293.

<sup>22</sup> Interestingly enough, many of those who refuse this linkage simplify the issues, speaking, for example, of structural peculiarities within gay people — which, of course, have not been discovered yet (so A. Ågmo, *Functional and Dysfunctional Sexual Behavior. A Synthesis of Neuroscience and Comparative Psychology* [Amsterdam & London, 2007], pp. 336-343 at 342-343 : « I do not think it is unfair to propose that to date there is no convincing evidence for a genetic or structural difference between homosexual and heterosexual men »). Against such hardcore scepticism may be adduced S. Bocklandt, S. Horvath, E. Vilain and D. H. Hamer, ‘Extreme Skewing of X Chromosome Inactivation in Mothers of Homosexual Men’, *Human Genetics* 118, 2006, pp. 691-694. Another crucial fact to which neither Ågmo nor the wholly derivative Gagnon pay the least bit of attention is that « whatever the exact nature of the genetic factor, it is interesting that such a factor has stayed present in the population throughout human history, given that homosexuals do not tend to procreate as much as the rest of the population » (Savic *et alii*, p. 53). This datum resists all manipulations.

The book canvasses much evidence from the Ancient Near East and the Greco-Roman world with an air of confidence and a parade of scholarly authorities in the notes, as a tool for its disentangling the position of Scripture on homosexuality. The accuracy of such ancillary matters should have been Gagnon's absolute priority ; for whoever embarks on a task such as this must prove to be a judicious master of both method and materials<sup>23</sup>. Unfortunately, the Greek scholarship which roots the work is superficial and simply inadequate. As soon as he ventures beyond the language, ideas and culture of the New Testament, Gagnon indulges in wanton misrepresentation of data. Let me adduce his lecture on 234 :

« *desires*. Gk *epithymiais*. LSJ : “desire, yearning ; (also) longing, passion ; (generally) appetite ; (especially) sexual desire, lust” ; BAGD : “desire, longing, craving”. In Greek thought generally the word can have a neutral or positive sense, though from the time of Plato on and particularly with the Stoics the word typically acquires the negative sense of a desire for what is not one's own, forbidden, and outside one's moral purpose. Thus, Plato, *Phaedo*, 83 B : “the soul that truly belongs to philosophy thus abstains from both pleasures (*hēdonōn*) and desires (*epithymiōn*)” (...) »

Actually *ἐπιθυμία* neither means a forbidden impulse in Plato (for whom, though an appetite, it can be base or noble<sup>24</sup>) nor gained a whole complex of negative, moral

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<sup>23</sup> See S. G. F. Brandon, *The Judgement of the Dead. An Historical and Comparative Study of the Idea of a Post-Mortem Judgement in the Major Religions* (London, 1967), p. IX : « the task of the historian of religions is basically the same of that of the historian of any other form of human activity. He is concerned to understand ideas, actions and institutions of a specific kind of past generations of men and women. Although his subject matter is often very various and complex, he seeks to elucidate it by employing the same methods and techniques of research as are used by his colleagues in other fields of historical enquiry. However, while his approach and presentation of his findings must be as strictly academic as those of the political and economic historian, the historian of religions is ever aware that he is dealing with issues that have more than academic interest. »

<sup>24</sup> E. des Places, *Lexique de la langue philosophique et religieuse de Platon* (= *Platon. Oeuvres complètes*, XIV ; Paris, 1964), pp. 197-198, has a selective classification of its shades of meaning (‘desire (generally speaking) ; passion (including lust) ; craving (for virtue, science, etc)’) ; exhaustive figures in L. Brandwood, *A Word Index to Plato* (Leeds, 1976), pp. 375-376. It must be remarked that the word is vague enough that it may be twisted into meaning even the satisfaction of the desire or its very object, cf. Lysias' speech (a possibly genuine piece of pederastic sophistry) in the *Phaedrus*, 232 a 7-b 3 *ἔτι δὲ τοὺς μὲν ἐρώωντας, πολλοὺς ἀνάγκη πιθέσθαι καὶ ἰδεῖν ἀκολουθοῦντας τοῖς ἐρωμένοις καὶ ἔργον τοῦτο ποιομένους, ὥστε, ὅταν ὀφθῶσι διαλεγόμενοι ἀλλήλοις, τότε αὐτοὺς οἶονται ἢ γεγενημένης ἢ μελλούσης ἔσσεσθαι τῆς ἐπιθυμίας συνεῖναι* (‘(...) so, when one sees them chatting, one believes that there already is, or there soon is to be, an *ἐπιθυμία* <for (*or* : between) them>’), with G. J. de Vries, *A Commentary on the Phaedrus of Plato* (Amsterdam, 1969), p. 63. Instead of quoting the *Phaedo* snippet in splendid isolation, thus faking the whole Platonic usage, Gagnon would have been far better off with any of the passages illustrating the tripartite division of the soul / mind

overtones from that philosopher onward. Aristotelian psychology too had little need nor use of an entirely negative desire, not unimportant a point since Paul has been shown to draw, at a remote, on the Stagirite for his ethics<sup>25</sup>. The prevalence of the morally pejorative take on ἐπιθυμία after Zeno's decree that the sage was to be free from all kinds of passions<sup>26</sup>, which he equated with illnesses, is obvious and tallies with an early Stoic innovation ; but the somewhat different views held by Epicurus around the same time, who only condones those desires which are both natural and necessary to the happy life<sup>27</sup>, make one weary of any definitive statement, including

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into 'appetite', τὸ ἐπιθυμητικόν, 'spiritedness', τὸ θυμοειδές, and 'reason', τὸ λογιστικόν, the most detailed of which is *Republic*, IV, 436 a 8-441 c 3, particularly 439 d 4-8 οὐ δὲ ἀλόγως, ἦν δ' ἐγώ, ἀξιόσομεν αὐτὰ διττὰ τε καὶ ἕτερα ἀλλήλων εἶναι, τὸ μὲν ὧι λογίζεται λογιστικὸν προσαγορεύοντες τῆς ψυχῆς, τὸ δὲ ὧι ἐραῖ τε καὶ πεινῆι καὶ διψῆι καὶ περὶ τὰς ἄλλας ἐπιθυμίας ἐπτόγηται ἀλόγιστόν τε καὶ ἐπιθυμητικόν, πληρώσεών τινων καὶ ἡδονῶν ἐταίρον. But none of these texts would have bolstered Gagnon's very untrue claim. A glance at the Platonic lexica or at F. D. Miller Jr, 'Plato on the Parts of the Soul', in J. M. van Ophuijsen (ed.), *Plato and Platonism* (Washington, 1999), pp. 84-101 at 92 or 97-98, was remedy enough.

<sup>25</sup> B. Blumenfeld, *The Political Paul. Justice, Democracy and Kingship in a Hellenistic Framework* (London & New York, 2003), pp. 45-94 at 84-86, especially 85 (« in Aristotle, *epithumia* describes the middle range of the soul. A composite faculty, *epithumia* may heed reason or disregard it. The seat of appetites and of desire in general, to *epithumia* also belong *aretai*, qualities, in this case of the moral kind. These refer to a thought-desire system (*nous-orexis*), a system of variables controlled by choice (*proairesis*). Hellenistic popular philosophy, to which Paul is indebted, focused on this intermediary rational-irrational part, the domain of ethics. In Romans, *epithumia* (1.24) and *orexis* (1.27) describe precisely this intermediary aspect of the soul, connected, as in Aristotelianism, with morals »). On Aristotle's stance as to the emotions, M. C. Nussbaum, *The Therapy of Desire. Theory and Practice in Hellenistic Ethics* (Princeton, 1994), pp. 78-100 ; on Paul's stance, S. Lyonnet and L. Sabourin, *Sin, Redemption, and Sacrifice. A Biblical and Patristic Study* (Rome, 1970), pp. 52-53,

<sup>26</sup> M. Pohlenz, *Die Stoa. Geschichte einer geistigen Bewegung*, I (Göttingen, 1992<sup>7</sup> [1948]), pp. 141-153 at 148-150 (« daß die Begierde in einer Reihe mit den 'Gefühlen' auftritt, entspricht dem hellenischen Empfinden, für das die Vorstellung eines künftigen Gutes notwendig das Streben nach ihm auslöst », p. 148) ; M. van Straaten, *Panétius. Sa vie, ses écrits et sa doctrine avec une édition des fragments* (Amsterdam, 1946), pp. 182-190 at 183-184 (e.g. « lorsque les Stoïciens estiment l'ἐπιθυμία, la convoitise, condamnable, parce qu'elle est une tendance trop forte et effrénée vers les προηγμένα, ils ne peuvent avoir eu que l'intention de condamner cette licence effrénée, ce πλεονασμός », p. 183) ; etc. P. P. Fuentes Gonzales, *Les diatribes de Télès* (Paris, 1998), pp. 411-412, collects many texts illustrating the topos of the irrepressible desires, cf. also on 494-497 (the Stoic notion of ἀπάθεια = εὐπάθεια) ; D. Babut, *Plutarque et le stoïcisme* (Paris, 1969), pp. 319-230, shows well the weaknesses of the Stoic stance as to the emotions, on which see Nussbaum, pp. 316-401. I fail to grasp the rationale behind Gagnon's suppression of the context in which the Stoics refused all passions, *perturbationes animi* ~ πάθη, viz. a medical model comparing the working philosopher to a physician ; they inherited it from Aristotle (Nussbaum, pp. 48-53) and used it extensively.

<sup>27</sup> *Letter to Menoecus*, 127-128 ἀναλογιστέον δὲ ὡς τῶν ἐπιθυμιῶν αἱ μὲν εἰσι φυσικαί, αἱ δὲ κεναί, καὶ τῶν φυσικῶν αἱ μὲν ἀναγκαῖαι, αἱ δὲ φυσικαὶ μόνον· τῶν δ' ἀναγκαίων αἱ μὲν πρὸς

Gagnon's asseveration that the Stoics represent a landmark in the semantic history of ἐπιθυμία — if I do not read too much into his informal, loosely phrased sentence, for his recourse to adverbs ('particularly', 'typically') cannot help blurring the edges of the matter. Anyway, Gagnon not only distorts the evolution of the meanings of our lexeme by misrepresenting Plato and casting the light on both him and the Stoics for the negative value he recognizes in Romans 1 :24, something that misleads him into implying that Paul merely follows or adapts here a classical Greek theme<sup>28</sup>. He fails to acknowledge the negative moral value of ἐπιθυμία as being in current use in Hellenistic Greek, witness the *Silloi* of Timo Phlious (H. Lloyd-Jones and P. Parsons, *Supplementum Hellenisticum* [Berlin & New York, 1983], n°845 p. 394 πάντων μὲν πρώτιστα κακῶν ἐπιθυμίη ἐστί), which makes his summary yet more one-dimensional, and veers right into falsification when he covers up the crucial fact that Hellenistic Judaism knows both this meaning (so the first century B.C./AD Wisdom of Solomon 4 :12 καὶ ῥεμβασμὸς ἐπιθυμίας μεταλλεύει νοῦν ἄκακον, a passage that recalls Timo's verse, and Siracid 23 :5 καὶ ἐπιθυμίαν ἀπόστρεψον ἀπ' ἐμοῦ) and the more classical ones<sup>29</sup>. All of this amounts to a blatant misconstruction of Greek intellectual history by Gagnon, the sign of a bad command of philology on his part. An important aspect

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εὐδαιμονίαν εἰσὶν ἀναγκαῖαι, αἱ δὲ πρὸς τὴν τοῦ σώματος ἀοχλησίαν, αἱ δὲ πρὸς αὐτὸ τὸ ζῆν. Τούτων γὰρ ἀπλανῆς θεωρία πᾶσαν αἴρεσιν καὶ φυγὴν ἐπανάγειν οἶδεν ἐπὶ τὴν τοῦ σώματος ὑγίειαν καὶ τὴν τῆς ψυχῆς ἀταραξίαν, ἐπεὶ τοῦτο τοῦ μακαρίως ζῆν ἐστὶ τέλος. Τούτου γὰρ χάριν πάντα πραττόμεν, ὅπως μῆτε ἀλγῶμεν μῆτε ταρβῶμεν, with the other passages assembled in H. Usener, *Glossarium Epicureum, edendum curaverunt M. Gigante et W. Schmid* (Rome, 1977), pp. 279-280 ; see A. A. Long and D. N. Sedley, *The Hellenistic Philosophers, I Translation of the Principal Sources with Philosophical Commentary* (Cambridge, 1987), pp. 121-125 at 123-124. Rather than sup full with other items of scholarly literature, let me quote the Epicurean inscription at Oinoanda, whose snippets relevant to ἐπιθυμία are absent in Long & Sedley : fr. 32, VI 10-VII 3 - - - ἡμεῖν δὲ] ἀπ[οδει]χτέον τίνες τε τῶν ἐπιθυμιῶν φυσικαὶ καὶ τίνες | μὴ· καὶ τὸ σύνολον πάν|θ' ὅσαπερ ἂν εἰς τὸν πρό[τερον ἀριθμὸν εἰσφέρη] | [ται ραϊδίως συμπληροῦ|ται (M. F. Smith, *Diogenes of Oinoanda. The Epicurean Inscription. Edited with Introduction, Translation, and Notes* [Napoli, 1992], pp. 200-201), and especially fr. 34, VI 14-VII 12 τὰ οὖν ὀχλοῦντα τίνα | [ἐστ]ίν· φόβοι μὲν [εἰσιν] | — [ὁ] μὲν ἐκ θεῶν, ὁ [δ'] ἀπὸ | [θ]ανάτου, ὁ δ' ἀπ' [ἀλγη] | [δ]όνων —, πρὸς δὲ [τοῦ] | [τρὶς ἐπιθυμίαι το] | [φυσικὸς ὅρους [ἐκ-τρέ] | [χουσαι. Αἱ γὰρ ῥί] | [ζαι] | κακῶν πάντων [εἰσιν] | [ἔ] | [ταί] | [τας μὴ] | ὑποτέρωμεν, [ὄχλος] | κακῶν ἡμεῖν [προσ] | [φύ]σεται (idem, p. 210).

<sup>28</sup> If anything, Paul's strongly-phrased farewell to the passions in 24 puts in mind Diogenes' no less trenchant qualification of them (alongside all disturbing emotions) as 'the roots of all evils', ῥίζαι κακῶν πάντων (fr. 34, VII 7-8). Lacking a comprehensive albeit cautious exploration of the apostle's awareness of the doctrines of Epicurus, one has to fall back on N. W. DeWitt, *Saint Paul and Epicurus* (Minneapolis, 1954), pp. 18-19.

<sup>29</sup> Lyonnet, *Les étapes de l'histoire du salut selon l'épître aux Romains* (Paris, 1969), pp. 128-130 ; F. Watson, *Agape, Eros, Gender. Towards a Pauline Sexual Ethics* (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 154-156, more pointedly 156 note 13 in which he discusses 4 Maccabees 2 :5. Cf. also R. Weber, 'Die Geschichte des Gesetzes und des Ich in Römer 7,7-8,4', *Neue Zeitschrift für systematische Theologie und Religionsphilosophie* 29, 1987, pp. 147-179 at 154-155.

of scholarly protocol stands at issue here : who but a biased polemicist could feel lexicographically vindicated as to the semantic history of a word once the relevant entries in two of the standard dictionaries, one of which is outdated and profoundly flawed <sup>30</sup>, have been skimmed and a couple of unrepresentative quotations from authors who hardly count as semantic landmarks are showcased as evidence for the very shade of meaning one was interested in from the start <sup>31</sup> ?

