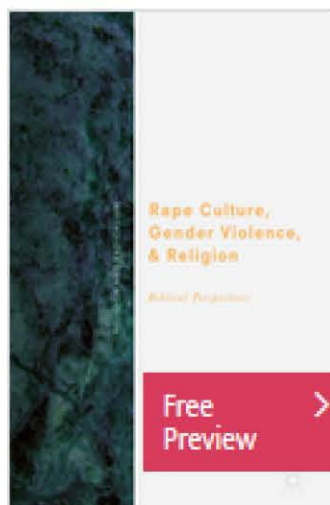


Religion and Radicalism



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Rape Culture, Gender Violence, and Religion

Biblical Perspectives

Editors: **Blyth**, Caroline, **Colgan**, Emily, **Edwards**, Katie
(Eds.)

Examines diverse articulations and interpretations of gender violence and rape culture within biblical traditions

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About this book

About the authors

This book explores the Bible's ongoing relevance in contemporary discussions around rape culture and gender violence. Each chapter considers the ways that biblical texts and themes engage with various forms of gender violence, including the subjective, physical violence of rape, the symbolic violence of misogynistic and heteronormative discourses, and the structural violence of patriarchal power systems. The authors within this volume attempt to name (and shame) the multiple forms of gender violence present within the biblical traditions, contesting the erasure of this violence within both the biblical texts themselves and their interpretive traditions. They also consider the complex connections between biblical gender violence and the perpetuation and validation of rape culture in contemporary popular culture. This volume invites new and ongoing conversations about the Bible's complicity in rape-supportive cultures and practices, challenging readers to read these texts in light of the global crisis of gender violence.

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Bibliographic Information

Book Title

Rape Culture, Gender Violence,
and Religion

Book Subtitle

Biblical Perspectives

Editors

Caroline Blyth
Emily Colgan
Katie Edwards

Series Title

Religion and Radicalism

Copyright

2018

Publisher

Palgrave Macmillan

Copyright Holder

The Editor(s) (if applicable) and
The Author(s)

eBook ISBN

978-3-319-70669-6

DOI

10.1007/978-3-319-70669-6

Hardcover ISBN

978-3-319-70668-9

Edition Number

1

Number of Pages

XV, 220

Topics

Religion and Gender



CHAPTER 4

Queering the Virgin/Whore Binary: The Virgin Mary, the Whore of Babylon, and Sexual Violence

Teguh Wijaya Mulya

In this chapter, I seek to problematize the virgin/whore binary which, I argue, has enabled, normalized, and sustained violence against women.¹ This binary positions women into two opposing categories: virgins or “good” women are those who express their sexuality only within culturally sanctioned and patriarchally defined boundaries such as marriage; all other women who fail to conform to this ideal are considered whores—morally corrupt and dangerously concupiscent “bad” women (Gottschall et al. 2006). Previous studies have shown how this binary has been deployed to justify and perpetuate sexual violence against those who are labelled as whores or “sluts” (Asencio 1999; García 2006). The logic is that sexual violence against these women is deemed “acceptable” or “makes sense” because they have transgressed cultural norms around women’s purity and chastity. By being “promiscuous,” they are “asking for trouble”; it is therefore their own fault if they are sexually assaulted.

While carrying out research for my doctoral thesis (Wijaya Mulya 2016), I discovered that this virgin/whore binary was frequently drawn

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C. Blyth et al. (eds.), *Rape Culture, Gender Violence,
and Religion*, Religion and Radicalism,
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-70669-6_4

upon by young Indonesian Christians whom I interviewed regarding their understandings of sexual violence. Below is an example of one response I received from Ayub, an 18-year-old male participant²:

When I was in Year 7 [13 years old], I was very naughty. In my class at that time there was a girl, like, a cheap girl. One day me and other boys played a prank on her. When there was no teacher in the class, we turned the light off, then we stormed her and grabbed her things [the sexual areas of her body].

