

# ○ STOR[Y]ING DEUTERONOMY 22:13–19 IN MISSIONARY POSITIONS

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The success of the colonising missionary encounter in the South Pacific Islands was due in part to missionaries trespassing island-spaces, and yoking island-natives to transgress their own people and cultures in the name of Christianity. As the tide turns, this paper invites reading biblical texts, product of the missionary encounter, from the mission field on behalf of the culturally-crossed-and-in-some-cases-culturally-raped-natives.

The paper faces the virgin in Deuteronomy 22:13–19 as a figure for pre-missionary encountered natives, and suggests that preoccupation with virginity disguises, among other things, lost of virility. In other words, a husband (read: missionary) 'can't get it up' (read: convert) so he claims that his wife (read: natives) was not a virgin.

Perhaps we have not sufficiently demonstrated that colonialism is not simply content to impose its rule upon the present and the future of a dominated country. Colonialism is not satisfied merely with holding a people in its grip and emptying the native's brain of all form and content. By a kind of perverted logic, it turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts, disfigures, and destroys it. (Fanon 1990, p. 169)

Missionary efforts... I put aside... as quite useless...; indeed there seems something so intrinsically absurd in [a] nation which is robbing another of its land and its means of subsistence [and at the same time] soliciting that other to adopt its religion. (Harris 1977, p. 232)

## AN UNHOMELY EVENT

It was at the visiting yard of Unit 4, Parklea Prison (Parklea, NSW), a meeting place in a context of confinement, one warm Wednesday afternoon (Aug 27, 2003), that this paper started to come together. As on most Wednesday afternoons, I come to Parklea to visit with, and be visited by, inmate friends. I usually start with the guys in Units 2 and 3, and then drop into Unit 4 on my way home.

On this particular afternoon, I was more aware of the setting: I was sitting with two inmate friends, Tony and Steve (who asked that their surnames be withheld), around an ashtray, facing a closet-like cage secured with a heavy chain and a huge lock. While we caressed a lighted cigarette each, sucking and puffing smoke and words at each other, three birds spread their wings inside the cage trying to fly through its barriers as if they want to join the birds crying from nearby trees.<sup>1</sup> The cage is curiously placed, as if to give inmates the impression that they are freer than the birds it imprisons. In this regard, the cage is a sign of freedom.

An inmate paid for the supplies out of his own pocket (which contained things taken from other people's pockets) and constructed the cage with the help of other inmates, as if to describe the context where we were smoking that afternoon: [jail]birds in the hands of enslaving masters.

The supplier is now out of prison but another inmate cares for the cage and assures that the birds are fed, locked, and replaced when they die. In this regard, the cage is also a system of enslavement.

This cage, signifying both freedom and enslavement, situates my conversation with Steve and Tony (who have been released since; additionally, the cage was empty the last time I went into Unit 4). Smoke and words can easily escape such conversations, but something was unhomey about that afternoon's *interaction*.

Similar to other occasions, we talked around their experiences and how they keep what's left of their sanity. Then I popped what I later decided was an existential question: 'What does wholeness of life mean to you?'

Tony took a few moments before replying, with an apocalyptic tone, 'Life is complete when you are not perfect!' When one is not perfect, he explains, s/he has something to live for (cf. Žižek 2003, p. 115). Life is complete, whole, when it is not whole. 'That's living!' His friend Steve agrees, 'Perfect life is similar to the freedom the birds have to fly in the cage'. Their freedom is limited, confined, so it is, to them, even if it's just a [jail]bird's eye-view, complete freedom.

Wholeness and perfection are reached in their partiality, in their incompleteness, in their whole-less-ness, which is not to be confused with emptiness (cf. Žižek 2003, 43). From this prison-view, what does it mean to speak of *beyond* as if wholeness and perfection are beyond reach? Doesn't *beyond* exist differently for subjects who are caged than for subjects, as in my privilege to enter and leave prison, who cross limits?<sup>2</sup> And whose freedom is caged, limited, when *beyond* is imagined and talked about?

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This paper *encages* Deut 22:13–19 and its focus on proving virginity, a state that exists in its violation, like an apocalyptic reality that comes into being when it is no longer. Virginity is like perfection and wholeness: you know you have it when you realise that you no longer have it, you have it when you've lost it.

I started with a smoking experience in a prison yard and I will bring in reactions to missionary works, to missionary positions, in the Pacific Islands to construct my caging-readings. What I aim to do in this paper, in relation to Bhabha,<sup>3</sup> is to [re]move Pacific island natives from under missionary positions<sup>4</sup> with 'strategies of subversion that turn the gaze of the discriminated back upon the eye of power' (Bhabha 1994, p. 112; see also Hau'ofa 1993). My repositioning readings, insofar as I will end up proposing alternative *master signifiers*, will inevitably *pin down* the natives (cf. Runions 2001, pp. 54–68); in other words, the readings I propose are cage-like, signifying both freedom and enslavement (see also Bennett 2002, pp. 11, 107–125; cf. Žižek 2003, p. 87).