The above complex of errors and disinformation is matched by the quality of Gagnon's apologetics when it touches on things Classical. Within his refutation of D. B. Martin's take on the *παρὰ φύσιν* of Rom 1 :26 <sup>32</sup>, he writes (p. 386) that his

« contention that in antiquity “homosexual desire is not itself ‘contrary to nature’” is false. To make such a claim Martin has to draw too great a divide between homoerotic desire and homoerotic action. »

The objection raised is inept, especially at this level of generality ; what counted for the Greeks was the act, viz. anal intercourse per se, vis-à-vis the status of those who engage into it, rather than either the rationale that might stand behind it or the sheer desire it evinces <sup>33</sup>. Moreover, the appeal to φύσις in sexual matters to cast a moral

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<sup>30</sup> LSJ<sup>9</sup> : J. Chadwick, ‘Semantic History and Greek Lexicography’, in F. Létoublon (ed.), *La langue et les textes en grec ancien. Actes du colloque Pierre Chantraine (...)* (Amsterdam, 1992), pp. 281-288. Remarkably, neither Chantraine's *Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque. Histoire des mots*, Paris, 1968-1980, 4 volumes, which puts the lexicography of LSJ up to date, nor G. H. W. Lampe's indispensable *Patristic Greek Dictionary*, Oxford, 1961 (pp. 524-525 for ἐπιθυμία), appear anywhere in *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*.

<sup>31</sup> As proof that one must not work from lexis only, cf. ἀρμόζεσθαι. The most complete inquest (LSJ) only gives ‘betroth’ in the active and middle and ‘take to wife’ in the middle, yet Parthenius of Nicaea, *Sufferings of Love*, 7.1, deploys it as ‘win over’ predicated of a boy (... παιδὸς διαφόρου τὴν ὄψιν... τῶν πάντων δοκίμων Ἀντιλέων ἠράσθη· ὅς πολλὰ μηχανώμενος οὐδὰ μῆτι δυνατὸς ἦν αὐτὸν ἀρμόσασθαι, « there was a lovely lad (...) from a very good stock, with Antileon as his suitor ; much as he tried, the latter was wholly unable to win his heart »). We shall always be leery of possible *unica*, especially in matters as fluid as those sexual.

<sup>32</sup> ‘Heterosexism and the Interpretation of Romans 1: 18-32’, *Biblical Interpretation* 3, 1995, pp. 332-355 at 343-349 = *Sex and the Single Savior. Gender and Sexuality in Biblical Interpretation* (Louisville, Ky, 2006), pp. 51-64 (text), 206-212 (notes) at 55-60, 207-211.

<sup>33</sup> Proof that sexuality was not conceived as natural or unnatural, but conform or not conform to the societal / ethnic norm (rule, custom), {οὐ} κατὰ νόμον, comes from Herodotus, I, 61.1-2, apropos of anal sex between the demagogic leader Pisistratus and his wife : οὐ βουλόμενός οἱ γενέσθαι ἐκ τῆς νεογάμου γυναικὸς τέκνα ἐμίσητό οἱ οὐ κατὰ νόμον. Τὰ μὲν νυν πρῶτα ἔκρυπτε παῦτα ἢ γυνή, μετὰ δέ, (...) ἢ δὲ τῶι ἀνδρὶ τὸν δὲ δεινὸν τι ἔσχε ἀτιμάζεσθαι πρὸς Πεισιστράτου (D. Asheri, in idem, A. B. Lloyd and A. Corcella, *A Commentary on Herodotus. Books I-IV. Edited by O. Murray and A. Moreno, with a Contribution by M. Brosius* [Oxford, 2007], pp. 123-124 ; also D. Ogden, *Greek Bastardy in the Classical and Hellenistic Periods* [ibid., 1996], p. 46 with note 51). It has been obvious for Greek scholars since J. J. Winkler's demonstration, that φύσις in straight or same-sex dealings comes very close to νόμος, viz. to culture or accepted customs / conventions, cf. παρανόμημα, ‘transgression, vile act’, at Polybius

blame on male-male love and intercourse, from Plato on, is a double-edged sword, despite Gagnon's heavy-handed, unilateral exposition of its pedigree<sup>34</sup>. The case of that passionate pederast, the epigrammatist Strato of Sardis (first half of the second century AD), is paradigmatic. Feigning to defer to the authority of φύσις in *Palatine Anthology*, XII 245, Strato ironically toys with the contrast between βινεῖν (beasts) and πυγίζειν (humans), whereas he broaches animal homosexuality in XII 238 with a wit and a luxury of details that leave little doubt as to where his sympathy stands :

Ἀλλήλοις παρέχουσιν ἀμοιβαδίην ἀπόλαυσιν  
οἱ κύνειοι πῶλοιο μειρακιευόμενοι·

Πᾶν ἄλογον ζῶιον βινεῖ μόνον· οἱ λογικοὶ δὲ ἀμφαλλάξ δὲ οἱ αὐτοὶ ἀπόστροφα νωτοβατοῦνται  
τῶν ἄλλων ζῶιων τοῦτ' ἔχουμεν τὸ πλεόν τὸ δρᾶν καὶ τὸ παθεῖν ἀντιπεραινώμενοι.  
πυγίζειν εὐρόντες. Ὅσοι δὲ γυναιξὶ κρατοῦνται, Οὐ πλεονεκτεῖται δ' οὐδ' ἄτερος· ἄλλοτε μὲν γὰρ  
τῶν ἀλόγων ζῶιων οὐδὲν ἔχουσι πλεόν. ἴσταται ὁ προδιδοῦς ἄλλοτ' ὅπισθε πάλιν.  
Τοῦτ' ἐστὶν πάντως τὸ παροίμιον· εἰς γὰρ ἀμοιβήν,  
ὡς λέγεται, κνήθειν οἶδεν ὄνος τὸν ὄνον.

The few texts linking male twosomes with unnaturalness (Gagnon, p. 386 note 57) do come from Jewish or Christian sources and have no say in the matter ; for the Judeo-Christian views on homosexuality as *παρὰ φύσιν*<sup>35</sup> are but a radical modification of the long-held Greek notions which a reader of Paul should be careful not to obscure to ward off Gagnon's misunderstanding<sup>36</sup>. Martin was right in his contention<sup>37</sup>.

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XXIII, 10.2, XXXVI, 17.13, XXXVIII, 6.2 (*The Constraints of Desire. The Anthropology of Sex and Gender in Ancient Greece* [New York & London, 1990], pp. 17-44 at 17-23, 36-43) ; and the original stance of Musonius Rufus against all sexual practices between males is but a idiosyncratic twist on the old (G. J. Pendrick, *Antiphon the Sophist. The Fragments* [Cambridge, 2002], pp. 319-321 and 352-356, after G. B. Kerferd, *The Sophistic Movement* [ibid., 1981], pp. 111-130, or J. de Romilly, *Les grands sophistes dans l'Athènes de Périclès* [Paris, 1988], pp. 197-205) antithesis νόμος versus φύσις : cf. C. A. Williams, *Roman Homosexuality. Ideologies of Masculinity in Classical Antiquity* (Oxford & New York, 1999), pp. 54-55, 239-241 ; second, revised edition (ibid., 2010), pp. 58-59, 272-274.

<sup>34</sup> Read B. S. Thornton, *Eros. The Myth of Ancient Greek Sexuality* (Boulder, 1997), pp. 100-105, who aptly writes on 101 that « both of these explanations of homosexuality — as either an 'unnatural' perversion of sex or an excessive expression of its essential nature — can be found in ancient Greek literary remains. Choosing one of the two to the exclusion of the other, which is often the practice among modern scholars, oversimplifies the complexity of attitudes attested in the evidence », on the Greek side, and Williams, pp. 231-244 (?), pp. 269-277), on the Roman. Cf. P. W. Ludwig, *Eros and Polis. Desire and Community in Greek Political Theory* (Cambridge, 2002), pp. 105-109, about the priority of φύσις to νόμος in same-sex ἔρωσ according to Plato ; B. Inwood, *Ethics and Human Action in Early Stoicism* (Oxford, 1985), pp. 194-215, for τὰ κατὰ φύσιν ; and C. Bryan, *A Preface to Romans. Notes on the Epistle in Its Literary and Cultural Setting* (ibid., 2000), pp. 84-89, on κατὰ / παρὰ φύσιν for Paul.

<sup>35</sup> That beloved argument of Gagnon's against same-sex acts can be turned on its head. We know that the natural character of heterosexual incest was an open question in fifth-century

The background of the New Testament fares no better. The kind of writer who dubs Second-Temple Judaism ‘Early Judaism’ (chapter 2 ‘Same-Sex Intercourse as “Contrary to Nature” in Early Judaism’, pp. 159-183)<sup>38</sup>, Gagnon tacitly enforces his Christian theology on his Greco-Roman data<sup>39</sup>. Thus, on p. 169 (italics mine) :

« the second main reason why same-sex intercourse was rejected as “contrary to nature” extends from reproductive capability to the anatomical fittedness (...). Sin-

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Athens, at least as much as tragedy bears testimony to the contemporary debates (R. Goossens, *Euripide et Athènes* [Brussels, 1962], pp. 143-144, with the endnotes on 183).

<sup>36</sup> Charito, II, 3.2 = adespote comic fragment 127\* Kassel-Austin ἔξω σε γαμετὴν παίδων ἐπ’ ἀρότωι κατὰ νόμους Ἑλληνικούς (*Poetae Comici Graeci*, VIII [Berlin & New York, 1995], p. 44) shows that, for the Greeks of his date (1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD), the procreation of children belongs to the sphere of the νόμοι. Same thing for the conjugal harmony, see fr. 1000 Kassel-Austin, 14-16 ἔστ’ ἀνδρὶ καὶ γυναικὶ κείμενος νόμος, | τῶι μὲν διὰ τέλους ἦν ἔχει στέργειν αἰεί, | τῆι δ’ ὅσ’ ἂν ἀρέσκηι τὰνδρὶ, ταυτ’ αὐτὴν πο(ι)εῖν (*PCG* VIII, p. 290, cf. D. L. Page, *Literary Papyri Poetry* [‘Loeb Classical Library’, Cambridge, Mass, 1942], pp. 186-187).

<sup>37</sup> He could have added that, in the imperial age, the antithesis between *nature* and *convention* raged around the superiority of the male or the female in the bedroom. Indeed, poets and homosexual apologists alike did not miss the considerable level of artifice that entered into any woman’s beauty / allure (viz. perfumes or balms), thereby underscoring the unmodified charms of the boy, he who comes into the intercourse as nature fashioned him. The texts read as follows : Strato, *Palatine Anthology*, XII 7, 1-2 παρὰ παρθένωι (...) | (...) οὐ φυσικὴ χρωτὸς εὐπνοῖη, and XII 192 οὐ τέρπουσι κόμαι με περισσώτεροι τε κίκιννοι, | τέχνης, οὐ φύσεως ἔργα διδασκόμενοι : ἀλλὰ παλαιστρίτου παιδὸς ῥύπος ὁ ψαφαρίτης | καὶ χροὴ μελέων σαρκὶ λιπαινομένη. | Ἡδὺς ἀκαλλώπιστος ἐμὸς πόθος· ἢ δὲ γοῆτις | μορφὴ θηλυτέρης ἔργον ἔχει Παφίης ; Rufinus, *ibid.*, V 19, 3-4 ἀντὶ δὲ μοι παίδων ἀδόλου χροὸς ἤρесе γύψου | χρίματα καὶ φύκους ἄνθος ἐπεισόδιον ; and the *locus classicus*, Achilles Tatius, II, 38. 2-3 γυναίξι μὲν γὰρ πάντα ἐπίπλαστα, καὶ τὰ ῥήματα καὶ τὰ σχήματα· κἂν εἶναι δόξει καλή, τῶν ἀλειμμάτων ἢ πολυπράγμων μηχανή. Καὶ ἔστιν αὐτῆς τὸ κάλλος ἢ μύρων, ἢ τριχῶν βαφῆς ἢ καὶ φιλημάτων· ἂν δὲ τῶν πολλῶν τούτων γυμνώσεως δόλων, ἔοικε κολοῖωι γεγυμνωμένωι τῶν τοῦ μύθου πετρῶν. Τὸ δὲ κάλλος τὸ παιδικὸν οὐκ ἀρδεύεται μύρων ὄσφραις οὐδὲ δολεραῖς καὶ ἀλλοτρίαις ὀσμαῖς, πάσης δὲ γυναικῶν μυραλοφίας ἥδιον ὄδωδεν ὁ τῶν παίδων ἰδρῶς. Compare the early Christian ideas on sexual ethics (e.g. R. Lane Fox, *Pagans and Christians in the Mediterranean World from the Second Century AD to the Conversion of Constantine* [London, 1986], pp. 340-351) and consult, on this syncretism, R. Hunter, *A Study of Daphnis and Chloe* (Cambridge, 1983), pp. 70-71, and S. Goldhill, *Foucault’s Virginité. Ancient Erotic Fiction and the History of Sexuality* (*ibid.*, 1995), pp. 66-111, cf. 49-67 on the *nature* vs *unnatural* sexual divide.

<sup>38</sup> He cannot even tell when Paul does endorse Philo : J. W. Thompson, ‘Creation, Shame and Nature in 1 Cor 11 : 2-16 : The Background of Paul’s Argument’, in J. T. Fitzgerald, T. H. Olbricht and L. M. White (edd.), *Early Christianity and Classical Culture. Comparative Essays in Honor of A. J. Malherbe* (Boston, 2003), pp. 237-257 at 251-256.

<sup>39</sup> He thus lumps the anti-pederastic verses of the Pseudo-Phocylides together with other Jewish texts and pseudepigrapha (p. 161), but vv. 192-194 need only stem from the cynic-stoic polemics (so P. W. van der Horst, *The Sentences of Pseudo-Phocylides* [Leiden, 1978], pp. 238-241, or P. Derron, *Pseudo-Phocylide. Sentences* [Paris, 1986], p. 30 notes 5-6).

ce the obvious receptacle given by nature for the male penis was the female vagina, penetration of a male amounted to treating the male as if he were a female and thereby “emasculating” him — a blatant case of anatomical gender transgression. In effect, the willingly penetrated male takes up complaint with nature for failing to supply him with a vagina. In Hellenistic and Roman imperial culture, “the passive partner” in a homoerotic relationship, either of his own initiative or by way of encouragement or coercion from “the active partner,” took the process of feminization a step further by braiding and adorning his hair or growing it long, putting on makeup and perfume, adopting female mannerisms, wearing women’s clothes, plucking facial and body hair, or (in extreme cases) undergoing castration. *Overlaying this critique of a rebellion against one’s God/nature-given gender* was the standard hierarchical conception of male-female status in antiquity : females were inferior and subordinate to men. »

Though he cites Dover and Nissinen in his note 16, he missed the nature of Greco-Roman homosexuality as a social construct which these experts were at pains to establish<sup>40</sup>. Thus enfeebled, his case twists into an almost comical misunderstanding : growing one’s hair to sign one’s feminization in the same-sex couple. Dover, *Greek Homosexuality*<sup>2</sup>, pp. 78-79, would have debunked so outlandish a claim : ‘length of hair, like colour of skin, is culturally determined (...)’ (p. 78). Let us repeat that, in Greece and Rome, long hair was typically a youthful trait which male teens renounced at their entry into adulthood<sup>41</sup> ; young adults from the élite also were fond of this hairstyle. As a social cipher, it does not mean the same whether the male who wears it is your average Joe, however attractive, or a lad in the right age segment to belong to the world of pederastic relationships<sup>42</sup> — especially before the second

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<sup>40</sup> Throughout the book, the noticeable lack of engagement with the constructionist position held by them stands out. Such an ideological blinker demanded a demonstration of its *raison d’être* which never appeared ; Gagnon is thus revealed as prejudice-driven.

<sup>41</sup> D. D. Leitao, ‘Adolescent Hair-Growing and Hair-Cutting Rituals in Ancient Greece. A Sociological Approach’, in D. B. Dodd and C. A. Faraone (edd.), *Initiation in Ancient Greek Rituals and Narratives. New Critical Perspectives* (London & New York, 2003), pp. 109-129, especially 112-117 ; Christian Laes, *Children in the Roman Empire. Outsiders Within* (Cambridge, 2011), pp. 232, 276-277. For the Romans, hairstyle operated as a social giveaway : the kid of free descent wore his hair long and artfully arranged, whereas it was long without any adornment for the slave boy and the adult slave (see H. Gabelmann, ‘Römische Kinder in *Toga Praetexta*’, *Jahrbuch des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts* 100, 1985, pp. 497-541). The young citizen, with his toga, braids and the *bullae* on his throat, could not be mistaken for a slave, thus was spared the pederastic zest of older citizens eager to prey on slave boys (P. Grimal, *L’amour à Rome* [Paris, 1988], pp. 121-124 ; E. Eyben, *Restless Youth in Ancient Rome*<sup>2</sup> [London, 1993], pp. 243-245 ; B. Rawson, *Children and Childhood in Roman Italy* [Oxford, 2003], pp. 261-263). Herein lies the main difference between Greek and Roman pederasty : the former binds two citizens, the latter, a free man and a slave.