Besides trivializing this incident as a “prank” (thereby implying it was not serious), Ayub’s narrative normalized an act of sexual violence by constituting the target as a “cheap girl”—that is, a young woman who has (or is believed to have) engaged in consensual sex with many boys. Since a “cheap girl” is presumed to no longer be a virgin and is thus deemed “morally corrupt,” Ayub and his friends believed that they could treat her any way they like, especially sexually. It is her own fault, they reason, because she has failed to comply with “acceptable” social practice and stands in contrast to “good girls” who preserve their virginity. Drawing on the virgin/whore binary therefore enabled these Indonesian youths to justify sexual violence against certain women and girls.

As a hugely influential cultural text, the Bible has played a significant role in perpetuating the virgin/whore binary, justifying violence against women who fail to conform to dominant social discourses of “acceptable” female sexuality (Ipsen 2009; Kim 1999; van der Stichele 2000). One text that has been identified by queer and feminist interpreters as particularly toxic in its depiction of gendered violence is the narrative of the Whore of Babylon in Revelation 17 (e.g. Pippin and Clark 2006; Warren 2017). I want to contribute to this discussion, focusing in particular on the virgin/whore binary, which remains such a prevalent and ubiquitous part of contemporary rape culture, both in Indonesia and elsewhere. In order to queer or denaturalize this binary, I will juxtapose the Whore of Babylon with another biblical character, the Virgin Mary. Compared to the Whore of Babylon, Mary is portrayed in the gospels as the sinless virgin mother who gave birth to Jesus (Matt. 1:18–25; Luke 1:26–56). Within these gospels and other early Christian traditions, her figure is continuously disassociated from sex, thereby maintaining her uninterrupted state of “perfect purity.” At first glance, then, it would appear that Mary can be situated at the opposite end of the virgin/whore binary to Revelation’s Whore of

Babylon. In this chapter, however, I will explore the possibility that these two characters share more similarities than they do differences. My aim is to queer—to interrogate, to denaturalize, to rework—the virgin/whore binary by demonstrating that it is fundamentally unstable and unnecessarily categorical. I hope that this queer juxtaposition of Mary and the Whore of Babylon might provide alternative discursive resources to give new meanings to the young woman in Ayub’s narrative and subsequently disrupt the normalization of sexual violence against women.

SEX, VIOLENCE, AND THE CONTESTATION OF MALE-DOMINATED SEXUALITY

In Ayub’s narrative, the young woman he and his friends targeted is defined and characterized by her sexuality, and is allocated by these young men to the “whore” category in the virgin/whore binary. Similarly, the Whore of Babylon is also named and known by her sexuality. Babylon the great one, the great city (Rev. 17:5, 18), is referred to as the “great whore” (v. 1) and the “mother of whores” (v. 5). She is defined by her opulent clothing and adornments (v. 4) and her acts of fornication with kings and “inhabitants of the earth” (v. 2), who have become drunk on the impurities of her fornication (vv. 2, 4). Her compelling sexuality and depravity takes the Apostle John’s breath away—he is greatly amazed (*èthaumasa*, v. 6) when he looks upon her (Huber 2011, p. 307).³

While the whore of Babylon is characterized by an excess of sexuality, in contrast, the figure of the Virgin Mary is distinguished by an *absence* of sex, being renowned in both gospel and early Christian traditions for her chastity and purity (Taylder 2004). As Joseph Goh notes, “the worth of Mary as a product of theological assemblage rests upon her *desexualized* body by virtue of her virginity-maternity” (2012, p. 226; original italics). Previous feminist and queer biblical interpreters have suggested that this desexualization of Mary is problematic. Denying Mary’s sexuality, or “condemning her to eternal chastity by making her name synonymous with virginity,” as Sian Taylder argues, means preserving Mary as “an agent of patriarchy,” who embodies the “impossible role models [for women] of Virgin and mother” (2004, p. 351). Such a desexualization of Mary reproduces patriarchal discourses of female purity, obedience, and submission as symbolized by the subject positions of a virgin and a mother. Thus, she has become an icon of subjugation to “male imagination and, indeed sexual fantasy” (p. 350), where women are imagined, fantasized,

and idealized as sexually pure and submissive. In a similar vein, Marcella Althaus-Reid refers to this desexualization of Mary as a “theological clitoridectomy,” which denies and nullifies women’s sense of sexual agency and entitlement (2000, p. 49). Women’s sexual desires, pleasures, and fulfillment are thus discursively detached or cut off from their bodies, so that they are left without any sense of their sexual autonomy or self-identity.