## STOR[Y]ING READING

Most people romanticise storytelling events in Pacific Island oral cultures as tranquil occasions in which elders tell stories about their past, symbolically handing over the past to younger generations. What is not often realised is that native storytellers inevitably reconfigure the past in their storytelling events. The stories that elders hand over to the next generation have already been reconfigured when they received them, and they reconfigure those stories further as they hand them over to the next generation. These days, for example, Tongan elders do not tell of how natives resisted the arrival of missionaries (Tongan natives were the first in the Pacific Islands to

kill and consume London Missionary Society missionaries). Rather, contemporary Tongan elders retell the past in ways that accommodate the Christianised island group that James Cook called ‘The Friendly Islands’. Contemporary storytelling elders are partial in their favouring of Christianity and Western Exploration, whose arrival brought history-writing and the power of authentication. Our bloody past gets reconfigured in their partial, selective, retelling.

Similarly, the rise of the current royal family (*Tu’i Kanokupolu*) is remembered as the consequence of tribal wars to save natives from heathenism and an overpowering form of kingship (*Tu’i Tonga*). Stories of these wars beg indebtedness to King Taufa’ahau Tupou I and his freedom fighters. But the blood of the victims and the cries of the natives who were exiled to Koro, Fiji, including King Taufa’ahau’s own daughter, Salote, are silenced (cf. Havea 2001). Elders dare not retell these tribal wars as encouraged by the missionary program for fear of double treason, to the reigning king and to the Christian king.

I draw from these examples two marks of stor[y]ing reading: first, drawing upon the partial (selective and incomplete) tendencies of storytelling events, a stor[y]ing reading needs to be both interested and open-ended. It needs to be interested because storytelling is a reconfiguring and ‘past controlling’ event, and it needs to be open-ended because an event (subject of storytelling) can’t be neatly, and totally, put into words. There will always be remainders, both in the text being read and in the stor[y]ing reading itself.

And second, evident in the ‘bloody past’ which contemporary Tongan storytelling elders ignore, storytelling events both reveal (story) and conceal (store). Stories are told in order to tell, to expose and hand over, and in order to hide, to reconfigure. In this regard, a stor[y]ing reading seeks to expose moments of reconfiguration and concealment in the text, as well as add its own reconfiguration as it passes on the text.

My stor[y]ing reading of Deut 22:13–19 will therefore be partial, interested and open-ended, and it will attend to instances of both storying and storing in the text.

## STOR[Y]ING DEUTERONOMY 22

Deuteronomy 22 is a mixed bag of regulations concerning ownership, and the exchange and crossing of properties (especially animals and women), which, together, undermines itself. It opens by stipulating that a man should not be indifferent toward his fellow’s lost or injured ox, sheep or ass (22:1–3). He must help a lost animal find its owner, even if the owner does not live nearby, and help his fellow raise his fallen ass, or ox (22:4). While Deut 22:1–3 denies the crossing of property between two fellows, holding back the arms of one man from his fellow’s animal, Deut 22:4 requires that a man reaches out to his fellow’s injured animal, in order to raise it up, presumably because it may give the owner a bad image (as the man whose ass, or ox, has fallen [maybe because he overworked it]). In this regard, Deut 22:4 can be read both as giving assistance to the injured animal as well as covering up for the animal owner.

A bird’s eggs and fledglings do not enjoy the same protection. Deut 22:6–7 permits a man who finds a bird’s nest along the road, in any tree or on the ground, to take only the young but let the mother go. This regulation presumes that a bird does not belong to a man, to whom it should be returned (as in 22:1–3), and a mother-bird is not considered as the owner of her eggs and fledglings. The regulation conceals gender (a mother [bird], a female, is not an owner) and age (the young bird is expendable) biases.

Protection for property-owners is emphasised in Deut 22:8. One who builds a new house must also make a parapet for (in order to reinforce) his roof so that he is free of guilt in case someone falls from it.<sup>5</sup> The fallen victim, who is probably a worker/servant or slave, unlike the injured animal in Deut 22:4, is not promised protection or assistance. The fallen victim shares the fate of the young bird in Deut 22:6–7: they do not belong to anyone and are disposable to everyone.

Cross dressing is regulated in Deut 22:5 also. Clothes are specific to each sex – as if no type of garment is owned by both sexes together – and a woman should not wear men’s clothes and a male body should not be inserted into women’s clothing. Dressing in garments specific for the opposite sex is prohibited because it is abhorrent to Yhwh, raising a boundary, so to speak, with regard to what is put outside the body. This regulation is broadened in Deut 22:11, which regulates against wearing a garment made of both wool and linen. Cross-dressing and mixing fabrics are regulated, outlawed, and so is the planting of two kinds of seeds in the same vineyard and using both an ox and an ass to plow the same field (Deut 22:9–10). Whether this has to do with planting actual seeds or insemination with seeds from two different men, one being ‘an ox’ and the other being ‘an ass’, is open for further interpretation.