<sup>42</sup> K. Hopwood, ‘All That May Become A Man’ : The Bandit in Ancient Novel’, in L. Foxhall and J. B. Salmon (edd.), *When Men Were Men. Masculinity, Power, and Identity in Classical Antiquity* (London, 1998), pp. 195-204 at 201-202. On sexy long hair, R. G. M. Nisbet and M. Hubbard, *A Commentary on Horace Odes Book I* (Oxford, 1970), p. 341 at 8 *unctis*,

century AD, by which time long hair becomes popular in grown men without any regard for age, social status and condition in the oriental parts of the Roman empire<sup>43</sup>. It follows that, in the texts which relate to pederasty or homosexuality and on the iconographic evidence for these practices, the long hair given to the junior partner never expresses their desire to change their anatomic gender and assimilate themselves to women, unless this is told<sup>44</sup>. Actually, this long-haired man or boy is very likely to be either a *puer delicatus* or a slave owned / courted by his companion, viz. a nobody, socially speaking, who does not qualify for the protection afforded by the Roman *lex Scantinia*<sup>45</sup>. The monstrosity of the thesis put forward by Gagnon<sup>46</sup> stands out : far from setting right the confusion of those late-antique Christians who discovered (or feigned to) same-sex overtones in long hair and / or seemingly effeminate looks in young males<sup>47</sup>, he perpetuates it.

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*A Commentary on Horace Odes Book 2* (ibid., 1978), p. 92 at 23 *solutis crinibus. Capillatus* refers to the slave-boy by a metonymy and the reverse is most unusual (N. M. Kay, *Martial Book XI. A Commentary* [London, 1985], pp. 89-92 at XI 11, 3 *tonso pura ministro*).

<sup>43</sup> L. L. Belleville, 'Κεφαλή and the Thorny Issue of Headcovering in 1 Corinthians 11 :2–16', in T. J. Burke and J. K. Elliott (edd.), *Paul and the Corinthians. Studies on a Community in Conflict. Essays in Honour of Margaret Thrall* (Leiden, 2003), pp. 215-231 at 217.

<sup>44</sup> Witness *Priapea*, 45, 1-3 *cum quendam rigidus deus uideret | feruenti caput ustulare ferro, | ut Maurae similis foret puellae*; in 6-7, the boy is mocked as a *cinaedus* by the god : *num tandem prior es puella, quaeso, | quam sunt, mentula quos habet, capilli ?* (on this sex-crazed figure, E. M. O'Connor, *Symbolum Salacitatis. A Study of the God Priapus as a Literary Character* [Francfort, 1989], pp. 1-53, or J. Uden, 'Impersonating Priapus', *American Journal of Philology* 128, 2007, pp. 1-26 at 4-13). Otherwise, long hair appears, as in Rufinus, epigram X Page (= *Palatine Anthology*, XII 28), 3-4 *νῦν μοι προσπαίξεις, ὅτε τὰς τρίχας ἠφάνικας σου, | τὰς ἐπὶ τοῖς σοβαροῖς ἀυχέσι πλαζομένας*, qua shorthand for the beauty of any lad / παιδικά whose favors can either be cajoled or paid for.

<sup>45</sup> S. Lilja, *Homosexuality in Republican and Augustan Rome* (Helsinki, 1983), pp. 302-320 ; J. Pollini, 'The Warren Cup : Homoerotic Love and Symposial Rhetoric in Silver', *The Art Bulletin* 81, 1999, pp. 21-52 at 29-36, particularly 31 sqq. ; id., 'Slave-Boys for Sexual and Religious Service : Images of Pleasure and Devotion', in A. J. Boyle and W. J. Dominik (edd.), *Flavian Rome. Culture, Image, Text* (Leyde, 2003), pp. 149-166 ; C. Vout, *Power and Eroticism in Imperial Rome* (Cambridge, 2007), pp. 17-22 ; C. Williams, *Roman Homosexuality*<sup>2</sup> (Oxford, 2010), pp. 31-40 ; Laes, pp. 223-243. On the *deliciae*, 'pet slaves', H.-J. Van Dam, *P. Papinius Statius Silvae Book II. A Commentary* (Leiden, 1984), pp. 72-73 ; A. J. Pomeroy, 'Heavy Petting in Catullus', *Arethusa* 36, 2003, pp. 49-60 at 55-59 ; N. W. Bernstein, 'Mourning the *Puer delicatus* : Status Inconsistency and the Ethical Value of Fostering in Statius, *Silvae* 2.1', *American Journal of Philology* 126, 2005, pp. 257-280 at 267-268.

<sup>46</sup> He was not even bothered to specify that the humiliation, for a male, of being penetrated, on which, historically, the rabbis first based their distaste for homosexuality, is a Roman borrowing : M. L. Satlow, 'Rhetoric and Assumptions : Romans and Rabbis on Sex', in M. Goodman (ed.), *Jews in a Graeco-Roman World* (Oxford, 1998), pp. 135-144 at 137-140.

<sup>47</sup> Exemplified in W. Loader, *The Pseudepigrapha on Sexuality. Attitudes Towards Sexuality in Apocalypses, Testaments, Legends, Wisdom, and Related Literature* (Grand Rapids, 2011), pp. 473-474, 506-507. The Pauline precept calling long hair a man's disgrace (Thompson, pp.

Other faults of his when he treats the background of the New Testament include the sweeping recourse to unsupported assertions, lexicography-wise. Thus, on 236, Rom 1 :26 αἱ τε γὰρ θήλειαι αὐτῶν elicits the following comment :

« the use of *thēleiai* rather than *gynaikes* ('women'), and later in v. 27 of *arsenes* ('males') rather than *andres* or *anthrōpoi* ('men'), suggests an allusion to Gen 1 :27 (*arsēn kai thēlu epoiēsen autous* : 'male and female he made them'). Most English translations, however, translate here as 'women' and 'men' respectively, thus obscuring the link to Gen 1:27 for readers. »

Such intertextuality is possible but beyond any proof in 26 ; in 27, where both ἄρσῃν and θήλυς stand, a link with Gen 1 :27 looks more likely, but remains conjectural. Two classical words of excellent pedigree<sup>48</sup>, they are frequent in the Hellenistic and early imperial periods<sup>49</sup> and need be no echo of the Septuagint whenever they appear *separatim* in the New Testament, witness Rom 1 :27, Rev 12 :5, Rev 12 :13 for lone ἄρσῃν — no lone θήλυς survives in the NT. Philo's practice, which puts ἄρσῃν simplex independently of Gen 1 :27, combined with the evidence of the numerous composed forms in ἄρρεν- canvassed by Lampe, pp. 229-230 (e.g. ἄρρενιστέον, ἄρρενογονία, ἄρρενοειδῶς, etc), shows that the mere deployment of this lexeme cannot be pressed into an intertextual use in a Judeo-Christian writer. The same holds good for Flavius Josephus (another landmark)<sup>50</sup>, while many passages in non-Christian, imperial Greek can be found wherein the polar pair ἄρσῃν ~ θήλυς appears for the

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252-254) and its refusal (M. Kuefler, *The Manly Eunuch. Masculinity, Gender Ambiguity, and Christian Ideology in Late Antiquity* [Chicago, 2001], pp. 224-225, 274-275), is relevant. Gagnon only mentions the former p. 235 because, on 169, he needs to hide his apologetics.

<sup>48</sup> Ἄρσῃν, with its dialectal variants, is the byword for maleness (Chantraine, I, p. 116 ; G. P. Shipp, *Modern Greek Evidence for the Ancient Greek Vocabulary* [Sydney, 1979], pp. 99-100) and reflects directly a Proto-Indo-European etymon \*{h<sub>1</sub>}r̥sen-, 'männlich, männliches Tier' (D. S. Wodtko, B. Irslinger and C. Schneider, *Nomina im Indogermanischen* [Heidelberg, 2008], pp. 584-586). The hardly less venerable θήλυς (Chantraine, II, p. 435 *sub* Π°), a banal derivative of the PIE verb meaning 'to suckle (the maternal milk)', \*d<sup>h</sup>e<sub>1</sub>{i} - (H. Rix (ed.), *Lexikon der indogermanischen Verben. Die Wurzeln und ihre Primärstammbildungen*<sup>2</sup> [Wiesbaden, 2001], pp. 138-139), took on a value 'effeminate' as early as Herodotus in the forms θηλυδρίας and θηλυδρώδης, cf. the name of quality θηλυτής, which, from 'femininity' (3 ex., contrary of ἄρρενότης [1 ex.] : H. Bonitz, *Index Aristotelicus* [Berlin, 1870], pp. 330, 107), went on to signify 'effeminacy, delicateness' by early imperial times (Plutarchus).

<sup>49</sup> For the late Hellenistic attestations, cf. E. Mayser, *Grammatik der griechischen Papyri aus der Ptolemäerzeit, I Laut- und Wortlehre* (Berlin & Leipzig, 1923), p. 220.

<sup>50</sup> *Antiquities of the Jews*, XVII, 12. 1 ἦσαν γὰρ τῶι μὲν Ἀλεξάνδρῳ ἐκ Γλαφύρας ἄρσενες δύο, Ἀριστοβούλῳ δὲ ἐκ Βερενίκης τῆς Σαλώμης θυγατρός ἄρσενες τε τρεῖς καὶ θήλειαι δύο, also proves that a learned Jew could take ἄρσῃν and θήλυς to mean υἴος and θυγάτηρ, a perfectly classical usage, witness *Meno*, 71 e 8 = Gorgias, fr. 19 T. Buchheim (*Gorgias von Leontinoi. Reden, Fragmente und Testimonien* [Hambourg, 1989], p. 88) καὶ ἄλλη ἐστὶν παιδὸς ἀρετὴ καὶ θηλείας καὶ ἄρρενος καὶ πρεσβυτέρου ἀνδρός. It is a matter of Hellenic culture.

sake of the sense and nothing else<sup>51</sup>. Why should it be any different in Rom 1 :26-27, where only an arbitrary *petitio principii* would have us admit that Paul's choice of words points to the Greek of Gen 1 :27 ?

The section of the book that investigates the Ancient Near Eastern remains of homosexual acts and affects (pp. 44-55) exhibits a similar lack of mastery and yet more disdain for philological rigor. This topic is frighteningly technical ; one should have expected Gagnon to work *experto credite*, by relying on those publications by noted assyriologists and egyptologists who have withstood the test of time, and then to check some key facts in the primary texts through those very translations used by those experts. He has done the contrary, as disclosed on p. 44 :

« recent summaries and analyses by David Greenberg, Martti Nissinen, Donald Wold and Saul Olyan provide a helpful starting point for describing ancient Near Eastern perspectives on homosexuality. »

This is qualified by the bibliographical note 1 on the same page, in which he lists his sources. Apart from Greenberg, *The Construction of Homosexuality*, Nissinen, and a few second-hand surveys of biblical homosexuality, the only contributions by assyriologists are the classical, although dated, article 'Homosexualität' by J. Bottéro and H. Petschow (*Reallexikon der Assyriologie und vorderasiatische Archäologie*, IV [Berlin, 1975], pp. 459-468), from which he never quotes, probably because it is written in French, and H. A. Hoffner Jr, 'Incest, Sodomy and Bestiality in the Ancient Near East', in idem (ed.), *Oriens et Occidens. Essays Presented to Cyrus H. Gordon on the Occasion of his Sixtieth Birthday* (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1973), at pp. 81-90, which he too does not deploy elsewhere. Hoffner actually did not enter into any detail save on the Hittite *hurkel-*<sup>52</sup>, so its relevance here is not obvious. That way, Gagnon missed at least four seminal studies with titles quite explicit-looking<sup>53</sup>. They

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<sup>51</sup> So, e.g., in Diodorus of Sicily, VIII, 23. 2 και ἀνεΐλε Ἀψία ἥι ποταμῶν ἱερώτατος εἰς ἄλλα πίπτει, ἐνθ' εἴσω βάλλοντι τὸν ἄρσενά τε καὶ θήλειά τε καὶ αἴγας καὶ ὄϊας ; Lucian of Samosata, *On the Syrian Goddess*, 54 θύουσιν δὲ βόας ἄρσενάς τε καὶ θήλειας καὶ αἴγας καὶ ὄϊας ; Oppian, *Cynegetics*, III, 147-148 ἡμάτα γὰρ καὶ νύκτας ἐελδόμεναι φιλότῆτος, | αὐταὶ θηλύτεραι μάλ' ἐπ' ἄρσεσιν ὀρμαίνουσι, 289 ἄρσενά τε καὶ θήλειαν ἀμείβεσθαι λυκάβαντι, 357-358 ὡς τότε φύλον | θήλυ πρόπαν τελέθει καὶ ἀδέμμιον ἄρσενός ἐστι ; or in Galenus (many examples).

<sup>52</sup> J. Tischler, *Hethitisches Etymologisches Glossar*, I (Innsbruck, 1983), p. 302 ; J. Puhvel, *Hittite Etymological Dictionary*, III *Words Beginning with H* (Berlin & New York, 1991), pp. 402-403 ; I. Peled, 'Expelling the Demon of Effeminacy. Anniwiyani's Ritual and the Question of Homosexuality in Hittite Thought', *Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religions* 10, 2010, pp. 69-81 at 76-79. The heterosexist bias is thankfully lesser now than in 1973.

<sup>53</sup> Bottéro, 'L'amour libre à Babylone et ses servitudes', in L. Poliakov (ed.), *Le Couple interdît* (Paris, 1980), pp. 27-42, reprinted in *Mésopotamie. L'écriture, la raison et les dieux* (ibid., 1987), pp. 224-240 at 231-232, 235-236, 238 ; B. Groneberg, 'Die sumerisch-akkadisch Inanna/Ištar : Hermaphroditos ?', *Welt des Orients* 17, 1986, pp. 25-46 at 33-39 ; W. G. Lambert, 'Prostitution', in V. Haas (ed.), *Aussenseiter und Randgruppen. Beiträge zu einer Sozialgeschichte des Alten Orient* (Constance, 1992), 127-157 at 145-153 ; S. M. Maul,

would have taught him that homosexuality was not shameful in early Mesopotamia ; to quote from Bottéro, *Mésopotamie...*, p. 232, « absolument rien ne nous autorise à penser que ces relations homosexuelles aient été le moins du monde réprouvées, ou même simplement tenues, comme telles, pour plus infamantes, ou à déconseiller, que les relations hétérosexuelles — pourvu seulement que les unes comme les autres ne comportassent point de violence ». He would also have gained from these contributions a more substantial notion of the cultic figures which the evidence at hand allows us to recognize as either homosexual or transgendered ; for his account of them, pp. 47-50, shows devastating weaknesses. The Sumerian *gala* ~ Akkadian *kalû(m)*, a lamentation priest who cuts a most elusive figure <sup>54</sup>, appears nowhere in the book though he has been long deemed a eunuch <sup>55</sup>. Whatever the rationale behind this suppression, it deprives the reader of a crucial figure. Gagnon has much to say concerning two other priests which are difficult to differentiate from the *gala*, the *saĝ-ur-sa(ĝ)* and the <sup>(h)</sup>*kur-ĝar-ra*, so this omission is glaring. The *saĝ-ur-sa(ĝ)*, ~ *assinnu(m)* / *issinu(m)*, took central stage during the New Year festival at Isin in homage to Inanna and seems to have been something in-between a transvestite male prostitute and a eunuch or a hermaphrodite <sup>56</sup>. As for the <sup>(h)</sup>*kur-ĝar-ra*, borrowed as

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‘*Kurgarrû* und *assinnu* und ihr Stand in der babylonischen Gesellschaft’, *ibid.*, pp. 159-171. Once more, non-anglophone European scholarship escaped Gagnon’s radar, despite the quality of these authors, all of whom are big names in Assyriology.