Despite this, however, it is possible to reinvent Mary as a sexual theological figure and to reveal the centrality of sexuality in her gospel narrative. For this narrative revolves around a sexually related event, namely, her surrogate pregnancy. She was chosen among women on earth to be the mother of God’s son (Luke 1:35, 42). So how does her “virginity” relate to this sexual event? On the one hand, virginity is often associated with abstinence, asceticism, and sacrificial self-denial. On the other hand, though, it can also symbolize sexual potential, fertility, fecundity, and, to a degree at least, autonomy and self-sufficiency (“belonging-to-no-man”; see Taylder 2004, p. 350). The word typically translated “virgin” in Hebrew (*‘almâ*) refers to a maiden or young woman who is not married or betrothed; it need not explicitly, exclusively, or inevitably convey a sense of sexual chastity (Sjöö and Mor 1987). The Latin word *virgo* essentially refers to a woman who does not belong to a man, while the Greek word *parthenos* similarly describes an unbetrothed or married woman (Apostolos-Cappadona 2005; Spurr 2007). These terms therefore carry nuances of sexual independence, rather than just sexual abstinence. As *parthenos*, Mary may therefore be identified as an unattached woman, rather than simply as a sexually inexperienced (or sexually “pure”) woman.

The centrality of sexuality to Mary’s character may also be indicated in her exercise of sexual agency regarding her body as a site of spiritual struggle. As Goh has argued:

I see Mary’s body as queer ... because it is a body in which sexuality is prioritized and exercised in accordance with the authority of personal agency and body knowledge. It is possible to theologially construct a Mary who manifests a sacred choice of bodiliness due to a keen awareness of her own sexual epistemologies. As such, I advocate a revisioning of theological bodiliness on Mary who discovers her inner holiness in the strength of choice that is informed by the promptings of the God that she finds in her sexual personhood ... This Mary places authority in the depths of her bodily self-knowledge and locates the “power of the Most High” to her embodied, sexual self. (2012, p. 227)

Goh identifies Mary's decision to surrender her body as an act of faith—an agentic exercise of power which radically challenged the dominant patriarchal control of the female body that prevailed in the first-century Greco-Roman world. In contrast to her relative Elizabeth, whose imminent pregnancy was announced by the angel Gabriel to her husband Zechariah (Luke 1:11–20), Gabriel speaks to Mary directly and Mary then appears to make an informed and independent decision regarding her (sexual) body (Luke 1:26–7, 38). It is through this particular act of faith—in which body, sexuality, and spirituality are entangled in a sacred life-changing moment—that Mary becomes a (sexual) theological figure. Further, through Mary's decision to comply with a virginal conception, the usual participation of men in important historical events and decisions is replaced with the (genderless) divine spirit (*pneuma*). That is, the conception of Jesus is a sexual act from which men are entirely absent (Johnson 1992). As Sojourner Truth (1851) argues, “Where did your Christ come from? From God and a woman! Man had nothing to do with Him!” Consequently, having challenged the normative (patriarchal) way of being both woman and sexual subject, Mary is then accused of being “not-a-good-woman,” including by Joseph who planned to quietly divorce her (Matt. 1:19).⁴

A similar challenge to male-dominated sexuality and patriarchal domination of women's bodies can also be found in the Whore of Babylon narrative. The image of this powerful, wealthy, and sexually seductive Whore who has the power to conquer kings has posed a serious threat to her male audiences over the centuries (as well as female readers who identify with male-dominated culture) (Sawyer 2008, pp. 308–14). In a patriarchal context where only men were considered powerful, agentic, and authoritative (both socially and sexually), the combination of the Whore of Babylon with the scarlet beast upon which she sits (Rev. 17:3) represents “the collapse of masculinity back into the morass of femininity and animality” (Moore 2009, p. 92). Because of her own power, agency, and authority, the Whore of Babylon incites fear *and* desire, hatred *and* attraction, amazement *and* trembling within both John and the audience of Revelation (Runions 2014, p. 236). By occupying this powerful position, the Whore of Babylon contests the stability of the patriarchal culture within which her story was written and read. Similarly, the young Indonesian woman in Ayub's narrative also posed a challenge to the patriarchal discourses of sexuality dominant within her context. Ayub and his friends regarded her as having contested the male privilege of sexual exploration by engaging in (what they presumed to be consensual) sex