Crossing of a different kind of property is regulated in Deut 22:22–27. A man cannot lie with another man’s wife (22:22) or a virgin, whether she is engaged to another man (22:23–27)<sup>6</sup> or not (22:28–29). These women are off limits because they belong to other men (a wife belongs to her husband and a virgin belongs to the man to whom she is engaged, and to her father) whom, like the animal-owner and the house-owner, these regulations protect.

Overall, Deuteronomy 22 regulates two privileges. First, Deuteronomy 22 protects ownership. An owner, who can only be male, is protected against another man who may take or make a claim against his property. And second, Deuteronomy outlaws *crossing* of property, animals, seeds, garments, fabrics, plowing animals, seeds and women. Together, both forms of regulation ignore the crossings in, and interpenetrations that occur at, lived space. Whether these regulations protect or imprison, as in the prison yard bird cage, depends on how one reads them. And whether they free women to keep lost animals they find, not to help raise a fallen animal, wear garments made of wool and linen, and so on, also depends on how one reads them. A stor[y]ing reading however needs to hold all of these issues in tension.

## STOR[Y]ING DEUT 22:13–19

Stor[y]ing Deut 22:13–19 will produce many readings. I first outline the currents of this regulation then propose two stor[y]ing possibilities.

A man takes (*lqb*) a woman, enters (*ba'*) her (cf. 2 Sam 11:4), but then he hates (*shnh*)<sup>7</sup> her (22:13). He lays a charge against her, ‘I married (*lqb*) this woman; but when I approached her, I found that she was not a virgin (*betulab*)’ (22:14b, Tanakh). The charge (the biblical equivalent of ‘you whore!’) may have started at home, in private, but it is the kind of [pub-]talk that can creep into the public domain.

When such a charge is made, it becomes the responsibility of the young woman’s father and mother to take [evidence of] her virginity/nubility (*betulab*)<sup>8</sup> and produce it at the gate before the elders of the town (22:15). The charge may have been made privately, but it is brought into the open by the father and the mother. The father shall say to the elders, ‘I gave this man my

daughter to wife, but he hates her. So he puts words against her saying, “I did not find your daughter a virgin”. But here is [evidence of] my daughter’s virginity’, spreading out the cloth before the elders of the town (22:16–17).

If the elders are convinced by the evidence, they shall take the man and flog him, fine him a hundred silvers, which is to be given to his father-in-law, for he defamed a virgin of Israel. ‘Moreover, she shall remain his wife; he shall never have the right to divorce her’ (22:19b, Tanakh). This is supposed to punish the husband, who is thought to have made the charge in order to get a divorce without having to pay the bride price (cf. Exod 22:16–17), but of course it is also punishing upon the daughter, who is forced to remain a wife to a man who does not want her.

Throughout the hearing process, the daughter is to be silent, in fact, she is silenced. Her lips remain close while the elders decide if her legs were opened to another man so that she was penetrated before she was given to her husband. The husband’s charge was against the daughter, but her father’s honour is at stake. In the end, the honour of the father, as owner of his daughter, provided he and his wife produce [evidence of] her virginity, which can easily be fabricated, is guarded against the slander of his son-in-law.

The accusing husband is also silenced. He is not called to justify his charge and defend himself, suggesting that [evidence of] his wife’s virginity is all that the elders need. In this regard, the elders honour the insulted father more than his accusing son-in-law; one property-owner (father) is privileged over another property-owner (husband). While the silencing of the penetrated daughter suggests gender prejudices – a woman is not consulted – the silencing of the accusing husband suggests age discrimination – a (presumably) younger man does not have the privilege of being heard as does a man of the generation before his. In this regard, the younger husband shares the disposable lot of the (gender-less) young bird in Deut 22:7.

Given that [evidence of] virginity (*betulah*) can easily be fabricated and that the regulation does not stipulate what constitutes legitimate [evidence of] virginity, and given that the regulation privileges the [evidence-producing] father, what kind of husband would get away with charging that his wife was not a virgin when he took her? And at the underside of that question, what kind of husband (with a winnable charge) is vulnerable to the protection that this regulation gives the father (as property-owner)?

I propose two stor[y]ing readings, drawing upon some of the treatments Pacific islanders experienced at the hands of Christian missionaries, in other words, these readings circle around missionary positions.<sup>9</sup> I first target the initial failure (‘limpness’) of missionaries to convert natives before turning to the inconspicuous contribution of natives to establishing missionary positions in the Pacific.