<sup>54</sup> « A ridiculous figure of uncertain sexuality according to some literary texts, a respected cleric with life and children in many documents » says J. S. Cooper, ‘Genre, Gender, and the Sumerian Lamentation’, *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 58, 2006, pp. 39-47 at 45. Cf. further M. Bachvarova, ‘Sumerian Gala Priests and Eastern Mediterranean Returning Gods : Tragic Lamentation in Cross-Cultural Perspective’, in A. Suter (ed.), *Lament. Studies in the Ancient Mediterranean and Beyond* (Oxford, 2008), pp. 18-52 at 20-22 and 39-41 notes 3-23, after P. Michalowski, ‘Love or Death ? Observations on the Role of the *gala* in Ur III Ceremonial Life’, *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 58, 2006, pp. 49-61, who shows that there were « galas for a day, for days on end, or even for an hour ; they were not initiated into the permanent status of a *gala* » (p. 55), and before the two studies by U. Gabbay, first in the *Proceedings of the 51st Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale* (Chicago, 2008), pp. 49-56 (‘The Akkadian Word for Third Gender : The *kalû* (*gala*) Once Again’), then in *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 63, 2011 (‘Lamentful Proverbs or Proverbial Laments : Intertextual Connections Between Sumerian Proverbs and Emesal Laments’, pp. 51-64 at 55-56).

<sup>55</sup> By virtue of his using the literary dialect reserved for heroines and goddesses, the Emesal, and since the proverb 2.90 as explained by E. I. Gordon (*Sumerian Proverbs. Glimpses of Everyday Life in Ancient Mesopotamia* [Philadelphia, 1959], pp. 247-248, most notably his note 9 on 248) mentions masturbation and may be related to another proverb, 2.100, which exhibits the *kalû(m)* speaking about his anus as belonging to his goddess, Inanna, in such a way that renders possible some sexual allusion. B. Alster, though, has contradicted this exegesis of 2.90 in his own *Proverbs of Ancient Sumer* (Bethesda, 1997), II, p. 65, and it must be conceded that the whole evidence rests on fragile grounds.

<sup>56</sup> W. H. P. Römer, *Sumerische ‘Königshymnen’ der Isin-Zeit* (Leiden, 1965), pp. 157-158 ; G. Farber-Flügge, *Der Mythos ‘Inanna und Enki’ unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Liste der me* (Rome, 1973), p. 106 ad 23 ; D. Reisman, ‘Idin-Dagan’s Sacred Marriage Hymn’,

*kurgarrû(m)*<sup>57</sup>, this cleric must have been a true-to-life eunuch or castrate since we possess an explicit passage where (their<sup>7</sup>) blood is mentioned in connection with the same goddess<sup>58</sup>. So, what about these priests, of which the *assinnu* and the *kurgarrû*, having renounced the societal marks (clothing) of their gender, perhaps even their genitals, provide a kind of culturally acceptable archetype of the passive partner in same-sex relationships? Gagnon, who argues that homosexuality mainly happened in cultic contexts in the Levant (pp. 100-110) since the *assinnu*, the *kurgarrû* and the *kulu'u* 'provide good evidence for homosexual cult prostitution' (pp. 102 sqq.)<sup>59</sup> and parallel the Hebrew *qēdēšîm*, fails to tell the reader that Nissinen considers the cultic role of our Mesopotamian clerics to have been asexual rather than homosexual (*Homoeroticism in the Biblical World*, pp. 30-31). Such a far-reaching disagreement with one of his most expert authorities weakens the case Gagnon attempts to build. Small wonder he kept silent, given the ignorance *The Bible and Homosexual Practice* remains in as to the whole dimension of transvestitism in the Ancient Near East and the gender issues at stake<sup>60</sup>; its iconography too is seminal<sup>61</sup>, but Gagnon

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*Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 25, 1973, pp. 185-202, cf. 187; G. Leick, *Sex and Eroticism in Mesopotamian Literature* (London & New York, 1994), pp. 157-158, 159-160; J. M. Durand, 'La Religión en Siria durante la Época de los Reinos Amorreos según la Documentación de Mari', in P. Mander and id., *Mitología y Religión del Oriente Antiguo*, II. 1 (Barcelona, 1995), pp. 125-533 at 332-334; S. T. Kamionkowski, *Gender Reversal and Cosmic Chaos. A Study of the Book of Ezekiel* (Sheffield, 2003), pp. 79-80; P. Lapinkivi, *The Sumerian Sacred Marriage in the Light of Comparative Evidence* (Helsinki, 2004), pp. 158-166 at 159; S. Teppo, 'Sacred Marriage and the Devotees of Ištar', in Nissinen and R. Uro (edd.), *Sacred Marriages. The Divine-Human Sexual Metaphor from Sumer to Early Christianity* (Winona Lake, 2008), pp. 75-92 at 84-91. The popular, scholarly analogy with the *berdache* of American folklore, viz. a man with feminine sensibility, has little to commend it.

<sup>57</sup> Römer, p. 166 *ad* 7; L. Cagni, *L'Épopée de Erra* (Rome, 1969), p. 233 *ad* 55; CAD K (1971), pp. 557-559; R. A. Henshaw, *Female and Male: The Cultic Personnel. The Bible and the Rest of the Ancient Near East* (Allison Park, PA, 1994), pp. 284-306 *passim*.

<sup>58</sup> Lines 76-77 of the Sumerian 'royal' hymn Inanna-Dilbad, as edited and translated by Römer: *giri úš dul<sub>4</sub>-dul<sub>4</sub>-e šeš.NI [ ] | kù<sup>d</sup>-inanna-ra igi-ni-še i-dib-bé*, 'der das Schwert mit Blut bedeckt, der [ ], tritt vor die heilige Inanna'. The standard discussion is W. G. Lambert's 'Prostitution', in Haas, *Aussenseiter und Randgruppen*, pp. 127-158 at 150-151 (the whole passage 147-153 repays careful reading). The doubts voiced by Greenberg, *The Construction of Homosexuality*, p. 96 and notes 37-39, fail to convince once compared with the lines quoted above; see Nissinen, *Homoeroticism in the Biblical World*, p. 33.

<sup>59</sup> Though plausible, the idea that they may have been/played the part of cultic prostitutes is little more than guesswork; see Bottéro & Petschow, p. 463, and Greenberg, pp. 96-97. Gagnon could have availed himself of the survey of these priests by W. Roscoe, 'Precursors of Islamic Male Homosexualities', in S. O. Murray and idem (edd.), *Islamic Homosexualities. Culture, History, and Literature* (New York, 1997), pp. 55-86 at 65-68.

<sup>60</sup> Suffice it to mention here H. T. Vedeler, 'Reconstructing Meaning in Deuteronomy 22 :5: Gender, Society, and Transvestitism in Israel and the Ancient Near East', *Journal of Biblical Literature* 127, 2008, pp. 459-476 at 461-469. A similar ignorance mars what, to date, is Gagnon's most technical contribution ('The Old Testament and Homosexuality: A Critical Re-

was not in the least conversant with this kind of evidence. His paltry, third-hand at best, acquaintance with the Ancient Near East betrays him into accepting the fastly-diminishing *opinio communis* that anything coming close to same-sex love between Gilgamesh and Enkidu in the Standard Babylonian epic would do too much violence to the primary texts, the testimony of which passes for inconclusive (pp. 50-51)<sup>62</sup>. However, the latest scholarship firmly upholds such an attachment of the two Mesopotamian heroes<sup>63</sup>, and the case is far from being closed, owing to the amount of philological facts and interpretive data these scholars offer, witness the somewhat embarrassed reluctance shown by the last religious scholar who wrote on Gilgamesh and Enkidu<sup>64</sup>. I shall finally adduce Gagnon's credulity as to the Biblical testimony on the peoples of Canaan as showcased on 54. Once he has stated that « Ugaritic literature and art discovered to date gives no hard evidence of homosexual practice, though it does of bestiality and incest », a remark unsupported in the desultory foot-

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view of the Case Made by Phillys Bird', *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 117, 2005, pp. 367-394 at 373-375, on homosexual cultic prostitution).

<sup>61</sup> Inanna / Ištar's gender-bending priests wore womanly clothes and performed their deeds with a view to entertain their grim goddess, witness the Assyrian iconography : J. Scurlock, 'Animals in Ancient Mesopotamian Religion', in B. J. Collins (ed.), *A History of the Animal World in the Ancient Near East* (Leiden, Boston & Köln, 2002), pp. 361-387 at 369-370. Cf. more generally Roscoe, 'Priests of the Goddess : Gender Transgression in Ancient Religion', *History of Religions* 35, 1996, pp. 195-230 at 213-217.

<sup>62</sup> This is a classical topic of conservative exegesis, mirrored even by people who know some cuneiform (e.g. M. Zehnder, 'Observations on the Relationship Between David and Jonathan and the Debate on Homosexuality', *Westminster Theological Journal* 69, 2007, pp. 127-174 at 171 : « some passages in the Gilgamesh epic, alluded to by Schroer and Staubli and others, though not being unequivocal and for the most part reconstructed, can be interpreted as containing — perhaps only very implicit — homoerotic or homosexual connotations, without negative evaluation ») and historians with no concern for homosexuality (so M.-A. Ataç, '“Angelology” in the Epic of Gilgamesh', *Journal of Ancient Near Eastern Religions* 4, 2004, pp. 3-25 at 12-16 ; according to him, « speculations on the nature of the relationship between the two heroes of the epic, Gilgamesh and Enkidu, have often suffered from literalisms such as a friendship that takes the place of a normal heterosexual relationship, and even homosexual inclinations proper » [p. 4]). Literalism it must indeed be, for Ataç wishes to show « that all the events presented within the framework of the Epic are actually models or representations of cosmic sagas that take place in a mythical time frame, an anthropological proto-history that does not involve man in the ordinary sense of the word, as we know him today, but one that focuses on the primordial versions of the *anthropos* » (p. 5), an eccentric thesis which only an extraordinary amount of proof could make palatable.

<sup>63</sup> S. Ackerman, *When Heroes Love. The Ambiguity of Eros in the Stories of Gilgamesh and David* (New York, 2005), pp. 33-150 (text), 246-282 (notes) ; my own *Homosexuality and Liminality in the Gilgamesh and Samuel* (Amsterdam, 2007), pp. 6-26 ; D. E. Fleming and S. J. Milstein, *The Buried Foundation of the Gilgamesh Epic. The Akkadian Huwawa Narrative* (Leiden & Boston, 2010), pp. 38, 104-105, 105-106.

<sup>64</sup> D. Launderville, *Celibacy in the Ancient World. Its Ideal and Practice in Pre-Hellenistic Israel, Mesopotamia, and Greece* (Collegeville, 2010), pp. 191-197 at 193-195 : he (briefly) summarizes the *status quaestionis*, then leaves the question open with no further ado.

note 35, he immediately embarks on references to the abominations of the Leviticus and Deuteronomistic History and the crime of Ham, ‘the father of Canaan’, to claim that « the Yahwist too would have regarded this practice as typical of the Canaanite population. The attestation of three independent (!) sources, along with the persistence of male temple prostitutes in Israel during the era of the divided monarchy, speaks against an entirely imaginative reconstruction of the past by any one biblical author ». Take such uncritical behavior verging on fundamentalism, with not the least bit of primary evidence from West Semitic texts to bolster these claims<sup>65</sup>, and you will find yourself bound to conclude that the Pittsburgh professor has neither the technical tools to report the Ancient Near Eastern evidence about same-sex love and dealings in a trustworthy capacity, nor the intellectual calibre needed to assess this evidence with apt scholarly transparency.

His total lack of understanding for the cuneiform materials and his equally antiscientific adherence to unreliable sources are yet more damagingly in evidence in the note which begins on 186. There Gagnon quotes Matthew 5 :22 and attempts to explain to his satisfaction the clause *ὃς δ' ἂν εἴπῃ τῷ ἀδελφῷ αὐτοῦ· ῥακά, ἔνοχος ἔσται τῆι συνεδρίῳ*, ‘he who calls his brother : *raka*, will be liable to the Sanhedrin’, as follows (*The Bible and Homosexual Practice*, pp. 186-187) :

« a few have argued that *raka* is from the Hebrew *rak* (here with a vocative ending -a), meaning ‘tender, soft, weak, sensitive.’ According to Greenberg, ‘the phrase refers to passive effeminate male homosexuals. The case for this reading is strengthened when it is recalled that in Akkadian the syllable *raq* is used as a prefix to denote a woman’s name or occupation. It appears in compounded form in the words for a woman, a particular kind of nun, and the female genitals. The Akkadian symbol derives from the Sumerogram for a woman. It has also been suggested that the Greek word *moros* . . . refers to a male homosexual aggressor. This reading makes the threatened punishment far more plausible’ (*Construction*, 211 ; citing (...)). »

Unqualified quotation means approval of the conclusion raised and faith in its data ; thus Gagnon turned a blind eye to the gross assyriological errors of his source. For there exists no such thing, in Akkadian, as ‘the syllable *raq* (...) used as a prefix to denote a woman’s name or occupation’. What serves as the female determinative is the Sumerogram MUNUS, most commonly read MÍ(N) or S/ŠAL ; in Standard and Late Akkadian, it has a phonetic value RAQ, RAG, RAK which does never denote womanly things or occupations, let alone a nun<sup>66</sup>. For it only appears in the Neo-Assyrian geo-

<sup>65</sup> I shall compare the enigmatic *gzrm n<sup>c</sup>m*, ‘gracious lads’, of *KTU* 1.23, 17-18, which, pending new findings, no amount of learned commentary will ever make clear (see M. S. Smith, *The Rituals and Myths of the Feast of the Goodly Gods of KTU/CAT 1.23. Royal Constructions of Intersection, Integration, and Domination* [Atlanta, 2006], pp. 60-61). The rationale behind Gagnon’s silence is partly tactical, the famous ‘great sin’ of Ugarit (and Egypt) with regard to marriage being adultery, not the homosexuality of the husband.

<sup>66</sup> R. Labat and F. Malbran-Labat, *Manuel d’épigraphie akkadienne*<sup>6</sup> (Paris, 1988), n°554 p. 229, R. Borger, *Mesopotamisches Zeichenlexikon* (Münster, 2004), n°883 pp. 450-451. W. von

graphical name *Raqmat*, also read *Amat*, *S/Šallat* <sup>67</sup>; in the verb *raqāqu(m)* — Old Babylonian on —, logographic SAL.LA, SAL.SAL, ‘to (be)come thin, sparse’, plus its cognates *raqqu(m)*, *raqqaqu* (Von Soden, *Akkadisches Handwörterbuch*, II, p. 957; CAD R [1999], pp. 167-168, 171-172; *Concise Dictionary of Akkadian*<sup>2</sup>, p. 299; W. Schramm, *Akkadische Logogramme* [Göttingen, 2010], p. 126); and in the substantive (*a*)*raqraqqu* / (*a*)*laqlaqqu*, log. SAL.SAL<sup>musēn</sup>, ‘stork’ <sup>68</sup> — Standard Babylonian on (*AHw.* I, p. 538; CAD L [1973], p. 102; *CDA*<sup>2</sup>, p. 178; Schramm, p. 122) <sup>69</sup>. The cuneiform roots of ῥακά thus being moot, either one takes it as vocative of ῥαχᾶς, a barely attested term of contempt (one example, meaning uncertain), or, better, as the calque of Aramaic ריקר / ריקה, *rêḳâ / rêḳā*, ‘good for nothing, empty-head; fool, imbecile’, highly grievous an insult in a shame-honor culture <sup>70</sup>. The latter solution is commended by the parallelism with μωρός <sup>71</sup> (which might very well be the gloss or the translation of the enigmatic ῥακά <sup>72</sup>) in the last clause of our verse δὲ δ’ ἄν εἴπηι· μωρέ, ἔνοχος ἔσται εἰς τὴν γέενναν τοῦ πυρός, ‘he who says: ‘<you> fool’, will be liable to the Gehenna fire’ <sup>73</sup>. Gagnon hardly pays lip-service to this point, despite the triadic shape of 5:22, a favorite device of Matthew’s that increases the enigmatic character of the utterances of Jesus on anger; neither does he admit that our verse

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Soden and W. Röllig, *Das akkadische Syllabar*<sup>4</sup> (Rome, 1991), only lists SAL, as n°298 p. 58. Greenberg’s notes 144-145, citing Borger’s *Akkadische Zeichenliste* (1971), which supports none of his lexicographical claims (the nun is the infamous *nadītu(m)*, munus + me = LUKUR) but, at very superficial reading, that about the female pudenda (on which note 69 *infra*), and a personal piece of advice, show that he muddled data he had no control upon.