with multiple partners—hence their identification of her as a “cheap girl.” Just like Mary, she was accused of being “not-a-good-woman” by the men around her, based on their own assumptions about her sexual experience. Just like the Whore of Babylon, she was then attacked violently, punished for challenging male privilege to sexual agency and invading the male-controlled arena of sexuality. At the end of her narrative in Revelation 17, the Whore of Babylon is violently destroyed. The beast and the ten horns, who represent ten kings of the earth, will eventually kill her in a gruesome scene, making her desolate and naked, devouring her flesh, and burning her up with fire (v. 16).

I would suggest that, like the Whore of Babylon, the Virgin Mary is no stranger to sexualized violence, thereby likewise relating her to the experiences of the Indonesian woman in Ayub’s narrative. While, as I have already discussed, the moment of annunciation can be seen as an exercise of Mary’s sexual agency, it is also possible to interpret this moment as a non-consensual sexual encounter. As Daly writes, Mary’s virginal conception can be seen as a retelling of the ancient patriarchal myth of the rape of the goddess, related in Greek mythical traditions about the goddess Antiope’s rape by Zeus (1984, pp. 127–9). Or, as Althaus-Reid puts it, Mary has submissively endured the sexual aggressiveness of the “Highest Phallus” (2000, p. 49). I will therefore examine Luke 1:26–38 to explore this possibility further.

I suggested above that Mary’s response to the angel Gabriel (Luke 1:38) may indicate her voluntary consent to a surrogate pregnancy; after Gabriel tells her she is to bear a son, she responds, “Here I am, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word.” However, Gabriel never explicitly *asks* for her consent, but simply pronounces, “And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus” (v. 31). Since Mary is not in a sexual relationship at this time, she initially asks Gabriel, “How can this be, since I am a *parthenos*?” (v. 34), to which he responds “The Holy Spirit will come upon (*èpeleusetai*) you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow (*èpiskiasei*) you” (v. 35). The word *èpeleusetai* is the third-person singular indicative future form of the verb *èperchomai*, which can mean “to arrive” (of time), “to overtake,” or “to come upon” (of disease or calamity) (see Abbott-Smith 2001, p. 166). This word has been used in New Testament texts in the context of a disaster or misery (Luke 21:26, Acts 8:24; 13:40; James 5:1), the overpowering attack of a stronger person (Luke 11:22), an angry mob (Acts 14:19), and a strong spiritual power (Acts 1:8; Eph. 2:7). These usages all convey

a sense of an unexpected and non-consensual encounter. Meanwhile, the verb *èpiskiasei* (third-person singular indicative future form of *èposkiazō*) means “to throw a shadow upon,” or “to envelop in shadow” (Abbott-Smith 2001, p. 173; cf. Matt. 17:5; Luke 9:34). The angel Gabriel’s answer to Mary’s question about the source of her pregnancy thus conveys nuances of attacking, overtaking, overshadowing, and enveloping; she is essentially told that *something* will do *some thing* to her, with the result that she will get pregnant. Most importantly, the angel does not ask for her consent; therefore, Mary can only respond, “Here I am, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word” (Luke 1:38).

This situation is reminiscent of Lois Pineau’s depiction of sexual consent as “a proper conversation” versus “an offer from the Mafia” (1989, p. 235):

So let us, for a moment, conceive of sexual interaction on a communicative rather than a contractual model. Let us look at it ... as if it were a proper conversation rather than an offer from the Mafia.