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Due in part to stereotyping by western missionaries (cf. Hau’ofa 1993, p. 3; Bhabha 1994, p. 66–84), Pacific Island natives came to be seen as primitive savages who needed to be civilised and domesticated, as if they had to be upgraded. In the late 1850s, for instance, the American missionary Hiram Bingham wrote concerning the Gilbertese:

The sight of naked men, boys, girls and more than half naked women, the ob-servance of their extreme poverty, their worship of false gods, their extremely

immodest manners and customs, their great licentiousness, their unbounded lying, their covetousness, theft, warlike spirit and bloody warfare, a realising sense of their ignorance of a final judgement of heaven of hell of Jesus Christ, have me long to preach to them... (cited in Macdonald 2001, p. 33)

This testimony conflicts with the observation by other Europeans who traded with natives from the same islands, which described them as ‘perfectly harmless while on board the ship as they carry no weapons, and everything on board is put on [one] side’ (Macdonald 2001, p. 23). In other words, natives were neither thieves nor warlike, and things were in order when they disembark.<sup>10</sup> The missionary (on land) is intolerant of natives while the trader (in the ocean) is more lenient, and I suspect that neither perception of the natives was romanticising (cf. Oliver 1989, p. 70–76).

While I prefer not to privilege one perspective against the other but hold them together in a stor[y]ing tension, I am curious as to why a missionary thinks that natives, whether they were ‘perfectly harmless’ or not, needed to be saved from their ways. It is commonly argued that fear of the other and of differences, fuelled by eurocentrism and imperialism, are the driving forces behind colonialism and orientalism – the Western way of ‘dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient’ (Said 1985, p. 3) – which are the kinds of behaviours that result in natives being ostracised as primitive savages. Natives are blamed for bearing the marks of their ancestors, for being a people they can’t help being, for being conditioned by their space, and for not meeting the standards of the superior visitors. Natives wear the wrong colours and marks on their faces, do uncivilised deeds, give repulsive smells, bend over to ungodly deities, expose disgusting body parts, and so forth. In other words, the problem with natives, which can and must be corrected, lies with the natives themselves (on mimicry, see Bhabha 1994, pp. 85–92).

I however wonder, shifting to a more psycho-analytical gear, if the judging visitors also have a share in the problem. Could feelings of insecurity, of fearing failure, have contributed to the degradation of natives? In this regard, it was not so much the ‘enemies without’ as it was the ‘enemies within’ that produced intolerance and prejudices in the minds of missionaries. Lacan’s *Che vuoi?* should thus be addressed to the missionaries that I have been de-scribing. What was it that missionaries really wanted when they saw our ancestors as primitive savages? And shifting to a more materialist view (cf. Žižek 2003, p. 6), could actual failure, not just fear of imagined failure and masking of real desires, also have contributed to the way that missionaries disgraced the natives?

There are many stories in native circles, most of which are not recorded (insofar as historiography, belonging to the winners, is concerned), about failures in the initial stages of the missionary work. Most telling is the reaction by Hone Heke, the first Maori to sign the Treaty of Waitangi: ‘To Jesus Christ and the book, I will turn my back and empty my bowels [in other words, shit] on them?’ And there is also the embarrassing case of the Tongan cannibals, who killed and ate the first LMS missionaries to land in Tonga. On the one hand, one may argue that missionaries were right in identifying the natives as savages. Only savages and warlike people would want to shit on Jesus Christ and the bible, kill and eat the bodies of people who came to ‘save’ them. On the other hand, one may also argue that the natives were simply responding to, as if to revenge and/or to materialise, the way they were looked upon and treated by the missionaries. In other words, missionaries shit on their cultures so they shit on the god and the book of

the missionaries; responding to talks about eating the body and blood of Christ in the most sacred of Christian rituals, natives take and consume the body and blood of the bearers of that Christ. Did the missionaries rightly label the primitive savageries of the natives, or did the natives ‘become savages’ in response to the way missionaries looked upon and treated them? One can only speculate, until historiographers decide, which, if Said and Spivak are right, will be moments in orientalism and in shutting up subalterns.

While I prefer to hold both positions in a stor[y]ing tension, for this paper I opt to stir the reading that is more sympathetic towards natives, the speculative reading that is not always considered by the lords of the rings of history. That is, missionaries failed to convert the natives so they called them savages, among other things, and natives became savages in response to that treatment in order, maybe unintentionally, to materialise what missionaries really wanted. Further, it was not just the fear of imagined failure but also the experience of actual failure that produced the colonising and orientalisating thrusts of missionary positions.

Turning back to Deut 22:13–19, I propose that a husband who experiences failure, who has lost his virility, can get away with charging that his wife was not a virgin when he took her. In other words, a husband (read: missionary) who ‘can’t get it up’ (read: convert) can get away with claiming that his wife (read: natives) was not a virgin. Say the father and mother produce [evidence of] their daughter’s virginity in the cloth they spread before the town elders, who accept the evidence produced as legitimate. All that the husband has to do to prove his charge is to show that he ‘can’t get it up’. His wife has been penetrated, and there is proof of that, but it was not by him.