<sup>67</sup> J. N. Postgate, ‘Assyria: the Home Provinces’, in M. Liverani (ed.), *Neo-Assyrian Geography* (Rome, 1995), pp. 1-17 at 10 and notes 33-34; S. Yamada, *The Construction of the Assyrian Empire. A Historical Study of the Inscriptions of Shalmaneser III (859-824 B.C.) Relating to His Campaigns in the West* (Leiden, 2000), pp. 60-61.

<sup>68</sup> On which, specifically, N. Veldhuis, *Religion, Literature, and Scholarship. The Sumerian Composition ‘Nanše and the Birds’* (Leiden, 2004), pp. 265-266 sub li-li-bi-sig<sup>musēn</sup>.

<sup>69</sup> *AHw.* and *CDA*<sup>2</sup> mention a *l/raq/raqqu* qua ‘vulva’, which must be what Greenberg had in his mind, but the evidence, exclusively of a lexicographical nature, is quite paltry (see *AHw.*, sense 2, H. Holma, *Die Namen der Körperteile im Assyrisch-babylonischen* [Leipzig, 1911], p. 109: the only ubiquitous spellings are those with the determinative for body parts UZU, but they do not contain MUNUS / SAL = RAG/Q/K) and has been eliminated in Borger 2004.

<sup>70</sup> As shown by J. H. Neyrey, *Honor and Shame in the Gospel of Matthew* (Louisville, KY, 1998), pp. 192-193, building on theoretical grounds set by B. J. Malina, *The New Testament World. Insights from Cultural Anthropology* (ibid., 1981), pp. 30-36, especially 34.

<sup>71</sup> Alternating with ἄφρων in New Testament Greek (ἄ. 10x, μ. 12x); the two words and their cognates scarcely appear afterwards (Lampe, pp. 279 and 859 respectively).

<sup>72</sup> So S. T. Lachs, *A Rabbinic Commentary on the New Testament. The Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke* (Hoboken, N.J. & New York, 1987), p. 92, cf. 95 note 23.

<sup>73</sup> D. C. Duling, ‘The Matthean Brotherhood and Marginal Scribal Learning’, in P. F. Esler (ed.), *Modelling Early Christianity. Social-Scientific Studies of the New Testament in Its Context* (London & New York, 1995), pp. 159-182 at 169 « verse 22 formally like verse 21b, appears to contain expansions based on the Matthean tendency to form triads, and contains parallel insults in Aramaic (*raka*) and Greek (*more*) ».

bristles with exegetic problems <sup>74</sup>. Anyway, whatever the value of *ῥακά*, it encapsulates no condemnation of homoeroticism <sup>75</sup>, unless one is so incompetent not to see anything amiss in the bad research of Greenberg and biased to the point of preying on the flimsiest evidence favoring what one regards as the truth.

The level of naivety, superficiality and incompetence in this section of his book, whether on matters technical <sup>76</sup> or on issues of interpretation <sup>77</sup>, puts the other

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<sup>74</sup> D. C. Allison, *Studies in Matthew. Interpretation Past and Present* (Grand Rapids, 2005), pp. 65-66. Not the least of the problems in v. 22 is whether we are to find a gradation in the insulting ejaculations Jesus condemns successively, viz. if a progression in foolishness from *ῥακά* to *μωρός* which may explain the increase in punishment from going to the Sanhedrin to burning in the Gehenna (*sed contra*, Lachs), was intended by Matthew ; a classic, theological explanation is that by W. Barclay, *The Gospel of Matthew. Chapters 1-10* ('Revised and Updated', Louisville, 2001 ; original editions, 1956, 1975<sup>2</sup>), pp. 161-163.

<sup>75</sup> Witness the standard commentaries, none of which mentions the possibility of a same-sex slighting by Jesus : so R. T. France, *The Gospel According to Matthew. An Introduction and Commentary* (Nottingham, 1985 ; Grand Rapids, 2002), p. 120 ; W. D. Davies and Allison, *Matthew 1-7* (London & New York, 1988), p. 513 ; L. Morris, *The Gospel According to Matthew* (Grand Rapids, 1992), pp. 114-115 ; C. S. Keener, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew* (Grand Rapids & Cambridge, 1999), p. 184 and note 71.

<sup>76</sup> Errors in the secondary references and factual blunders appear in such numbers that the footnotes, and often the text, cannot be trusted. On 53 note 30, J. Gwyn (not : Gwynn) Griffiths' *Conflict of Horus and Seth*, pp. 45-46, is adduced as evidence that the « temple inscriptions at Edfu from the Ptolemaic period (third-second centuries B.C.E.) convey a similar theme : Horus eats lettuce (whose juice is identified with semen) so that he can ejaculate into Seth's anus » (pp. 52-53), but the two texts Griffiths quotes there do not say this at all. The lettuce, Seth's food of choice (see the *Contendings of Horus and Seth*, 11.8-12.1), is associated with fertility / fecundity (though this is quite controversial nowadays : M. Broze, *Mythe et roman en Égypte ancienne. Les aventures d'Horus et Seth dans le papyrus Chester Beatty I* [Leuven, 1996], pp. 94, 251-252) ; splashed with Horus' semen in the *Contendings*, *loc. cit.*, or by their own virtue (the Edfu inscriptions), lettuce makes *Seth* pregnant once he has eaten it, cf. Edfu II 44, 12-13, as Englished by Griffiths 'take to thyself the beautiful green plants which are with me that thou mayest cast the sacred fluid which is in it (the lettuce), so that the poltroon may swallow for himself thy seed and conceive (...) — no idea of anal sex at all ! For this latter theme, cf. Griffiths, pp. 42-45, and H. te Velde, *Seth, God of Confusion*<sup>2</sup> (Leiden, 1977), pp. 35-39. This is iron-clad proof that Gagnon did not actually consult Griffiths ; he just reproduced Greenberg's howler (« temple inscriptions at Edfu (...) imagine the god Min, identified with Horus, eating lettuce (whose milk-sap is identified with semen) so that he can anally penetrate and impregnate his male enemy (presumably Seth), humiliating him by turning him into a female » : *The Construction of Homosexuality*, p. 132 § 2 and note 31, with the reference to Griffiths). Other blunders of Gagnon's range from the trivial (note 30 on p. 53 has the pagination of te Velde on Seth's homosexuality spectacularly wrong ; it is actually 32-46) to the perverse (the snippet of the *Erra* epic quoted on 49 with a reference to Dalley, *Myths from Mesopotamia*, does not come from that anthology ; the translation resembles her, with at least one grave blunder : at *Erra*, IV 56, *ana šupluḫu nisi*<sup>mes</sup> does not mean 'to strike horror into people', for *palāḫu(m)* [AHw., II, pp. 812-813 ; CDA<sup>2</sup>, p. 261 ; CADP (2005), pp. 37-49], far from having its standard value 'to fear', means here 'to revere' [Dalley : 'to make

existing accounts of Mesopotamian homosexuality by fellow evangelicals (those in Wold, *Out of Order. Homosexuality in the Bible and the Ancient Near East*, Grand Rapids, 1998, or Davidson) on a class apart, despite their insufficiencies linguistic and text-critical and their ideological shortcomings. Even if one eschews a comparison between Gagnon's text and the best short survey at hand <sup>78</sup>, his pages have no claim to be called a fair review of the Egyptian, Levantine and Assyro-Babylonian traces of male-male sex and affect <sup>79</sup>. Was it really so difficult, for a biblical scholar

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the people of Ishtar revere her'), 'intimorire, infondere timore religioso' [L. Cagni, *L'epopea di Erra* (Rome, 1969), pp. 233, 294], a fairly common sense [CAD P, 4<sup>o</sup>, pp. 41-45]).

<sup>77</sup> On p. 50, the various transgender servants of Inanna / Ištar attract a misleading comment : « the goddess, it was believed, had transformed each into a “man-woman” or even a “dog-woman” (with “dog” denoting a disgusting transformation of masculinity and possibly also intercourse in doglike position) ». Despite the endorsement of Davidson, p. 138 (« according to Mesopotamian mythology, they had been turned from men to women by the goddess Ishtar, and thus they were given the designation “man-woman” and even a “dog -woman” — the designation “dog” probably “denoting a disgusting transformation of masculinity and possibly also intercourse in doglike position” »), the truth of the matter is that *assinnu*, syllabically spelled *as-sin-nu*, *is-sin-nu*, etc, has the logographic writing <sup>(li)</sup>ur.SAL (CAD A Part 2 [1958], p. 341), verbatim ‘dog-woman’, viz. ‘bitch, female dog’, therefore the ‘feminine one, catamite’ ; a mere Akkadographic scriptural convention (as was not made manifest enough in Nissinen, pp. 28 and 147 note 45), it must not be called a ‘designation’, pace Davidson ; nor speculation about a specific position in sex, which may or may not resemble dogs copulating, should have been indulged in in the manner of Gagnon so as to increase its relevance to the gender-bending clerics. Gagnon and Davidson missed a crucial point : unlike what holds sway for the Hebrew Bible, where the dog epitomizes what is vile / unclean, this animal was not repulsive in the eye of the Mesopotamians except for the people of Ugarit (« in Ancient Near Eastern Literature, the dog symbolizes a submissive, obedient animal, whose characteristic behavior is to grovel and humiliate itself in front of its master » T. L. Forti, *Animal Imagery in the Book of Proverbs* [Leiden & Boston, 2008], p. 93, cf. her note 19). Last but not least, Gagnon eschews all secondary bibliography, such as the comprehensive M. Malul, ‘David’s Curse of Joab (2 Sam 3:29) and the Social Significance of *mhzyq bplk*’, *Aula Orientalis* 10, 1992, pp. 49-67 at 53-56 for Ištar’s power to render someone sexually abnormal.

<sup>78</sup> P. A. Byrd, ‘The Bible in Christian Ethical Deliberation concerning Homosexuality : Old Testament Contributions’, in Balch, *Homosexuality, Science, and the ‘Plain Sense’ of Scripture*, pp. 142-176 at 158-160 and 173-176. The superiority of her presentation was so obvious that these parts of her paper are the only ones which did not come under fire in his rebuttal : ‘The Old Testament and Homosexuality : A Critical Review of the Case Made by Phillyrs Bird’, *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 117, 2005, pp. 367-394.

<sup>79</sup> It most resembles B. Musche, *Die Liebe in der altorientalischen Dichtung*, Leiden, 1999, an attempt to trace the evolution of the relationships between male and female from the Sumerians down to the Sassanid epoch which rests on a surer control of the data and the relevant bibliography than Gagnon’s, but still does not deploy enough philological scholarship. Its technical shortcoming are glaring — it is a treasure-trove of half-truths and hyperspeculative deductions —, and its chronological view of the development of milder notions of heterosexual love through the rise of ‘romantic’ elements received the cold shoulder from those qualified to evaluate it (e.g. J. G. Westenholz, *Nin. Journal of Gender Studies in Antiquity* 2,

untrained in the relevant languages but accustomed to juggling with Semitic documents and their huge critical literature, to reap the benefits of the best scholarship in the field and then proceed without compromising the indispensable awareness that even the most reasonable conclusions grounded in solid facts and arrived at by a sturdy-looking network of conjectures might be found, in the end, to be fallacious and not square really well with the evidence<sup>80</sup> ? The unpretending *L'homosexualité dans le Proche-Orient ancien et la Bible* by T. Römer and L. Bonjour (Geneva, 2005), pp. 13-35, 80-102, shows that it was no superhuman task, simply one which demanded care, modesty, the control of the limits, philological and anthropological, between which the sense is to be fought within the primary documents, and a strong sense of self-effacement. In the place of it, we are dealing with a scholar who holds his farthing candle to the sun, but remains silent whenever a difficulty unmapped in his sources crosses his path.

Let us now comment, though far more briefly for much has already been said in the above, on Gagnon's handling of Scripture. His theological assumptions belong to fundamentalism inasmuch as he takes whatever text canonically and tries to lessen all cases of inconsistency he chances upon. This is quite respectable in a theological piece, but makes for awkward compromises when one does trumpet the

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2001, pp. 125-133), yet, as a scholarly performance, it shames neither the author nor her chosen discipline. Let it be said, with the strongest emphasis possible, that there is a crucial divide between a book to be avoided as a cesspool of lies, errors and texts cut too short so that they could be taken out of their context (Gagnon) and a flawed but fundamentally honest work from which the discriminating reader can profit (Musche).

<sup>80</sup> Since the Ancient Near East embodies the context against which the Early Jewish notions of gender and sexuality developed, I am baffled by the small compass, lack of comprehensiveness and narrow level of engagement with the Assyriological and Egyptological literature every evangelical treatment of sex or love in the Bible known to me exhibits. With very few exceptions, liberal scholars are rather more at home in cuneiform (Nissinen and Ackerman come to the mind), but these too fail to treat the Near Eastern evidence at the length required, witness the space devoted to it in the standard handbooks by the sociologist Greenberg and the cuneiformist Nissinen. This is not simply a matter of qualifications, even though, indeed, Biblical scholars all too often are superficially informed in things Oriental. Topics understudied by Assyriologists are the more dangerous to Bibliists ; thus the chapter on Mesopotamian female prophecy in W. C. Gafney, *Daughters of Miriam. Women Prophets in Ancient Israel* (Minneapolis, 2008), pp. 49-73, and its endnotes on 178-183, bristle with infelicities — the *qabbātu(m) / qamātu(m)* of Mari (pp. 50, 52-53) should read *qammatu(m)*, cf. *CDA*<sup>2</sup>, p. 283 ; on p. 50, it is perverse to suppress the standard form of the prophet *raggintu*, a Neo-Assyrian spelling resulting from a shortening of the long vowel and the doubling of the consonant that follows it, viz. *rāgintu(m)* ; the Akkadian byword for the fringe of the prophets, *sissiktu(m)*, is written either syllabically or as the logographic TUG.SÍG (Borger, *Mesopotamisches Zeichenlexikon*, n°809 p. 426) and only appears as an Akkadogram in Hittite with the Sumerogram for 'dress, garb' as its determinative, viz. TUGSISIKTUM, pace Gafney on 71-72 ; etc — and does not belong to high-level scholarship, compare J. Stökl, 'Ištar's Women, YHWH's Men ? A Curious Gender-Bias in Neo-Assyrian and Biblical Prophecy', *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 121, 2009, pp. 87-100 at 94-98.

scientific value of one's discourse. With this preliminary caveat firmly in mind, the striking difference between the chapter concerned with the Hebrew Bible and those which tackle the New Testament — the latter are on a much fuller scale than the former, to the extent that the reader is treated with a translation and commentary of the all-important Romans 1 :24-27 — does not match the degree of elaboration within. In both parts a feeble engagement with the critical literature stands out : bibliographical lists are provided at the start of each section, only to be nigh forgotten in the following pages, where one or two studies, at best, are discussed or built upon ; as a consequence, nearly all of the secondary pleading, including the kind of finer points which normally fill the footnotes of dissertations, falls under the radar <sup>81</sup>. Apart from the annotated translations and commentaries, which appear in unnecessary profusion within the preliminary lists but seldom play any part in the footnotes nor inform the core of the main text, what secondary items served as brick-and-mortar for Gagnon never ventures outside of the ideological divide informing same-sex matters in the United States : evangelical research versus queer theology. A great loss of erudition ensues, with virtually no European scholarship no matter whether Catholic, Protestant or atheist. The decision to stick to books and journal articles written in English

