“A Big, Fabulous Bible”: The *Queen James Bible* and Its Queering of Scripture

R. Shannon Constantine
r.shannon.constantine@gmail.com

**ABSTRACT**

While queer biblical translation aims to validate the presence of the LGBTQI community within Christianity, it is often viewed as violating the ethical standards of canonical biblical texts. This paper analyses the *Queen James Bible* as an activist, queer translation of the Bible that intersects with questions of ethics. Drawing on prefatory material and textual and comparative analysis of the “clobber verses” as presented in the *Queen James Bible* and the King James Version on which it is based, I discuss how this Bible makes a significant contribution to both the LGBTQI community and activism. Engaging with queer translation and activist theory to frame my analysis, I explore how the *Queen James Bible*’s anonymous editors confer new meaning to normative biblical conventions, thereby subverting accusations by readers and theologians that depict this text as an unethical alteration of the Bible. By categorising the edits made on the “clobber verses” into four sections and investigating the editors’ engagement with the initial Hebrew and Greek scriptures, I conclude that translations such as the *Queen James Bible* contend with the issue of ethics by creating a queer hermeneutical space via religious scripture that is often used to marginalise the LGBTQI community.

**KEYWORDS**

Queen James Bible; queer Bible translation; activism; clobber verses

**Introduction**

As a religious text, the Bible has long been associated with homophobia and anti-queer rhetoric. Activist, queer-positive translations of the Bible enact a subversion of conventional interpretations of biblical texts, and may even be viewed as legitimising the position of the queer community within Christianity. However, activist queer translation brings with it the problem of ethics and the destabilisation of the biblical text, positions that potentially challenge the efficacy of such translations. This study draws on the *Queen James Bible* (hereafter QJB) as a case study within the field of activist Bible translation, and its research parameters are the strategies on which the QJB draws to challenge the authority of canonical biblical texts and the role of ethics in the process of translation. Rather than investigate the merits and demerits of the QJB or assess the moral stances involved in queer biblical translation, this paper analyses the QJB to explore the intersection between activist translation and broader commentaries on translation and its ethics. The *Queen James Bible* was selected for its approach to the task of “(resolving) interpretive ambiguity in the Bible as it pertains to homosexuality,” namely its alteration of eight verses (amounting to seven passages) from the King James Version (KJV) that
discuss homosexuality through retranslation and interpretation. These verses correlate with the ‘clobber passages’ that are co-opted to marginalise the LGBTQI community using the Bible as a tool, as discussed for example by Colby Martin in his book *UnClobber.* As such, the QJB editors situate their changes within recognisable parameters, thereby contributing to existing activism and marking their changes as purposive rather than purely subjective.

In terms of methodology, the paper primarily involves textual and comparative analysis of the QJB and KJV texts. Queer translation theory and activist theory are incorporated as methodological frameworks, guiding how the verses are analysed and contextualising the discussion. Focus is on the eight altered verses, primarily at the level of their lexical semantics. While reliance on just one other version for comparative purposes may be seen as a limitation, the KJV was selected as the editors of the QJB based their changes on the KJV (which thus operates as the source text, with the QJB being the target text). Additional material involved in the discussion includes the Editors’ Notes, cover image, and flyleaf of the QJB, alongside the reviews included on its Amazon page (which also serves as its website). A related point to be noted is that the editors and publishers of the QJB remain anonymous (and thus could not be contacted for clarification or interviewing).

In its exploration of how the QJB is positioned within the field of activist translation, this paper investigates three main areas. Firstly, it looks at what strategies the QJB employs to challenge the authority of canonical biblical texts. Secondly, it analyses the significance of ethical translation in relation to this specific translation, and thirdly, the paper questions the extent to which activist theory frames the changes made in the QJB. A brief literature review of the key concepts that serve as analytical frameworks is useful in situating these points.