Even though Deut 22:13–19 does not give the husband an opportunity to sustain his charge, Deut 22:20–21 considers the possibility that the charge is true. This latter revising sub-clause anticipates instances when [evidence of] virginity is not produced, but it also gives room for a response from a ‘floppy’ husband. In other words, this amending sub-clause gives the charging husband an opening to firm his charge. But whether he has the vigour to prove his limpness is another question, noting that a group of elders sit in judgment over his charge. A floppy/softy husband may get sympathy votes from some of the town elders, especially from those elders who fear or who have experienced actual loss of virility. Paradoxically, a strong husband is one who can prove his limpness!

Deut 22:20–21 shifts the focus to the punishment to be given to a guilty wife: she ‘shall be brought out to the entrance of her father’s house, and the men of her town shall stone her to death; for she did a shameful thing (*nblb*) in Israel, committing fornication (*znh*) while under her father’s authority (*byt*). Thus you will sweep away evil from your midst’ (22:21, Tanakh).<sup>11</sup> According to the foregoing reading, the daughter also makes her father look foolish by whoring while in his house and by failing to arouse her husband, by not erecting him, which can be abhorrent, ‘evil’, in a circle of town elders (and also among my inmate friends).

Crossing over to the birdcage storied earlier, a floppy/softy husband is like an inmate who realises that he is no better than the birds in the cage (read: circle of elders). He brings a charge that can’t be refuted, if he is willing to prove his limpness, and his charge will be judged by men who share, or who fear the possibility of, his state. But of course, in a circle of men where manhood is guarded, he may face denial.

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The second stor[y]ing reading draws upon the often unacknowledged contribution that native converts made toward establishing Christian missionary positions.

Missionaries used native converts to take Christianity to other natives whom the missionaries could not reach, in their native lands and across to other island groups. Tongan converts were sent in missions to Samoa and Fiji, from where native pastors were sent to other groups like Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea. And in the case of the Gilberts and Ellice islands, LMS missionaries used ‘Polynesian pastors [who] *led a vigorous assault against ‘the forces of darkness’* and propounded a Samoanised form of Christianity that had a greater appeal for Islanders than the doctrines and lifestyle advocated by most European missionaries’ (Macdonald 2001, p. 31; my italics). In assaulting ‘the forces of darkness’ among their own people, native converts receive from missionaries both hammers and nails for the coffins of their native cultures.

The bone I am picking here is the use of natives to ‘assault’ other natives in the name of Christianity. This puts me, an islander native Christian, in a bind. To applaud natives’ contributions to missionary work would suggest that I endorse the assault against native cultures (cf. Sugirtharajah 2002, pp. 200–207). But to regret the assault by native converts over other natives would suggest that I deny the unavoidability of cross-cultural encounter.<sup>12</sup> I hold both effects in a stor[y]ing deadlock, and I also wish to point out that orientalism was at work then among natives, under Christian endorsement, as it is in the present.

The natives who were most vulnerable to missionary orientalist positions were those who uncritically accepted Christianity and its bible.<sup>13</sup> As Bhabha (1994) might put it, they took the signs for wonders (pp. 102–22), and they gave up speaking as natives in order to speak as Christians against other natives. They worked against their people and their cultures in the name of their new religion.<sup>14</sup> Instead of assisting the crossing of cultures these early native converts saw themselves as helpers in the godly task of cleansing native cultures, which they saw, through the eyes of missionaries, as pagan and dark.

Turning back to Deut 22:13–19, I suggest that a husband who buys into the authority of the town elders, and who does not question his evidence-producing father-in-law, is made vulnerable by this regulation. Given the disempowering of husbands (for evidence may be produced even against a husband with a true charge) and in light of the harshness of the punishment against a false charge, I suspect that husbands who hate their wives (22:13a) would be wary of bringing a charge they can’t win. Only a husband with a winnable case (proposed above to be a husband who has lost his virility) would bring this kind of charge forward. The dilemma for him is that his limpness, his floppy dick, will as a consequence be exposed. He too is in a bind. If he fights his case, by questioning the legitimacy of the [evidence of] virginity that his in-laws produced, he risks bringing insults on himself. But if he does not question the judgment against his charge he shall be flogged and fined.

A husband with a true charge who does not question a judgment against his case is, borrowing from Spivak, a subaltern who can’t speak. This may be out of fear for the elders and his father-in-law, out of respect for the harmony of his community, or maybe he doesn’t want to drag the process further for fear that the elders would yarn over his loss of virility. I imagine some of the elders stirring to his floppy/softy defence with ‘That’s silly! That don’t happen in our town’. It therefore appears that he would save himself a lot of trouble if he does not fight his case.

Reasons such as those are often given by native islanders. They do not contest, not because they do not have a valid case, but because they refuse to speak in such a process, conditioned by their care-free dispositions and *cultures of relations*. Such subjects are made vulnerable by Deut 22:13–19, where a husband (read: native convert) who does not question the judgment of the elders (read: missionaries) when it is against him (read: his culture) is prone to bear the punishment of being flogged, fined, and having to live with a partner (read: Christian cultures) he does not want (cf. 22:18–19).