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<sup>81</sup> Let one example suffice here, since it is of paramount value : unless I am mistaken, in no place within the entire book is the reader informed that one of Gagnon's most favorite sources of textual parallels in his exegesis of the Scriptures, viz. Philo, far from being representative of Hellenistic Judaism in matters of sexual ethics, embodies on the contrary an extreme case, being Pythagorean-like both in his austerity and procreationism (K. L. Gaca, *The Making of Fornication. Eros, Ethics, and Political Reform in Greek Philosophy and Early Christianity* [Berkeley, 2003], pp. 193-217, particularly 205-214 ; homosexuality is treated on 210-211). A synchrony between the outlooks of Philo and Paul, such as the one written by J. W. Martens in *One God, One Law. Philo of Alexandria on the Mosaic and Greco-Roman Law* (Boston, 2003), pp. 160-163, with respect to their mixture of Jewish theologemes and things Hellenic, was out of the question for Gagnon. Philo's considerable Greek culture (for which see, e.g., his view of Gen 1 :27 in *De opificio mundi*, 23 and 69, with J. Pépin, *Mythe et allégorie. Les origines grecques et les contestations judéo-chrétiennes*<sup>2</sup> [Paris, 1976], pp. 327-328 note 93), and high elevation of mind, are somewhat problematic when one uses him to disentangle the issues at stake in the far more uncouth and lower-reaching Paul. One should not forget who the audiences of his canonic epistles must have been : commoners, slaves, freedmen, people predominantly concerned as such by sexual exploitation and forced submission to their owners (J. A. Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity* [Oxford & New York, 2002 ; reprinted Minneapolis & Edimburgh, 2006], pp. 9-101, especially 39-70 ; S. Tsang, *From Slaves to Sons. A New Rhetoric Analysis of Paul's Slave Metaphor in his Letter to the Galatians* [New York, 2005], pp. 38-62). Glancy nails down the very crux of the matter at 40, where she writes that « Pauline Christianity was an urban phenomenon. The relationships of slavery with which Paul was acquainted would have been principally the relationships of urban slavery. Slaves in Corinth or Philippi would not have been miners or agricultural laborers but, for example, craftspeople, prostitutes, managerial agents, and domestic slaves, including those whose domestic duties included sexual obligations. How would a new identity as a Christian affect an urban slave, and how did the presence of slaves and slaveholders in the population affect the growth and practices of the churches ? ».

increases this parochialism<sup>82</sup>. The effects of these ill-conceived restrictions could have been reduced by an adequate argumentative style and a rigorous interpretive grid. Those deployed by Gagnon are neither, for his whole book seeks to defend the a priori notion that the agenda of the Biblical redactors, whatever their date and ideological slant, was to promote the God-ordained, sexual-affective complementarity of the male and the female of the human species. The grid identifying the sheer reproductive capability as the proof of some divine will for sexual congress does not work without a heavy doctoring of the few texts which, prima facie, would tally with such a theologeme<sup>83</sup>. Indeed, the most natural and straightforward way of explaining

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<sup>82</sup> ‘The Old Testament and Homosexuality’, pp. 387, 387 note 80, 388, might seem to imply that he has some German, but since he only quotes there the *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Alten Testament* instead of a paper or a monograph for which no translation exists, he needs not have deployed more effort than to confront the *TWAT* with its usually fine English adaptation, the *TDOT*. No other evidence for any knowledge of German is available in the parts of his oeuvre which are neither psychologically-oriented nor meant to counsel the faithful. That he is devoid of the faintest tincture of French, despite the mass of fine or at least decent scholarship written in my mother tongue during the twentieth century, cannot be doubted, I think, but this ignorance he shares with most American Bible scholars.

<sup>83</sup> See, with respect to the Leviticus ban of same-sex acts / affects, my *Aristarchus Antibarbarus. Pseudologies mésopotamiennes, bibliques, classiques* (Amsterdam, 2012), pp. 88-93. The central piece of Gagnon’s apology is the Creation story in Genesis 1 :26-28, where male and female are fashioned in the image of Yahweh and fit one another in a genital sense (v. 27) which foreshadows the blessing of reproduction that immediately follows (v. 28) ; however, nowhere it is adumbrated that the sexes complement one another to reflect the unity they are declared to stem from (unless one does detour to 1 Cor 11 :11 πλὴν οὐτε γυνή χωρὶς ἀνδρὸς οὐτε ἀνὴρ χωρὶς γυναικὸς ἐν κυρίῳ !). Anything along the lines of a moral prescription of heterosexual coupling is wholly alien to the Jewish interpretations (J. Neusner, *Judaism’s Story of Creation. Scripture, Halakhah, Aggadah* [Leiden, Boston & Köln, 2000], pp. 219-227, most particularly 225 ; J. T. A. G. M. van Rutten, ‘The Creation of Man and Woman in Early Jewish Literature’, in G. P. Luttikhuisen (ed.), *Interpretations of the Biblical Narratives in Jewish and Christian Traditions* [Leiden & Boston, 2000], pp. 34-62, where it is demonstrated that, though marital, the sexual union of Adam and Eve has no mandatory status ; F. García Martínez, ‘Creation in the Dead Sea Scrolls’, in G. H. van Kooten (ed.), *The Creation of Heaven. Re-interpretations of Genesis 1 in the Context of Judaism, Ancient Philosophy, Christianity, and Modern Physics* [ibid., 2005], pp. 49-70 at 62-63), with the lone exception of Philo. *De opificio mundi*, 151-152 — a chapter on whom Platonic influences loom large (D. T. Runia, *Philo of Alexandria and the Timaeus of Plato* [Leiden, 1986], pp. 345-346) — claims that ἔρως δ’ ἐπιγενόμενος καθάπερ ἐνὸς ζώου διττὰ τμήματα διεστηκότα συναγαγὼν εἰς ταῦτὸν ἀρμόττεται, πόθον ἐνιδρυσάμενος ἑκατέρωι τῆς πρὸς θάτερον κοινωνίας εἰς τὴν τοῦ ὁμοίου γένεσιν (§ 152) ; read Runia, *Philo of Alexandria. On the Creation of the Cosmos According to Moses. Introduction, Translation and Commentary* (Leiden, Boston & Köln, 2001), pp. 354-358, who remarks, apropos of § 151 ἐπεὶ δ’ ἐπλάσθη καὶ γυνή, θεασάμενος ἀδελφὸν εἶδος καὶ συγγενῆ μορφὴν ἡσμένισε τῆι θεαί καὶ προσιῶν ἡσπάζετο, that « (...) the emphasis is above all on bodily or physical appearance. This is illustrative of the fact that for Philo the differences between male and female relate primarily to the body, but in two different ways : (1) the pa-

Gen 1 :26-28 is not by digging in clues which waited until Paul to be put together and made into a formal prescription. Nor can it pass for right interpretive protocol to dispose within one lone footnote, however long and involved (42 on 58-60), of the large-scale case built up by Bird, with massive scholarship, in favor of a restricted understanding of the sexual differentiation of Gen 1 :27<sup>84</sup>. Nor, finally, should one

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tent physical and biological differences between the two sexes ; (2) the fact (as he sees it) that the female nature (i.e. primarily her soul) is more affected by bodily and physical matters than the male. The second difference is the foundation for the allegory of man as mind and woman as sense-perception » (p. 357). Is this Gagnon's take on the complementarity between the sexes, which he never makes crystal-clear apart from the genetal subsidiarity entailing reproduction (the most that can be said with respect to 1 :27 is in G. J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15* [Waco, 1987], pp. 28-33) ? It looks rather more sexist and likely to be unappealing than what a majority of present-day Christians might accept, per se or compared to modern rabbinic teachings (for example, A. G. Zornberg, *Genesis. The Beginning of Desire* [Philadelphia, 1995], pp. 14-16). I should not dwell on the fact that Gagnon surreptitiously would have us swallow the rampant Platonism and misogyny which inform Philo's views on the distinction of sexes (cf. Runia, *Philo of Alexandria and the Timaeus of Plato*, pp. 283-286), but the sheer absence of the *Op. mundi* in the book, not just in connection with gender complementarity, is testimony enough. Last but not least, it is highly uncertain, to put it mildly, whether the Creation narrative was ever meant by the redactors of Gen as prescriptive rather than merely aetiological, as recognized by a huge majority of interpreters (who are content with viewing Gen 2-3 as an *ἀίτιον* ; e.g. the classic commentary of H. Gunkel, *Genesis* [translation M. E. Biddle, Macon, Ga, 1997 ; German original, 1917<sup>4</sup>], p. 13, went so far as to speak of Gen 1 :24-25 as « the prototypical example of an aetiological myth (...) The question here is, "How is it that man strives for union with woman ?" The myth answers, "Man desires to become one flesh with woman because he was originally one flesh with her"'. In love that which was originally one is reunited ») ; those few who refused to admit that they were faced with myths of origins, like V. P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis* (Grand Rapids, 1990), pp. 56-59, have had to split hairs and they founder on difficulties of all kinds. The moral reading adumbrated by Gagnon for the creation of male and female as divine 'fits' therefore needs careful backup theoretical and theological, as befits an iconoclast interpretation. That he found no place for this within five hundred pages and many e-papers since then strikes me as unfair.

<sup>84</sup> His arguments either circular or invalid he advances in typically self-confident fashion. Far from conceding what is obvious, viz. that 'the interpretive details of Gen 1 :26-27 are unclear at best' (W. R. Garr, *In His Own Image and Likeness. Humanity, Divinity, and Monotheism* [Leiden & Boston, 2003], p. 4 ; the whole analysis, 2-9, repays careful reading for its good sense and deep engagement with the secondary literature), Gagnon flings in the face of the reader his own idea of commonplace. 'It is obvious that, *contra* Bird, the clauses in v. 27 are not sequential but parallel ; the sequence is between (not within) verses' (p. 59) runs counter to the standard grammatical theory on apposition in Hebrew, v. 27 consisting of four clauses of which the last three are apposed to what precedes (27 b-c to 27 a-b — 'epic' —, and 27 c-d to 27 b-c — specifying-explanative) : F. I. Andersen, *The Sentence in Biblical Hebrew* (The Hague, 1974), pp. 36-60, specifically 55 (not the best linguistic definition and use of apposition, cf. T. Collins, *Journal of Semitic Studies* 20, 1975, 252-254 at 253, yet philologically the least invasive ones, and most exegetes leave aside a rigorous grammatical analysis of 26-27 as futile). I will not rebuke Gagnon's other strictures with Bird, for what most concerns

grant on a priori grounds that Lev 18 :22 and 20 :13, far from being isolate nuggets of homophobia in the Hebrew Bible, actually do preserve the very heteronormative spirit that pervades the whole corpus<sup>85</sup>. Complementarity indeed functions so little that, far from proceeding step by step with this interpretive key and seeing what can be borne out and what cannot, Gagnon in reality backtracks ; he does not declare where his interest stands but relies on tricks such as arbitrary analogy, *reductio ad absurdum* or circular logic, throughout the whole book<sup>86</sup>. I am not clear about how

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me here is his contention that the definite purpose of divinely-ordained heterosexuality does not revolve around reproduction. This he maintains against her by twisting her terms. She had written, in a paper Gagnon missed, that ‘P declares that sex, as differentiation and union, is intended for procreation’ (‘Sexual Differentiation and Divine Image in the Genesis Creation Texts’, in K. E. Børresen (ed.), *Image of God and Gender Models in Judaeo-Christian Tradition* [Oslo, 1991], pp. 11-34 at 23 ; also *Missing Persons and Mistaken Identities. Women and Gender in Ancient Israel* [Minneapolis, 1997], pp. 151, 170), but her adversary chooses to confront her 1981 paper in the *Harvard Theological Review* alone — « that the creation of ‘male and female’ would have held for P no implications regarding “the status or relationship of the sexes to one another, or marriage” is hard to accept, given the following verse with its command to procreate. To suppose that P viewed marriage as solely ‘biological’, as if for P marriage was just a mechanical and impersonal relationship void of mutual affection, is to posit for P a view of sexuality out of step with the rest of the Hebrew Bible » (*The Bible and Homosexual Practice*, 59). Now, in the light especially of Garr, pp. 130-132, the role of the first human pair, homological of Yahweh’s androcentric will, does not bypass the transmission of the divine image / likeness, as a theophany ; in other words, neither mutual affection and feelings between the pair need appear in 1 :26-27 nor marriage itself should be found in this purely biological-theological narrative (cf., e.g., M.-A. Tolbert, ‘Marriage and Friendship in the Christian New Testament. Ancient Resources for Contemporary Same-Sex Unions’, in M. D. Jordan *et alii* (edd.), *Authorizing Marriage ? Canon, Tradition, and Critique in the Blessing of Same-Sex Unions* [Princeton & Oxford, 2006], pp. 41-54 at 44-45). Embarrassingly for Gagnon, the Fathers were loath to find in Gen 1 :27 a valid ground for the heterosexual unions (H. S. Benjamins, ‘Keeping Marriage Out of Paradise : The Creation of Man and Woman in Patristic Literature’, in Luttikhuisen, pp. 93-106 at 97-103).

<sup>85</sup> For Gagnon is a maximalist when it comes to derogative, homosexual interpretations of the Hebrew Bible : the crime of Sodom, Lot’s offence against Noah, the episode of the Levite at Gibeah, all bear, according to him, the unimpeachable marks of a hardcore line proscribing each and every kind of same-sex affects and dealings. He has some company in this line — Davidson or DeYoung are at one with him here —, but a closer look at his arguments shows the extent of the double standard which he and his fellow conservatives labor under (they ask airtight argumentation with explicit evidence from those who hold that David and Jonathan may have been lovers, whereas they themselves are happy to provide neither apropos of Gen 19 :1-29 and 9 :18-27, or Judges 19 :22-29) : *Aristarchus Antibarbarus*, pp. 206-219.

<sup>86</sup> The way he overrules Olyan and D. Boyarin on the coverage of the prohibitions of Lev 18 :22 and 20 :13 (p. 143) being a revealing case-in-point of his tactics : « (...) it would still be erroneous to conclude (...) that other forms of homoerotic contact would be permitted. Such a conclusion is akin to arguing that, because any corpus of law in the Old Testament explicitly proscribes only penetrative intercourse in the case of incest, adultery, fornication, rape, and bestiality, we can assume that fondling one’s stepmother, or a neighbor’s wife, or a vir-

differently he would confront the evidence of texts whose meaning can only, if at all, be unraveled by a cautious approach firmly encroached in Hebraic philology and lexicography — not his forte by any means<sup>87</sup> —, for those of his arguments I have

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gin, or an animal would be acceptable behavior in ancient Israel (cf. the Hebrew idiom “‘uncover her nakedness’” for sexual intercourse) ». On top of this rhetorical polarity ‘either/or’ — what is not punished, even in matters so grave as to warrant death, is not necessarily ‘permitted’ ; what about a ‘gray area’ entailing tacit freedom so long as it does not stir a fuss as pushing at the boundaries established by P ? —, the blatant exaggeration his *reductio ad absurdum* entails conspires with the appeal to the locution *gālâ ‘erwat*, ‘uncover nudity’, which expresses sexual immorality, most usually incest (so H.-J. Zobel apud *TDOT* II, s.v. *gālâ*, p. 479 ; D. Steinmetz, ‘Vineyard, Farm and Garden : The Drunkenness of Noah in the Context of Primeval History’, *Journal of Biblical Literature* 113, 1994, pp. 193-207 at 198-199 ; Davidson, *Flame of Yahweh*, p. 11), to amalgamate into a toxic blend the revulsion anyone sane of mind feels towards unnatural couplings (with beasts or one’s own children / parents) and the very partisan, very speculative disgust Gagnon tells us the early Hebrews had for the whole gamut of non-insertive, same-sex affection. Other than two verses of Lev, the distaste (to tone things down...) for same-gender affects or acts is unattested before the Hellenistic era, in the case of Hellenized Jews, or the Rabbinic period — see Satlow, ‘‘They Abused Him like a Woman’ : Homoeroticism, Gender Blurring, and the Rabbis in Late Antiquity’, *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 5, 1994, pp. 1-25 at 4-15, or *Tasting the Dish. Rabbinic Rhetorics of Sexuality* (Atlanta, 1995), pp. 198-222. Gagnon thus stands in a full exegetic circle.