For Pineau, a “contractual model” of cooperation offers a means to achieve further ends set by the contract. It is not important that the nuance of such cooperation is reluctant or hostile, as long as the agreed objectives are met. There are also situations where a contract is agreed in conditions where one of the parties involved has no other choice, because the other party has more power than they do, or may pose an (explicit or unspoken) threat should the contract be refused (as in the case of an offer from the Mafia). In contrast, a communicative model or “proper conversation” involves a willingness to seek what the other party wants and a desire to help them to achieve these ends. Pineau describes a proper conversationalist as charitable, intuitive, and sensitive to the responses of their partners.

Using this illustration, Mary’s short conversation with the angel about her pregnancy may be considered less a “proper conversation” than an offer from the Mafia, in which Gabriel does not care about Mary’s consent, but simply pronounces what his “boss” intends to do to Mary’s body. Thus, Mary’s “voluntary” consent, “let it be with me according to your word,” might convey an unspoken sense of “Please don’t kill me, I’ll do whatever you want.” Just like the young Indonesian woman in Ayub’s narrative, Mary may have survived a sexual assault (Daly 1978, pp. 84–5).

Thus far, I have identified the centrality of sexuality, violence, and disruptions towards male-dominated sexuality and patriarchal culture in the

narrative of the Whore of Babylon, the Virgin Mary, and the young Indonesian woman in Ayub's story. All three women have been defined and named after their sexuality within male-constructed narratives. They have travelled unusual paths of sexual relationship. They have been accused of being "not-a-good-woman." They have subverted some patriarchal assumptions about women and sexuality. They have experienced forms of violence. Considering these similar characteristics, I argue that the virgin and the whore might not be as oppositely different as the traditional virgin/whore binary suggests. In the next section, I will further queer this binary by showing how the virgin and whore categories might be constantly shifting and unstable within different historical and social contexts.

"PROMISCUOUS VIRGIN"? FLUID AND UNSTABLE SOCIAL MEANINGS OF THE VIRGIN AND THE WHORE

The "virgin" category of the virgin/whore binary is not always desired or ideal; the whore category, meanwhile, is not always considered as the despised or immoral side of this binary. Rather, there is evidence of a fluid and hybrid fusion between these categories traditionally used to define women.

One contemporary example of a hybrid combination of the virgin and the whore is the symbiosis and syncretization of Mary and Ezili, a Vodou goddess in Haiti. In contemporary Haitian society, Ezili was identified with the Virgin Mary (Rey 1999). This Ezili (or Marian) figure is constituted via a number of conflicting images, including Ezili Freda, who is portrayed as a rich, promiscuous, and flamboyant woman, and Ezili Dantó, presented as the Black Madonna, a militant mother who fights fiercely to defend her children from oppression. Both images are considered contradictory embodiments of the same Ezili, or Virgin Mary, figure. Through this symbiosis of Ezili and Mary, the virgin and the whore categories are dissolved into one persona, that is—as Terry Rey put it—the "promiscuous virgin" (1999, p. 199).

I also came across other contemporary contestations of the virgin/whore binary among the Christian youth participants in my own research (Wijaya Mulya 2016). While previous studies in Indonesia have shown the importance of preserving virginity before marriage, especially for women (Bennett 2005; Smith-Hefner 2005; Utomo and McDonald 2009), a

number of participants in my study challenged this dominant norm by giving alternative meanings to sex, women, and virginity. For example, according to Anggi, a 22-year-old female participant:

I think having sex is okay, as long as you are being responsible. I mean come on, who doesn't need sex? We are grownups ... Losing your virginity isn't like losing both your hands.

Similarly, Lusi, a 22-year-old female student, made the following point:

Coming from a not-so-good family relationship, I want more love and intimacy. So I have sex with my boyfriend. Sex is basically a normal human need. I think nowadays such a thing is quite common in Indonesia, depending on which community you are in.