Crossing over to the birdcage, an unquestioning husband is like the inmates who are sorry for the imprisoned birds but are unwilling to upset the caging system. They have been conditioned to believe that the birds would die if they are released because they would not know how to survive in the open. As early native converts were pacified and set to work against their cultures so does Deut 22:13–19 pacify native-like husbands not to question their elders, in the same way that concerned inmates are afraid that they might kill the imprisoned birds by releasing them.<sup>15</sup>

## STOR[Y]ING REMAINDERS

This paper crosses three unrelated cultural texts – a birdcage in a prison yard, Deut 22:13–19, and the treatment of Pacific Island natives in missionary positions – in a way that the paper at once stores and stories all three. In crossing texts from different cultural settings the paper is an example of hybridity. It at once is at home and not at home in all three texts, in all three positions.

I set out to make natives speak against the biblical text and missionary positions, in order to expose the foreignness of such texts to native cultures, and I come to realise that the crucial question is still ‘Who speaks for the natives?’ This is not in submission to the politics of representation, but with respect to native *cultures of relations*. ‘Can subalterns speak?’ (Spivak’s question) does not flow in the kinship waves and extended family currents in island cultures, where contesting authorities and judgments are often relinquished not because natives accept them, and not because natives do not have a quarrel to make, but partly because of their carefree willingness to cope with differences. Islanders choose not to contest because communal relations, for most, are more important than individual rights (cf. Oliver 1989, pp. 87–153; Waddell 1993, p. xiii).

Native cultures, in this regard, are susceptible to hybridising and hybrid readings. Because of this vulnerability (or should I say strength) I find hybrid and diasporic hermeneutics are threatening to participate in the colonial drive, to help establish missionary positions. My difficulty is not with the reality of hybrids but with the pacifying arms of hybrid modes of thinking, especially when the push to make people and texts cross, and belong (cf. Maalouf 2003), hushes resisting voices. In other words, hybrid modes of thinking do not account for who is at the bottom of missionary positions. In this regard, the issue is not ‘can the subaltern speak?’ but ‘can we speak the language of the subaltern?’

The two readings proposed above are more concerned with clearing a space where unrelated cultural texts cross. In other words, I was so concerned with creating *storied space* (Claudia Camp) that I gave up, alongside natives who prefer not to contest their authorities, my resisting voice. Toward arousing resistance, I add three more stor[y]ing readings of Deut 22:13–19<sup>16</sup> based on the imaginary tendencies of regulations.<sup>17</sup>

First, Deut 22:13–19 presupposes the reality of defamation, of someone bringing a false charge against someone else, and it privileges the father. But what if the father is the one who brings a false charge against his daughter’s husband, in order to keep his daughter attached to a husband and away from his (the father’s) home?<sup>18</sup> Since this regulation (according to the foregoing readings) silences both the husband and the daughter, doesn’t this regulation also give a father an opportunity to gain property from his son-in-law? This regulation is not just protecting the honour of a father against a husband who wants to divorce the daughter but it is also an opportunity for one property-owner (father) to gain properties from another property-owner (husband).

Deut 22:13–19 assaults the denial of crossing by other regulations in its context. Adjoining regulations do not allow property to be exchanged, or to be crossed, but Deut 22:13–19 legalises one man taking the property of another. Similar to a young bird who falls on the road, and a slave who falls from the roof of his master, a husband is vulnerable to false accusations by his father-in-law. Such a husband is susceptible to being called a primitive savage.

Second, in imagining a ‘floppy husband’ I open up the possibility for the son-in-law to be an older man, maybe from the same generation as his wife’s father. In this regard, privileging the father-in-law is more than just the upshot of age-discrimination, as I suggested above. It is also the kind of boy’s-club-partisanship that tends to happen when conflicts occur between pillars of the community.

I have in mind something similar to what happened in Tonga because of a conflict between two missionaries, James Egan Moulton and Shirley Baker, which led to the division of the Wesleyan mission (cf. Campbell 2001, pp. 95–96) and eventually the exile to Koro, Fiji, mentioned above. Personal and principle differences between these two missionaries crept into the public realm, the personal and the public overflow, and the 1873 Wesleyan Conference in Australia was forced to decide whether to allow the Tongan church to be constituted as an independent district (Baker’s position) or continue as part of the Australian Conference (Moulton’s position). The Australian Conference (read: elders) decided on behalf of Moulton (read: father-in-law), against Baker (read: son-in-law), even though Baker arrived in Tonga (in 1865) five years before Moulton arrived (read: the husband may be older than his father-in-law). I suspect that the Australian Conference wanted to give [patronising] care to its Tongan members, who were not equipped to run their own church, as well as keep [colonising] control over them. I imagine Deut 22:13–19 regulating something similar.