Beginning with the main framework of this paper, approaching queer translation necessitates a shift beyond the simplistic idea that “queer” only refers to sexuality and the LGBTQI community, instead moving towards identifying it as a method of queering disciplines as diverse as English, Anthropology, and History, and of queering, or disrupting, naturalised texts by “reading against the grain,” a view that requires further inquiry in relation to the QJB. Introduced as a methodological framework by Teresa de Lauretis, it initially aimed at disrupting the homogenising discourses of existing lesbian

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1 The Queen James Bible (Queen James, 2012).
2 Martin describes the use of these verses as effecting psychological violence against the rights and selfhood of the LGBTQI community. Colby Martin, *UnClobber: Rethinking Our Misuse of the Bible on Homosexuality* (Louisville: Presbyterian Publishing Corporation, 2016).
and gay studies and at questioning the heterosexist bases and assumptions of what functioned as academic theory at the time. As a praxis that has a strong intersection with queer theory, queer translation operates by challenging heteronormative structures and other forms of power that exist within texts. Baer and Kaindl note that there is a strong correlation between queer theory and translation: since queer theory “problematises the representation of otherness,” while translation studies “highlights the otherness inherent in representation,” the merging of these two fields would problematise both traditional models of representation (such as mimesis) and the voices and subjectivities contained in these representations. Additionally, mediation is a significant aspect within both these fields, as they work between and within hegemonic power structures, and as their unification enables “the possibility of new sites of heterogeneity and difference” that subvert existing structures and allow for alternative interpretations of texts and established theories.

Considering queer biblical translation, it is important to note that queer translations such as the one discussed here arose out of a particular tradition of biblical interpretation and exegesis that sought to reclaim a space for groups that were marginalised and discriminated against using the Bible. Feminist translations were particularly influential in this regard, due to their re-examining of the way gender is discussed in the Bible. Elizabeth Stanton’s *The Woman’s Bible* is considered a forerunner within this movement, challenging the way women were portrayed in the Bible; while this version was later criticised for its solely white, European/American perspective, it remains an important foray into re-evaluating the masculinist tradition of the Bible. The importance of this and other feminist approaches lies in the dual ideological and methodological challenge they pose to assumptions of neutrality in Bible translation. Additionally, there are close links between feminist inquiries into how social constructions and structures stabilise norms and categories (such as exclusionary binaries and

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identities) and those that form part of Queer Studies, and the two disciplines share methodologies, scopes, and influences.¹⁰

Furthering this discussion, the act of translation from one form to another functions as a queer praxis in itself, since it often involves a queering of the target language and culture through processes of displacement and broadening, and furthermore, challenges the static nature of divisions, or borders, by producing alternative meanings and knowledge.¹¹ In this manner, translation encourages an interpretive fluidity that questions binaries such as source and target,¹² and the impossible task of achieving complete fidelity in a translation problematises “the very gendered relation between the sovereign original text and the more feminised, more peripheral translated text,”¹³ further indicating a subversion of existing textual structures. Queer translation also involves focusing on what cannot be expressed through translation: to Spurlin, this is the space of ‘l’intraduisible’, or ‘the untranslatable’, which is a queer, ambiguous space that calls into question one’s understanding of translatability.¹⁴ These spaces of untranslatability, furthermore, are inherent to the process of translation, as they highlight the impossibility of fully reproducing what is being translated.¹⁵

Queer translation is a useful context for analysing the QJB, serving as a framework to analyse departures from the authority of the KJV. Furthermore, the QJB’s digressions from the KJV constitute a disruption of heteronormative structures (through alternative readings of the contexts and language in which the eight altered passages are located). This disruption, however, brings with it the question of whether it is ethical to alter religious Scripture, even for activist purposes. An important point in relation to the ethics of altering the Bible is that while the KJV is approached as an “authoritative” version, it is also circumscribed by translation. Translation is a hermeneutical process, and no translation of the Bible is neutral, implying that the KJV and other versions embody their translators’ subjective positioning and choices, which thereby impact the text and its meanings. For instance, critics highlight the Hebrew Bible (upon which several subsequent translations are based) as being granted a semblance of authority that has more to do with its familiarity and popularity rather than with any established authority.

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¹² Baer and Kaindl, Queering Translation, 6.
¹⁴ Spurlin, “Queering,” 8.
pointing out that even this Bible is a translation in “a smoothed-over, conceptual language.”

The question of ethics in translation is an extremely broad and complex area, meaning that translations cannot simply be divided according to those that are “ethical” and “unethical.” Discussions of what is ethical and unethical in translation have moved beyond early calls for functional equivalence in translated texts, with focus shifting away from concerns of linguistic equivalence or fidelity due to the complexity brought about by intersections of praxis, culture, and situational factors, implying a shift towards approaching ethics with a broader understanding of communication as being praxis-based and experiential. This in turn problematises attempts at formulating a list of rules that govern ethics. However, there has been criticism directed at dynamic translations of the Bible, for example against their modification of theological language and their reliance on the translator’s own beliefs and methods, which is seen as disrupting the relationship between author and reader. Despite these objections, acknowledging that it is impossible to arrive at a general consensus regarding ethical standards assists in working towards an analysis of queer biblical translation as activism.