These participants disrupted the dominant meanings around virginity in Indonesia—where maintaining virginity prior to marriage is regarded as the primary moral choice for young people (particularly women). For these participants, losing your virginity does not, however, imply your immorality, and engaging in sex outside of marriage does not make a woman a “whore” or a “cheap girl.” Instead, sex is constituted as “a normal human need.” In other words, they do not regard virginity as the ideal or desired condition for unmarried women. Quite the opposite: engaging in sex is considered a positive way to enjoy “love and intimacy.” As Jackson and Scott have noted:

Sex is now seen as positive, playful and life-enhancing. Where once it was thought to bring out the beast in us, it is now more often seen as having the potential to bring out the best in us ... Good sex has become a key life goal and a source of personal fulfilment: *sex as secular salvation*. (1997, p. 559; italics added)

In a discursive landscape where sex is no longer constituted as “the beast,” there is therefore the potential for the “whore” to become the ideal, the heroine, the role model; her sexuality ceases to be a marker of her immorality and transforms instead into a source of personal meaning and fulfilment, or even salvation.

As ambivalent as the categories of virgin and whore might be in these contemporary situations, there is also incongruity in biblical contexts

around the social role of the “whore” figure. In ancient Hebrew culture, the social existence of prostitutes or harlots appears to have always been contradictory. Prostitution was discouraged in certain circumstances in the laws of Leviticus (Lev. 21:7, 9, 14), but it was not a crime (Emmerson 1989, pp. 387–8). As Bird (1999) has noted, a prostitute was a shameful profession for a woman in this biblical context, but it was also one of the rare situations in which a woman was recognized as an individual, independent from any male guardian. A prostitute may have been an outcast, but she was not an outlaw. Women who took on the role of professional prostitute were thus rejected *and* accepted, tolerated *and* stigmatized. The whore subject position was both enabling *and* limiting for a woman in this context.

The instability of the virgin/whore binary is also evident when we examine other female biblical characters, including characters explicitly identified as prostitutes. Many of these women use their sexual appeal to fulfil God’s will, while others play protagonist roles in the biblical narratives. It is not always easy to discern whether the narrator wishes us to evaluate them as honourable heroines or immoral harlots. Ruth, for instance, is often portrayed as a faithful God-obeying woman; yet she used certain strategies to seduce Boaz as instructed by her mother-in-law Naomi (Ruth 3:1–13). She washes and anoints herself, putting on her best clothes (v. 3), waits until Boaz falls into a drunken sleep, and then sneaks under his blanket to lie beside him (v. 7).⁵ The characters of Jael and Judith are both hailed as heroines of Israel because they kill the enemy’s top military leader. Nevertheless, they also use methods which involve sexual appeal and deception in order to carry out their murderous actions. Jael invites the fleeing Sisera into her tent, just as a street prostitute might approach a stranger: “Turn aside, my lord, turn aside to me, have no fear” (Judg. 4:18; cf. Proverbs 7). Inside the tent, Sisera only asks for water, but Jael comforts him with a milky drink and covers him with a blanket, before driving a tent peg into his head. In Judges 5—Deborah’s hymn of praise to Jael—Sisera is described as falling down and lying “between [Jael’s] feet” (v. 27). Considering the word “feet” (*raglayim*) in Hebrew is sometimes used as a euphemism for genitals (Haupt 1921; Smith 1990; Schipper 2009),⁶ Jael’s murder of Sisera may have involved some form of sexual engagement, even sexual aggression (e.g. see Yee 1993).

Judith, meanwhile, also destabilizes the virgin/whore binary. She is depicted as an honourable and chaste widow and a devout Jew. Yet, she

seduces the Assyrian general Holofernes with her beautiful appearance, extravagant jewellery (Jdt. 10:3–4), and well-prepared speech (11:5–19), before taking up his sword and decapitating him (13:1–10). By so doing, she delivers the Jewish people of Bethulia from imminent conquest by the Assyrian enemy.