And third, privileging of the penis in Deut 22:13–19, its dick-support, indicates an obsession with invasion with no consideration for [the penetrated] space. The focus is on who was first to penetrate a young woman. In other words, the focus is with who first raised his flagpole over an unexplored territory. But from island placements, a liquid continent where ocean waves have power to penetrate and overturn, the glorification of the state of virginity is problematic. Doesn’t the flow of liquid, of human fluid, through the hallowed openings of penis-defined regulations, call for reconsideration of what being a virgin means? If a virgin is one who has not been penetrated, and the power of fluid to penetrate and crack open is recognised, what then does it mean to speak of virginity?

And what would a response from the liquid continent to the blindness of Deut 22:13–19 in regard to the violence of invasion/penetration sound like? One possibility may be drawn from Fijian Mosmi Bhim’s poem, ‘Love Bites’:

Trapping my heart,  
under a knife,  
He asks me,  
‘What have I done wrong?’  
Squeezing the blood,  
out of my heart,  
He asks,  
‘Are you okay?’  
Stepping on my,  
fallen body,  
He asks,  
‘Do you need help?’  
Crushing my heart,  
under his spiky boots,  
He says,  
‘The world is full of love’.  
Squashing my face,  
in his hands,  
He asks,  
‘Are you happy?’  
No, this isn’t love, it is pain,  
and I won’t have any more of it,  
So fuck off!

## **STOR[Y]ING VIRGINITY**

I am tempted to say, out of respect for the penetrating power of liquid and bodily fluids, that there are no virgins. Saying that however would imply that virgins exist, at least in the realms of language and ideology (Lacan’s symbolic and real orders). Since I am not as concerned with proving the footings of Deut 22:13–19 as with imagining the upshot of the ways they delimit as they do, reading for subjects that are [made] vulnerable under their words, I resign to the possibility that virgins exist and close with another unhomey event:

I spent part of my sabbatical (Sept 2003) with my cousin Lipoi Finau and his family at Burlington (Massachusetts). Their home was convenient for me, more so than my presence was for them, because I wanted to use the library at Harvard Divinity School. The library was full of resources, and so were the conversations on the road, the place of fallen birds, to and from the library.

When Kofe, Lipoi’s son, picked me up from the library one rainy afternoon, I tried to explain the subject for the paper I needed to write (i.e., this paper). To this vigorous young man, virginity was a code word for purity, for someone, male and female, who has not been defiled or corrupted. Whether such a person exists is a different question. What puzzled Kofe the most (other than the inclusion of texts on sexual matters in the Bible) with regard to female virgins, is how virginity is determined by rupturing a membrane, the hymen, which does not completely close off the vagina. It is not so much the question of whether a woman bleeds the first time a penis penetrates

her vagina, or the idea that the hymen is a fragile script, but what it means to crack a barrier that is already opening. Insofar as the hymen is a partial barrier, an opening boundary, what does it mean to penetrate it?

As we made our way home that wet afternoon we wandered from my [paper on] virginity to homosexuality, against which rules are also legislated for the sake of keeping purity; in other words, to use the Deuteronomy 22 language, for the sake of sweeping away evil from the midst of the community. A load of remainders began to materialise, three of which I will briefly lament as I (partially) close this stor[y]ing reading.

First, speculating that regulations over virginity and homosexuality mask the fear of penetration, what ‘actual loss of partial closure’ may have driven regulations such as Deut 22:13–19? Oh how colonising cultures (including biblical cultures) penetrate native (including Pacific Island) cultures in order to disguise their own (feared and actual) violations.

Second, imagining that regulating penetration is a mask for homophobia and gynophobia, what then may one say about the circle of elders from which regulations such as Deut 22:13–19 come? Oh the evils they have swept into our midst.

And finally, if virginity signifies the purity of a subject who has not been penetrated, violated and invaded, what have Christian missionary positions done to the native cultures of the Pacific Islands and beyond? Oh how our cultures have been turned into whores.

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## ENDNOTES

- <sup>1</sup> I am alluding here to the cry ‘to join’, in search of solidarity, by Toni Morrison’s beloved: ‘I am looking for the join... I want to join... I want to join’ (Morrison 1987, p. 213).
- <sup>2</sup> I have also been denied the chance to cross boundaries. Like when I was not allowed to board an Air Canada flight from San Francisco to Toronto to attend the 2002 SBL meeting, even though I travel on a Tongan passport (Tonga is one of the Commonwealth countries, as is Canada) and I was not required to have an entry visa the two other times I visited Canada. See also Spivak et al. (1993, pp. 200–201).
- <sup>3</sup> This paper grows out of a presentation to the Bible and Cultural Studies section (in a session titled ‘Bhabha and Beyond’) of the Society of Biblical Literature, Atlanta (Nov 24, 2003).
- <sup>4</sup> ‘What mostly distinguished Islanders (i.e., from Europeans) in this domain of behaviour was how few of them engaged, as the standard practice, in what some of them have labeled the ‘missionary’ position of intercourse: namely, the female underneath and facing the man lying on top. Much more common in many Island societies was for the couple to face one another in sitting positions; or, in others, for the male to kneel between the female’s outstretched legs; or in still others, for them to lie facing together side by side; and in many, many societies, to lie side by side with the female’s back against the man’s front when wishing to escape notice by nearby sleepers’ (Oliver 1989, 54–55).
- <sup>5</sup> Deut 22:12 echoes this regulation by regulating that tassels, as if they are boundary markers, are to be put on the four corners of ones garments.
- <sup>6</sup> The difference between 22:23–24 and 22:25–27 concerns the place where the engaged virgin is taken, in a town or in the open country. In the first case, both the man and the virgin are to be stoned to death, ‘the girl because she did not cry for help in the town, and the man because he violated another man’s wife’ (22:24). But in the second case, only the man shall die. Nothing shall be done to the engaged girl because ‘though the engaged girl cried for help, there was no one to save her’ (22:27).
- <sup>7</sup> The same word is used in 2 Sam 13:15 to describe Amnon’s ‘hatred’ for Tamar after he overpowered her and lay with her with force.