<sup>87</sup> Reading him, one soon tires of never ever being told that such a text is ambiguous or that the value of such a Hebraic or Greek word is shrouded in obscurity — even when most of his predecessors and successors did not manage to advance much beyond that. One is thus very surprised to see that his Hebraic philology amounts to the barest minimum : not only does the entire book contain only two references (!) to the *TDOT* and four to the *HALOT* ; the multi-volumes *Encyclopaedia Judaica* and *The Jewish Encyclopaedia* do not appear anywhere but in his ‘Abbreviations’. It comes as no surprise that key lexemes fare badly. *Hesed* is explained on 149 note 240 with a reference to K. D. Sakenfeld’s 1985 book, which does not suffice by a long margin and is inferior to her 1978 dissertation — cf. P. Kalluveetil, *Declaration and Covenant. A Comprehensive Review of Covenant Formulae from the Old Testament and the Ancient Near East* (Rome, 1982), pp. 47-51 ; G. R. Clark, *The Word Hesed in the Hebrew Bible*, Sheffield, 1993, especially pp. 267-268 (« רַחֲמִים is not merely an attitude or an emotion ; it is an emotion that leads to an activity beneficial to the recipient. The relative status of the participants is never a feature of the non act, which may be described as a beneficent action performed, in the context of a deep and enduring commitment between two persons or parties, by one who is able to render assistance to the needy party who in the circumstances is unable to help him- or herself » [p. 267]) ; J. Joosten, ‘רחם ‘bienveillance’ et ΕΛΕΟΣ ‘pitié’. Réflexions sur une équivalence lexicale dans la Septante’, in E. Bons (ed.), ‘*Car c’est l’amour qui me plaît, non le sacrifice...*’. *Recherches sur Osée 6 :6 et son interprétation juive et chrétienne* (Leiden, 2004), pp. 25-42, especially 26-28 ; W. Börschlein, *Häsäd — der Erweis von Solidarität — als eine ethische Grundhaltung im Alten Testament. Ein Beispiel für ein Modell in christlicher Ethik heute ?*, Francfurt-am-Mein, etc, 2000. Another key word, *tô‘ēbâ*, still puzzles specialists when it appears in Lev 18 :22 and 20 :13 (Satlow’s remark ‘the meaning of the term (...) in this context is obscure’ [‘They Abused Him like a Woman’, p. 5] being representative of this disquiet) ; you will not find one note of uncertainty in Gagnon, at pp.

taken steps to dissect and compare to the available critical literature seldom reach standard levels in the field with respect to the depth of information involved and to the capability to perform research prejudice-free<sup>88</sup>.

Time has come to conclude and leave aside the duty of impartiality which it was oftentimes found difficult to adhere to in the face of the detailed evidence for our author's crass academic and scientific dishonesty in the making of his book, but which nonetheless had to be observed<sup>89</sup>. *The Bible and Homosexual Practice* is a quite slippery target to criticize, despite its documentary flaws and outrageous claims, for

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117-118 or anywhere else, nor will it be explained out to you why these verses belong genetically, instead of editorially, to the other sexual prohibitions of chapter 18, cf. S. M. Olyan, "And With a Male You Shall Not Lie the Lying Down of a Woman": On the Meaning and Significance of Leviticus 18 :22 and 20 :13', *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 5, 1994, pp. 179-206 at 182-183. As Olyan states at 183 note 8, « some commentators assume such a necessary association ; they tend to be apologists for a conservative morality, and their arguments build on the final H casting of the laws of Lev. 18 and 20, in which all of the enumerated sexual violations are called *tô'ēbôt* and associated with the allegedly defiling behavior of the Canaanites and Egyptians. Conservative commentators tend to amplify and highlight the associations established by the final redactors of Lev. 18 and 20 without reference to issues of redactional intention or legal prehistory ». In a revealing move, Gagnon fails to give evidence as to the correctness of the belonging of v. 22 to the sexual code of Lev 18 ; he also declines to furnish references for the relation between the (crimes lists in) chapters 18 and 20, e.g. W. Warning, *Literary Artistry in Leviticus* (Leiden, Boston & Köln, 1999), pp. 159-160, 165 — two more proofs of his indifference to scientific impartiality. The philological insensitivity we have sampled in his grasp of classical Greek, which it was tempting to attribute to the same lack of familiarity with the tools of the craft that made him stick to LSJ, therefore needs to be qualified : since Gagnon is equally prone to oversimplifications in his lexicography of both Hebrew and non-biblical Greek, the fault can only lie in some defect of his mind, unless he really is an ignoramus in both languages. *Tertium non datur*.

<sup>88</sup> Whoever doubts me on this count should compare his treatment of 1 Corinthians 6 :12-20 (pp. 292-297) to K. O. Sandnes, *Body and Belly in the Pauline Epistles* (Cambridge & New York, 2002), pp. 191-198. « Who the Christians are », the latter writes by way of conclusion, « or what will become of them in the future, has consequences for what to do with the belly and genitals. To Paul therefore living properly with the stomach and genitals is a definitional activity. Such is Paul's strategy *vis-à-vis* the question of passions and desires. This theological substructure of Paul's text represents a confirmation of what we found in Phil. 3 :18-21 and Rom. 16 :17-20. Devoting oneself to the desires of the belly, whether in terms of food or sex, implies a practical denial of Christian faith. Hence belly-worship is identical with enmity to Christ's cross ; it is a neglect of the indicative-perspective in Paul's soteriology ; i.e. the basic identity of believers. Just as the Corinthian slogans in 1 Cor. 6 :13 pave the way for belly-worship, so too Paul's argument in this text paves the way for how Christians should think of their body in general. This is the theological framework within which Paul's dicta on serving the belly rightly belong » (pp. 197-198).

<sup>89</sup> Gagnon likes nothing more than to level the charge of ignorance of primary and secondary sources at his foes in his e-pamphlets ; as he is the worst offender on this account, to that extent that one may doubt he was ever a competent student (his Pauline dissertation was never published, a lone occurrence according to American norms), I shall not mince my words.

Gagnon never grants anything that does not square with his conservative methodology, thus putting those who disagree with him in an uncomfortable position. If they multiply rebuttals over minutiae, they are bound to produce, in the average reader, the feeling that but for these blunders, the book basically stands, which could not be more wrong-headed ; and if these critics fault the author for indulging in ideology-driven special pleading at odds with the critical method in Bible studies that rightly dominates the more academically-minded studies of Scripture, all Gagnon will have to do is ignore this charge as stemming from a ‘liberal’<sup>90</sup>, or, worse : an atheistic, viewpoint the validity of which he will never concede. The present article has tried to apply the dictum *dies diem docet* by considering the value the work does or does not retain eleven years after. From my careful scrutiny of those matters of detail he has mistreated, and what a state-of-the-art knowledge in biology, medicine and psychology, in the Mesopotamian and Classical Greek languages and sexuality, and in the Biblical literature, is able to teach, I entertain the gravest doubts as to the right of *The Bible and Homosexual Practice* to be branded a genuine contribution to its topic. On the one hand, a partisan view of intertextuality prevents the various texts examined, notably in the Hebrew Bible, from deploying their meaning according to the recognized stratigraphical and narratological models of composition : verses are seldom interpreted as their original writer(s) adumbrated them, but most usually read according to their final casting in the biblical books as handed down to us. In other words, Gagnon puts the dogmatic slant of the latest redactors, which determined the present-day collocation of verses in books with a complex genesis (e.g. Leviticus, 1-2 Samuel), over the authorial intents of the authors of their earliest textual strata<sup>91</sup>. It is an interpreter’s right to read the Hebrew Bible only through the post-exilic prism, with its theological hard line ; but the reader should be told that this is neither mandatory nor harmless, and be furnished with some justification for such a decision. Instead of airing this caveat and detailing his defense, Gagnon went all out stating that no other grid is sustainable. Could less transparent scholarship be devised ? On the other hand, a great too many arguments in his book depend on faulty methodology, either *ignoratio elenchi*, suppression of (counter-)evidence or biased quotations of primary texts. Thus Pauline intertextuality is enriched by confining to silence, e.g., the specifics of the community of mind between Paul and Philo, and by discovering what may be but are not capable of being proved to be scriptural echoes

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<sup>90</sup> « Individuals who are arguably the most important targets for anti-stigma interventions are also the least likely to benefit from them » G. A. Boysen and D. L. Vogel, ‘Biased Assimilation and Attitude Polarization in Response to Learning About Biological Explanations of Homosexuality’, *Sex Roles* 57, 2007, pp. 755-762 at 761 ; this interesting paper throws much light on Gagnon’s attitudes towards homosexuality and GBLT people.

<sup>91</sup> This informs e.g. his treatment of Lev 18 :22 and 20 :13 : he deals in a shabby manner with the findings and methods of Olyan 1994 — Milgrom’s stratigraphically-minded commentary on 17-22 appeared too late for him (2000) —, while claiming, on somewhat flimsy grounds (112 note 179), that ‘it is misleading (...) to treat Lev 18 :22 and 20 :13 (or worse, opposition to homosexual practice itself) as if they were late creations of the post-exilic period’.

and parallels ; more familiarity with Classical, Hellenistic, and Early Imperial Greek would have opened Gagnon's eyes to several such improbabilities. To make a long story short : with its peculiarities, defects and failures, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice* actually belongs to the genre of homophobic polemics of dubious value <sup>92</sup> ; regardless of its programmatic claims to fresh science and technical refinement <sup>93</sup>,

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<sup>92</sup> The noted Bible scholar J. E. Miller in 'A Response to Robert Gagnon on 'The Old Testament and Homosexuality'', *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 119, 2007, pp. 86-89, builds a good case for disregarding Gagnon as a serious, creditable interpreter. Since Miller did not mince words and faces his foe's assertions with scholarship, here is a bouquet of some of his points : « should the reader insist that the *qedeshim* are indeed religious prostitutes, the text in Deut comes no closer to an attack on homosexuality. The text is already explicit about the *qedeshah*, and it denigrates the practice of heterosexual religious prostitution. Choosing to read opprobrium into the homosexuality of the supposed male prostitution but ignoring the heterosexuality of the explicit female prostitution reveals more about the interpreter than the text » (pp. 86-87) ; « (...) even if we understand actual incestuous rape in the case of Noah and Ham, there is no clear negative content concerning homosexuality after we have recognized the issues of rape and incest. There are many rape and incest narratives and legal texts, but a paucity of texts which mention sex between males. If the author wished the reader to understand incestuous rape in the case of Ham and Noah, incest seems the primary focus, based on parallel narratives in Genesis » (p. 87) ; « Gagnon does not specify the rabbinic texts which support his reading of the Sodom story. BerR 49.5.3, some Targums on Gen. 18,20f. and some talmudic texts (e.g. San 109b) read the sin of Sodom in light of Ez 16,49f. and construct the story of Peletith. (...) In this story she is executed by the people of Sodom for the crime of helping the needy, and it is for this sin of Sodom, not a sexual one, that the city is destroyed. (...) The rabbinic tradition on Sodom found no homosexual opprobrium implied in the term *to'ebah* » (p. 88) ; « Gagnon's ethical hermeneutic seems simultaneously too blunt and intricate to accomplish his ends, ends which seem to precede his study of the text » (p. 89). That most of the first-rate Biblical scholars Gagnon assailed (e.g. Bird or J. Milgrom) did not bother rebuking him in print shows clearly enough their opinion of either his character or the worth of his scholarship ; conversely, the few competent scholars of both Bible and gender studies who have commented on this or that part of his oeuvre were far from laudatory (witness Ackerman, *When Heroes Love*, pp. 16-17).

<sup>93</sup> « The book by Soards provides helpful information and insights (...). However, the treatment of the biblical texts is deliberately brief and written in a popular style, leaving room for a more rigorous and detailed assessment of the Bible and its hermeneutical relevance. To some extent this need is met in the books by Springett and especially Schmidt. Yet I believe there is still a need for carrying the discussion of biblical texts further, including such areas as the implicit motive clause for the Levitical prohibitions ; the meaning of *para physin* (...) in early Jewish literature and its relation to Paul's understanding of the phrase ; and a more thoroughgoing response to recent criticisms of the Bible's view of homosexuality as misogynistic and outdated. A major aim of this book is to lift up in a more rigorous and scholarly way than has been done till now the argument of the complementarity of male and female in material creation as a key argument in early Judeo-Christian opposition to same-sex intercourse » (pp. 39-40). Notice the deceiving choice of words : the Bible's 'hermeneutical relevance' to same-sex debates is a politer synonym for fundamentalist homophobia and / or heteronormativity, whereas the 'implicit' motivation behind Lev 18 :22 and 20 :13 boils down to a preconcei-

to me it reads as a work of defamation plain and simple threatening GBLT persons, their supporters, those who advocate civil rights for them, and the Bible scholars for whom bigotry is no substitute to analysis and the exploration of all exegetic options. Inquinated by the desire to find simplicity in a religious tradition that at all stages is confused and tangled, Gagnon indeed sees only one side to any question and parades in support of it a mass of material designed to impress and canvassed in a manner which he knows will benumb most of his unwary readers into acquiescence. With the way Gagnon ridicules such-and-such, it even resembles intellectual terrorism : ‘think like me, if you are not mentally challenged and unwilling to see the truth’. This has been pushed to the point that he seems positively terrified of conceding the least bit of ideological space to ‘homosexualist’ (his own coinage <sup>94</sup>) exegetes due to fears common to evangelical folk which I cannot analyze here <sup>95</sup> but which pervade all of

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ved idea and ‘thoroughgoing response’ equates to faith-based advocacy of literalist biblical standards. As to the scholarly rigor Gagnon claims for his work, I am rather stricken by the vigor, pretension, and determination with which he pushed forward his ideas. The formula is well known : « dazzle the reader with erudition and hammer the opposition with arguments. When (...) critics raise questions about the veracity of the research and the validity of the conclusions, accuse them of lacking expertise and exhibiting an excess of partisanship » (P. C. Hoffer, *Past Imperfect. Facts, Fictions, and Fraud in the Writing of American History* [New York, 2004], p. 143, with M. Bellesiles’ 2000 book *Arming America* in his mind). This is not the hallmark of scholarship one sees under the covers of academic publishers ; actually *The Bible and Homosexual Practice* has been made by Abingdon, the premier conservative, evangelical press in America. I am quite certain that his manuscript would never have passed through the referees of any American University publisher, not to speak of worldwide famous presses like Oxford, Royal Brill, or Walter de Gruyter.

<sup>94</sup> He has been anticipated by M. A. Czaplicka in her 1914 anthropological study of Siberian Aborigenes, as quoted by J. P. Brown, ‘The Mediterranean Seer and Shamanism’, *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 93, 1981, pp. 374-400 at 376 (reprinted in *Israel and Hellas*, II [Berlin & New York, 2000], pp. 154-198 at 157 — a truly encyclopedic scholar would probably have known of this reference), and, of course, by out-and-proud novelist Gore Vidal more than a generation later (cf. D. Weise, *Gore Vidal, Sexually Speaking. Collected Sex Writings* [San Francisco, 1999], pp. 51-52, etc. with the analysis by J. Behrendt, *Homosexuality in the Work of Gore Vidal* [Münster & London, 2002], pp. 45-60, especially 59, cf. 117). How revealing of his grasp of cultural lore that Gagnon does not appear to understand that he harks back to a distant past by using that word — unless he knowingly twists it into a renewed, debased sense. If so, the desire this materializes is utterly un-academic and verges on psychiatric causes which I have neither the taste nor the tools to investigate.