Moreover, in the book of Genesis, we encounter Judah's daughter-in-law Tamar, who disguises herself as a professional prostitute to have sex with Judah, her father-in-law (Gen. 38:12–19). Although initially condemned to death by Judah for “playing the whore” (v. 24), he ultimately vindicates her as being “more righteous” than himself (v. 26). Tamar's actions are considered legitimate, since Judah had violated her rights according to Levirate marriage traditions to marry his son Shelah (Gen. 38:11, 14; cf. Deut. 25:5–10). By masquerading in the role of prostitute, she ensured the Judahite family line would continue, a line that would eventually give rise to the Davidic dynasty—the dynasty of Israel's messianic leadership. This vindication of the prostitute figure is also evoked in the story of Rahab (Joshua 2), a Canaanite prostitute who becomes an honourable hero by bravely refusing an order from the Jericho king to hand over the Hebrew spies (vv. 2–7). Rahab is later included in the genealogy of Jesus (Matt. 1:5), along with Tamar (v. 3), Ruth (v. 5), and Bathsheba (v. 6; see 2 Samuel 11–12 for Bathsheba's story)—all women whose sexual reputations are by no means without controversy. Corresponding with the focus of this chapter, the fifth and the last woman mentioned in this genealogy is Mary (Matt. 1:16), thereby connecting her symbolically with these sexualized women.

These contemporary and biblical examples demonstrate that the line between the virgin and whore is not always clear cut or easily demarcated; instead, these categories are fluid, unstable, and, at times, interchangeable. Thus, drawing on the virgin/whore binary to categorize women is inadequate, oversimplified, and unnecessary. Indeed, as the unknown author of *The Thunder, Perfect Mind* has articulated, the honoured and the scorned one, the whore and the holy one, may not be located on opposing sides of a gendered and sexualized binary. They may simply be one and the same person:

For I am the first and the last.
I am the honoured one and the scorned one.
I am the whore and the holy one.⁷

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have explored some possibilities to denaturalize the virgin/whore binary, which was drawn on to justify an act of gendered violence perpetrated against a young woman by a group of Indonesian youth. I have juxtaposed the Virgin Mary and the Whore of Babylon as biblical characters best representing the virgin and the whore categories in order to reveal the instability and insufficiency of this binary for categorizing women. As I have argued, these biblical figures may not be poles apart; rather, they share similar characteristics, such as the centrality of sexuality in their lives, their experiences of violence, and the challenges they pose to dominant patriarchal cultures. I also suggest that the virgin and whore categories are fluid and interchangeable in various contemporary and biblical contexts. These analyses call for a more nuanced recognition of the oversimplified ways in which women are often categorized in the virgin/whore binary. Throughout these discussions, I have highlighted some discursive possibilities to re-position or give new meanings to the “cheap girl” figure in Ayub’s narrative. These possibilities can help us resist the normalization of sexual violence in this context and elsewhere. By denaturalizing this binary—making it discursively irrational—I hope that the notion of violence as a “logical consequence” for women located by others in the “whore” category becomes both unintelligible and unacceptable.

NOTES

1. An earlier version of this chapter was published in Wijaya Mulya (2015). Used here with kind permission of the journal editor.
2. Narratives presented in this chapter were translated from Indonesian to English by the author. All the participants’ names are pseudonyms. Ethics approval for the project was given by the University of Auckland Human Participants Ethics Committee (reference number 9046).
3. Huber (2011) notes that this word is also used in the book of Judith to describe how Holofernes’ troops were amazed at Judith’s beauty, suggesting that it can connote amazement (or appreciation) when beholding a person’s physical or sexual appearance.
4. This tradition is omitted from the Lukan version of the annunciation story.
5. Quite what happens between Ruth and Boaz under Boaz’s cloak is left frustratingly vague by the narrator. Ruth does stay the night (v. 14), but it is not clear what she and Boaz got up to during her nocturnal visit. Although as I indicate below, Ruth’s acts of “uncovering” and “lying beside” Boaz’s “feet” takes on a sexualized nuance when we remember the Hebrew word for “feet” (*raglayim*) can be used euphemistically to refer to genitalia.

6. See, for example, Gen. 25:26; Exod. 4:25; Isa. 7:20; also possibly Ruth 3:4, 7, 8, 14.
7. Taken from *The Thunder, Perfect Mind*, a Gnostic text discovered at Nag Hammadi. Composed in Greek, it is usually dated to the early centuries of the Common Era. Available on the Gnostic Society Library website, <http://gnosis.org/naghamm/thunder.html>, accessed on 13 May 2017.

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