8 Whether *betulab* refers to her ‘actual virginity’ or ‘evidence of her virginity’ is not determined by the text.

9 I explored these readings with inmate friends at Parklea Prison, for whom sex and virginity are lively subjects, through denial and admission, and students in the 2002 offering of ‘Sex and the Bible’ (United Theological College, North Parramatta, NSW), who hesitated to entertain a critical and subversive look at missionary positions.

10 The natives were not completely stupid, for there is not enough room on board a ship for them to cause any trouble against people with more powerful weapons.

11 The repetition of ‘Thus you will sweep away evil from your midst’ in Deut 22:22 and 22:24 implies an obsession with establishing boundaries to exclude what is ‘evil’ in the sight of the elders. Ironically, this repetition also suggests that what is ‘evil’ resists exclusion, as if to say that ‘evil’ will remain despite the most limiting boundary that the elders establish.

12 I do not deny that cultures do, unavoidably, cross (Monica Melanchthon and Jione Havea – ‘Bastard cultures: Bible, Dalits, Islanders’ [Unpublished paper]), but I need to add here that Pacific islanders experienced cross-cultural contact before the arrival of missionaries and colonisers (cf. Oliver 1989, pp. 34–49; see also Macdonald 2001, pp. 1–13 [on Kiribati and Tuvalu] and Campbell 2001, pp. 21–25 [on Fiji, Tonga and Samoa]). Native cultures were already cross- and multi-cultural, individually and across each of the island groups, before the arrival of westerners. In other words, cultural complexities and differences in Pacific island cultures were not the consequences of the appearance of pale faces. The new elements, both good and bad, that pale faces inserted into crossing native cultures were western and Christian, that is, foreign, in makeup and orientation. The violent side of this encounter, more so for native cultures than for western and Christian cultures, is slowly surfacing in postcolonial circles (cf. Havea 2004).

13 Skeptical converts on the other hand were of no use in establishing missionary positions. There were two kinds of skeptics: those who, having learned the Christian message say that they know everything so ‘missionaries all gammon [all missionaries are pigs]’ (Macdonald 2001, p. 32), and those who rebelled against church authorities and became expendable, as in the case of the Tongan natives who were exiled to the island of Koro, Fiji.

14 There was warfare among natives before the arrival of missionaries and colonisers, of course, mainly for survival and space, on land and ocean, but assaulting each other in order to establish ideologies that were foreign to them is to contribute to their own colonisation.

15 But each Wednesday afternoon when I am in Unit 4 (including the times when the cage is empty), I hear friends of those birds singing from the trees as if to say that they are waiting to teach imprisoned birds how to survive outside their cage.

16 These are ‘remainders’ I did not address in my first attempt at stor[y]ing Deut 22:13–19 and I am sure that, as Erin Runions reminded me after I presented my reading at the Atlanta meeting, there are other remainders that I have not addressed in this paper. In other words, Deut 22:13–19 still resists the stor[y]ing readings I propose in this paper.

17 Regulations and laws anticipate situations occurring in the future, probably based on such situations happening in [stories from] the past, and rules and laws also open up opportunities for privileged subjects to take advantage of people who are susceptible to, made vulnerable by, those laws (cf. Bennett 2002, p. 11). In this regard, rules and laws *regulate* in all senses of the term (they control, amend and alter, as if to redirect, reconfigure and initiate something different).

18 In exploring ‘Whom to Believe?’ Amit (2001, pp. 93–102) urges readers to observe the ‘contract’ with the narrator, which requires that readers believe the characterisations of the omniscient and omnipotent narrator. This is not because the narrator tells the truth of what happened, but because the narrator wants to be believed. ‘In a sense, the modern reader who doubts the biblical story is violating the

contract and cannot be said to represent the intended public' (2001, p. 94). In this regard, the stor[y]ing readings I propose openly violate the imaginary contract with the [imaginary] legislators of Deut 22:13–19.

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