<sup>95</sup> Most of these fears would appear to stem from the preoccupation of evangelical activists and the Christian Right with the increasingly liberal climate, qua unfavorable to religion, that they think afflicts America as a consequence of the visibility and victories of the GBLT action in the last fifteen or so years. In this I am endorsing the model proposed by T. J. Linne-man (‘Homophobia and Hostility : Christian Conservative Reactions to the Political and Cultural Progress of Lesbians and Gay Men’, *Sexuality Research & Social Policy* 1, 2004, pp. 56-76), which rests on a — to my eyes — convincing array of data qualitative and statistical. From the journalist C. Wicker, *The Fall of the Evangelical Nation. The Surprising Crisis Inside the Church*, New York, 2008, one learns that the numbers of the faithful seem to stag-

his public stance as a professor, influential lecturer and media darling. It is highly unscientific to stick to one's guns in such a systematic way — especially when the demonstrations which back one's convictions rest on no sturdy grasp of medicine and the psychological sciences, on a below-average understanding of all non-biblical technicalities stemming from what I take to be a mishmash of laziness and misplaced feelings of self-sufficiency, and a refusal to be comprehensive in matters bibliographical and philological, despite the promise of exhaustiveness the huge compass of the work seemed to underscore. If, at the very least, it had been an intellectual achievement of the caliber of Boswell's *Christianity* or Nissinen's *Homoeroticism*, some sort of conservative landmark impeccably researched and bearing testimony to an enormous culture <sup>96</sup>, something would have been gained in the long term. Even an evangelical equivalent of the twin studies of homosexuality by Boswell, deeply flawed as I take them to be so far as their findings and theoretical tenets go, would have been nothing short of a boon. Unfortunately, this is not the fact at all : we are required to buy a falsifying, superficial <sup>97</sup>, very self-indulgent <sup>98</sup> libel that needed a

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nate around 7% of the whole population (pp. 15-32, 83-95) while there would appear to be a virtual lockdown in the capability of the Protestant churches to produce conversions (pp. 49-65). As for demography, available figures demonstrate that the weight of the non-Catholic denominations significantly decreased between the 1970s-1980s and 2008 (M. Ryan and L. Switzer, *God in the Corridors of Power. Christian Conservatives, the Media, and Politics in America* [Santa Barbara, Denver & Oxford, 2009], pp. 5-7).

<sup>96</sup> Not only does the book open with a voluminous compendium of the abbreviations used, which suggests a considerable erudition (it has an air of showiness, compared to the massive number of pages where the annotation is miserly or non-existent and no item from this shorthand appears) ; on the way, Gagnon implies that he has read, and digested, much more than what his text actually evinces or what it pays lip-service to, even barely so. G. Temple, *Gay Unions. In the Light of Scripture, Tradition, and Reason* (New York, 2004), p. 53, adumbrates this last point with respect to Dover and Foucault ; it should be multiplied, particularly within the bounds of Biblical scholarship other than evangelical, since it cannot be said to have been sampled by Gagnon in anything like a representative manner. It naturally follows that, despite its size, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice* cannot claim to be a self-contained compendium of all there is to know about same-sex practices according to Scripture. This work merely holds the dubious title of embodying the fullest conservative effort at pushing the clock back to the period before Kinsey and D. S. Bailey.

<sup>97</sup> The validity of any exegetic solution does not revolve solely around its internal cogency and imperviousness to objections, despite Gagnon's refutational strategy ; since his personal theses are unusually vulnerable to charges of tunnel vision and biased or faulty marshalling of the evidence, he should really have looked at epistemology of science for a less one-sided approach, for example C. Lévi-Strauss, *La pensée sauvage* (Paris, 1962), p. 328 : « l'explication scientifique ne consiste pas dans le passage de la complexité à la simplicité, mais dans la substitution d'une complexité mieux intelligible à une autre qui l'était moins ».

<sup>98</sup> I share Martin's diagnostic (*Sex and the Single Savior*, p. 26) « it is amazing to me that Gagnon can conduct himself through all this elaborate interpretation with all the decisions and speculations it necessitates, and then convince himself that any reasonable, responsible, unbiased reader would see in the text precisely what he sees. After such a parade of assump-

massive list of endorsements by biblical luminaries, as complacently detailed on the front and back covers, to stand on its own as a professionally written contribution to the field. 'Libel' does not strike me as too strong a word for *The Bible and Homosexual Practice*, since the book deliberately mistakes petty prejudice for intellectual courage when it suggests that its preparation cost the author much and might well endanger him by virtue of his swimming against the prevalent ideological current. As if there were something similar between Gagnon's comfortable tenure or cozy church activities and the daily sufferings of gay boys bashed, bullied, sent by their parents to boot camp or left by the curb ! The long list of youngsters dying because of what they were, from Matthew Shepard to Tyler Clementi, exposes this special pleading of Gagnon's for the heartless, revolting hypocrisy it is. Far from being but a side aspect of his work, it stands at the core of his attempt to consolidate the traditional reading of Scripture on homosexuality. This is demonstrated by the pieces of strident fundamentalist propaganda the monograph indulges in (notably pp. 29-30, on the tolerance and intolerance of homosexual behavior, or 471-484, 'The negative effects of societal endorsement of homosexuality')<sup>99</sup> and the pointed barbs

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tions, to believe that the text itself is dispensing its meaning is astounding », and do wholly concur with Jordan, *Blessing Same-Sex Unions. The Perils of Queer Romance and the Confusions of Christian Marriage* (Chicago & Londres, 2005), when he considers, p. 10, that « Gagnon's (willful ?) refusal to engage theoretical critique of sex/gender categories goes hand in hand with a refusal to admit exegetical questions that would complicate his lock-step argument ». It wholly astounds me that Gagnon could boast to have counteracted Nissinen's relevant section ('The Old Testament and Homosexuality', p. 367 note 2 : « the other major work is : M. Nissinen, *Homoeroticism in the Biblical World. A Historical Perspective*, 1998, 19-56. Hereafter : *Homoeroticism*. Cf. my critique of Nissinen throughout my book, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice. Texts and Hermeneutics*, 2001 (see index) »).

<sup>99</sup> Let me provide a taste of these claims of his which I identify as such. « We have already noted that same-sex molestation of children increases the chance that the child will later identify his orientation as homosexual. The problem of molestation pertains not only to adult male homosexual molesters but also to adolescent male homosexual boys who are increasingly being encouraged by sex-ed programs and gay-activist groups to engage in same-sex sexual experimentation with their peers » (p. 480). The rate of same-sex molestation of gay men and lesbians in their childhood or early teens is indeed abnormally high compared to straight people, but the samples tested are called not quite representative of GBLT persons, at least as a clinical group, by investigators themselves, whereas, pace Gagnon, it remains to be proved that molestation is a causal factor in the development of an homosexual identify (M. E. Tomeo, D. L. Templer, S. Anderson and D. Kotler, 'Comparative Data of Childhood and Adolescence Molestation in Heterosexual and Homosexual Persons', *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 30, 2001, pp. 535-541 at 539-541 ; the picture does not change when the samples come from another country and the patterns researched include vulnerability to suicide, see M. Eskin, H. Kaynack-Demir and S. Demir, 'Same-Sex Sexual Orientation, Childhood Sexual Abuse, and Suicidal Behavior in University Students in Turkey', *ibid.* 34, 2005, pp. 185-195, though they isolate, on 190-191, a significant difference between female and male participants). Last but not least, Gagnon strangely fails to cite the only rigorous statistical study then available (L. S. Doll, D. Joy, B. N. Bartholomew, J. S. Harrison, G. Bolan, J. M. Dou-

at the GBLT group Gagnon seems tireless in trading at every turn and opportunity — thus creating a climate that surreptitiously influences the reader. Out of place in any scholarly inquest worth the name as so many clues to *ira et studio*, these items evince the cultural anger of the polemicist catering to church-goers disgruntled by the proliferation of Queer and liberal views on homosexuality<sup>100</sup>. This no Biblical

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glas *et alii*, ‘Self-Reported Childhood and Adolescent Sexual Abuse Among Adult Homosexual and Bisexual Men’, *Child Abuse and Neglect* 16, 1992, pp. 855-864), preferring to deploy earlier or contemporary studies by psychologists belonging to the Far Right, such as Paul Cameron, who even in his heyday was seldom heard by mainstream sex researchers and is now useless (cf. A. Zanghellini, ‘Scientific Positivism and the Controversy Over Research Into Lesbian and Gay Parenting’, *Sexuality Research & Social Policy* 4, 2007, pp. 100-114 at 101, with literature — ‘discredited’, ‘disreputable’, ‘problematic approach’), and papers published in periodicals guilty of complacency towards evangelical integritism, like the *Journal of Sex and Marital Therapy* (pp. 412 and 480, in a seemingly impressive array of figures and footnotes, complete with arcane abbreviations) : this is extremely damaging to Gagnon’s pretence to a competent grasp of the evidence and weakens the lofty generalisations we have quoted. On top of that, he has no right whatsoever to link the putative role played by early same-sex abuse in the emergence of an homosexual identity with the (unproven and canned) motif of the encouragement given by both sexual education in school and LGBT activism towards teens — two wholly different matters which it was most unwise to lump together ; and why omit the Gay-Straight Alliances (GSAs) ? The very visibility and capability of action of these groups on school grounds so manifestly runs afoul of the conservative mindset in many counties that they meet with new legal blinkers, like antiobscenity rules and no-sex policy (C. Mayo, ‘Obscene Associations : Gay-Straight Alliances, the Equal Access Act, and Abstinence-Only Policy’, *Sexual Research & Social Policy* 5, 2008, pp. 45-55, particularly 45-47 and 49-54 ; as he summarizes on 47, « restrictions on GSAs do more than just prohibit gay youth from meeting — they also prohibit youth from critically analyzing sexuality, making alliances across sexual diversity, and reconsidering their own sexualities in supportive contexts. In short, by making speaking about sex equivalent to sexual activity, conservative policies are simultaneously acting to limit sex and sexual discourse. Abstinence-only policies not only define sexuality and import religion into the curriculum but also define a certain way of being a member of a community or group. In contrast, GSAs represent new forms of alliance identity that do not require antagonism — indeed they often (not always, of course) thrive on internal diversities and differences. Because their intention is to remain critical about identity and community, GSAs at least provide a queer understanding of membership, one that challenges embattled Christianity’s version of community (...) »). There is thus no rigour in the kind of reasoning Gagnon delights in. Whoever upholds the utterly devious linkage of sexual-education programs, the action of LGBT groups by and large and same-sex molestation merely showcases their renouncement to scientific discourse for fundamentalist propaganda.

<sup>100</sup> It was partly due to them that, in 2007, I included Gagnon among those ‘academics turned ayatollahs because of their dislike of homosexuality’ (*Homosexuality and Liminality in the Gilgameš and Samuel*, p. VII). This label has been reproduced by others, for example J. E. Harding, ‘David and Jonathan Between Athens and Jerusalem’, *Relegere. Studies in Religion and Reception* 1, 2011, pp. 37-92 at 41 note 12 — a sure sign, it would seem, that I nailed it down correctly when writing this sentence. It goes without saying that my use of ‘ayatollah’ was not intended as an offence to Islam ; it merely plays on the negative overtones the word,

scholar who strives in earnest to ascertain what was in the mind of the redactors and how they were responding to their cultural milieu — among a host of other goals — can allow to stand unanswered as it perverts the ideals of science. So there exists no middle ground between bowing down to Gagnon and stepping up as the sneering, scholarly onlooker who deems himself capable of proving that, eleven years after, at a times when America looks torn between twin extremes of acceptance of each and every alternative lifestyle <sup>101</sup>, and outright demonization of everything that is not straight — postures most provocatively advocated, respectively, by Lady Gaga and Westboro Baptist Church's Fred Phelps —, *The Bible and Homosexual Practice* is moot. As Queer scholars or 'liberal' exegetes, we have a duty towards students and the GBLT community who needs guidance rooted in sound interpretation of the Scripture, that is, Biblical commentary that makes use of the whole gamut of scientific tools at our disposal, not to wallow in a pity party around such a detestable pile of junk as Gagnon's book because its gauntness discourages rebuttals. As scholars tout court, imbued by our teachers at the university level with ethical standards that our frequentation of both colleagues and pupils must have nourished, if not increased, we shall not, I think, accept Gagnon within our ranks unless he amends his learning and recants the worst of his homophobia. But is he even trying to be a scholar anymore ? The sheer fact that he devotes so much of his time to mounting rambling e-attacks asking for no response from his foes (for you cannot make him see reason through persuasion) rather than writing books or articles in peer-reviewed journals, even evangelical ones, coupled with his fondness for giving speeches in churches and lecturing in conservative venues, some of these presentations eventually marke-

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in itself and by contrast with the more neutral 'mollah', has gained in contemporary parlance, where it comes close to signifying something like 'archetype of religious intolerance'. As for the charge that might be raised against me of behaving like the mouthpiece of a liberal fringe of interpreters in my analysis of Gagnon's book, let the reader balance my published output on Greek and Ancient Near Eastern homosexuality against his and then make up their mind, a task for which some help can be derived from <http://epistle.us/hbarticles/jondave11.html> ; <http://epistle.us/hbarticles/debate1.html> and <http://epistle.us/hbarticles/debate2.html> — I am confident they will find that the onus of proof does not fall on my side, unless my pride as an author blinds me as to the quantity and quality of the technical justifications I provided in my two (as of July 2012, three) relevant monographs.

<sup>101</sup> By this I do not imply or mean that being gay equates to engaging in a lifestyle, viz. the behavioral choice to partake in certain conduct, alternative to heterosexuality — a favorite tenet of conservative-minded people —, nor that embracing one's homosexuality amounts to much the same thing as 'living the homosexual lifestyle'. What I mean is that, currently there is a trend, for gay youth, to follow such role models as Lady Gaga or American Idol's Adam Lambert and be flamboyant in a way that seems to corroborate the stereotypes entertained by the Far Right about gay people as a group. I do not want to preach ; nouveau fag who appeals to straights and that no one can suspect is gay shall not be the norm of the GBLT community, yet 'flaming queens' made bold by the idols mentioned above do provide the Religious Right with an all too easy tool for discriminating against everything GBLT. This is why I speak of the 'acceptation of each and every alternative lifestyle' as an 'extreme'.

ted on tapes or put on YouTube, appears to evidence a revealing shift in purpose : his stance as a moral authority within the Far Right now seems of more concern to him than his status as a academic. In that case, in quite the same way as Nietzsche eventually renounced Greek philology for philosophy after his *Geburt der Tragödie* and the chilly reception it elicited from classical scholars <sup>102</sup>, let us make such a fuss with rebuttals, rejoinders, and protests that Gagnon desert Bible studies at the post-graduate level for the greener pastures of stardom. To this writer at least, he already looks well on the way of becoming a televangelist. <sup>103</sup>

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<sup>102</sup> Not that Gagnon comes close to resembling Nietzsche in power of intellect ; if all of his writings share anything with the book on tragedy by the Hellenist-turned-thinker, it would be in their not being in the least *φιλοπράγμων*, to borrow Neoplatonic parlance. My point is that even the staunchest, most entrenched abuser of any science can be ‘persuaded’ to stop damaging it (remember that, for all its dazzling splendor as a piece of German prose, the *Geburt* is abysmally argued and ill-informed from a strictly philological viewpoint).

<sup>103</sup> I would like to acknowledge a debt to William O’Donnell and the lamented Bruce Gerig. The former has been instrumental in pushing me to take a stance and insist on the medical evidence ; his enthusiasm and energy have been a comfort in the midst of all this drudgery. The latter suffered through countless versions of this paper *in fieri* during the ultimate months of his life, lavishing on me the proofs of his own familiarity with the subject and calling my attention on those points of mine that required further elaboration. He is responsible for more ameliorations than I care to count. Of course, they should not be held responsible for any of my views. On one point I must now admit of mixed feelings : not being American, but living and teaching in a so different a country, culturally and sociologically speaking, as France, my exposition to the United States has been through my contacts with American colleagues, pupils and laymen, my reading, which I hope will be deemed adequate enough, and my web browsing, so I may well have blundered here and there in non-academic issues. I can only beg the reader’s mercy for all blemishes cultural, educative, medical, and so forth, which had escaped me ; my hope is that they do not put me at too much of a disadvantage against Gagnon, whatever his blinkers on so many topics may be.

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