**Activist Theory and the QJB**

To Svirsky, activism is not always manifested in outward rebellions such as protests and demonstrations: instead, it is located “in the insolence and intensity of the challenge posed against constituted power (whatever its form or mode), and its associated way of life,” a view that centralises the activist function of subtle attempts to subvert hegemonic structures and their role in working towards challenging these structures. Applying this claim to this study, the prefatory material of the QJB can be analysed as a challenge directed at conventional biblical formats and styles, as discussed below.

Exploring the QJB and activist translation, the most noticeable feature of the QJB is the large, rainbow-patterned cross on its front cover. Christians identify the cross as a sacrificial symbol that highlights God’s love for humanity, while the rainbow flag is often associated with the LGBTQI community. Interestingly, the rainbow itself has biblical connotations as a symbol of promise and protection following the flood described in Genesis, thereby giving it a two-fold meaning. In keeping with the activist aim of the QJB,

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16 Sherry Simon, *Gender in Translation*, 125.
this unification of two universally recognisable symbols signifies an attempt to claim inclusivity for the LGBTQI community within Christianity, involving layered interactions among the meanings associated with each symbol. In terms of queering, it forms a discursive space that creates new significations\textsuperscript{21} by subverting contemporary understandings of both the rainbow flag and the cross, which are sometimes viewed as mutually exclusive symbols.

Further subversion exists in the title \textit{Queen James Bible}: the editors explain that this is both an acknowledgement of the significance of the KJV and a reference to the sexuality of King James (the editors write that he was bisexual and was known as "Queen James" in court).\textsuperscript{22} The reference made in the title can be viewed as a deliberate feminisation of the translated text, thereby reinforcing notions of translated texts as feminised versions of a sovereign original.\textsuperscript{23} This reading also further reinforces the idea of the \textit{QJB} as a \textit{translation} of the KJV (rather than a mere derivation). Considering Lacayo’s conceptualisation of translation as "a queer encounter between a bodily text and an infinite number of unknown, possible others,"\textsuperscript{24} the \textit{QJB}’s title also extends and challenges the “original” KJV through the creation of a new version that displays alternative possibilities of understanding specific biblical verses. Additionally, the title highlights the performativity of translation; like translation, the title is “a queer echo” that is more than just a reproduction of a source, as it both relocates and alters the original through the very process of repetition.\textsuperscript{25} The \textit{QJB} identifies itself as “a big, fabulous Bible”\textsuperscript{26} (a reference included in this paper’s title), with “big” conveying an impression both of size and of prominence, and “fabulous” invoking the queer community, as part of the vocabulary drawn on to affirm and distinguish the LGBTQI community.

Further subversive instances of activism are the anonymity of the editors and the identity of the publisher and the author (listed as Queen James and God respectively).\textsuperscript{27} Contradicting conventional norms of publication, these anonymisations involve a collision with stable, accepted norms and structures, thus creating a dialectical relation\textsuperscript{28} between the readers and the text and between the readers and these informational structures. In other words, these identifiers instil reflectiveness in readers, and the readers themselves

\textsuperscript{21}Spurlin, “Queering,” 16.
\textsuperscript{22}The Editors, “Editors’ Notes” in \textit{The Queen James Bible} (Queen James, 2012), 3.
\textsuperscript{23}Spurlin, “Queering,” 206.
\textsuperscript{26}\textit{The Queen James Bible}, 1.
\textsuperscript{27}\textit{The Queen James Bible}, flyleaf.
\textsuperscript{28}Svirsky, “Defining Activism,” 170.
draw on their own interpretations of these terms. Additionally, the reflection and emotion generated in readers by this information (which could be either positive or negative) are closely connected to activism: through a de-territorialisation of the conventional strategies of publication information (these identities are generally specified), there is an alteration in the reader’s engagement with these strategies, thereby facilitating an altered relationship between activism and the readers. For instance, the authorial information could possibly be regarded as blasphemous, while an alternative view may signify an involuntary engagement with activism by way of considering it symbolic of inclusivity.

**Ethical Translation**

The role of ethics in relation to the *QJB* is best illustrated through a discussion of the customer reviews included on the Amazon page for the *QJB*. While they reflect personal reactions, the reviews also indicate broader issues inherent in translating the Bible. Four of the first ten 'Most Critical' reviews directly refer to ethics, titled as follows:

1. “Just Say No” (by Casey, 18th June 2018).
2. “Fear God and give glory unto Him; for the hour of His judgment is come. Revelation 14:7 KJV” (by Shantina, 15th December 2018).
3. “Rewriting history with a misinformation campaign. The honest way would be to say ‘we disagree with what these verses say’” (by Hamza Philip, 3rd August 2018).
4. “A book for the obstinate” (by Ryan, 18th June 2018).

The review by Shantina draws on a Bible verse, citing a passage in Romans that describes the punishments that will be visited upon anyone who alters the Bible. Casey’s review claims that the editors have “created (their) own religion with a fake God that does not exist,” providing visual support for her claim in the form of a Bible verse about rejecting the Bible’s instruction. Similarly, Ryan’s review implies that people who buy the *QJB* are buying a fake Bible, thereby ignoring the truth and refusing to repent—both these reviews centre on a notion of absolute truth perceived as being violated by the *QJB* and its editors.

Basing their claims on the Bible, these reviewers suggest that altering the text of the Bible is a sin. While fidelity in translation has developed and broadened beyond linguistic equivalence, and the translation of any text brings with it concerns regarding the ethics of altering “original” forms of a text, Bible translation presents specific issues: “when the Bible is perceived in the literal sense as words of God, translation is impossible;

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30 The reviews are included in the Appendix.
the biblical texts are then in principle untranslatable,” indicating the challenge of altering what is commonly perceived as the direct word of God. The assumption that the Bible is the literal word of God explains why alterations made to the scriptures are criticised if they deviate from the KJV or other versions that are considered authentic or authoritative. The creation of the QJB also reflects Leland Ryken’s concern that the proliferation of biblical translations undermines the Bible’s authority.

Hamza Philip’s review, on the other hand, approaches the QJB from a practical rather than a religious perspective, stating that the QJB violates the rights of “Bible-believing Christians” through an attempt by the LGBTQI community to “force” their views on other people; they offer an alternative approach: “Why not publish a KJV bible where these verses are bracketed off with marginal notes.” Here, altering historical context to propagate a selective worldview is seen as the issue, indicating another aspect of the ethics of translation: to what extent can one avoid imposing one’s worldviews on other people through translation?

Considering the “Editors’ Notes” section at the beginning of the QJB, several statements made by the editors indicate an attempt to maintain ethical standards during translation. Firstly, explaining why they selected the KJV, the editors write:

“Some claim the language of the KJV is antiquated, but we believe it is poetic, traditional, and ceremonial. Christianity is an ancient tradition, and the King James and resultant Queen James versions remind us and keep us connected to that tradition.”

Here, the editors demonstrate a desire to retain both the language of the KJV and a connection to the antiquity of Christianity. This reflects the notion of a translator’s representational responsibility, which is to avoid contradicting “the source-text author’s communicative intentions.” To a certain extent, this use of the KJV and its language as a “source”—thereby maintaining links to “established” biblical texts—addresses the concerns of scholars such as Leland Ryken, who view dynamic translation approaches that modify theological language as threats to the stability of biblical texts. Another indication of an attempt to create an ethical Bible translation is the editors’ refusal to delete entire KJV verses that contradicted their intentions, on the basis that apart from failing to

35 The Editors, “Editors’ Notes,” 3, emphasis added.
address interpretive ambiguity, deleting verses “renders an incomplete Bible.” An attempt is also made to address two issues caused by editing the Bible (namely the difficulty of recreating the original biblical language and the interpretive ambiguity that editing could cause), by “deciding to make the edits as simple as possible.” This is an attempt to maintain ethical standards, which can be understood in terms of Chesterman’s four normative devices in translation. The relation, accountability, communication, and service norms, which aim to maintain integration between source, target, writer, and audience are combined here, presumably with the intention of addressing the translators’ responsibility towards both the KJV and the readers of the QJB.

Activist Strategies

Analysis of the seven altered passages (or eight verses, according to the editors) will focus on the editors’ explanations, in conjunction with a webpage on the Christian Apologetics and Research Ministry (CARM) website (created by its founder Matt Slick) that discusses the QJB. Founded in 1995, the website identifies itself as ”one of the oldest and largest Christian Apologetics sites on the Internet,” and this particular webpage was selected for its detailed engagement with the language of the ancient texts. Analysis is structured around four categories: substitution, deletion, insertion, and rearrangement.

Substitution (Genesis 19:5 and Jude 1:7)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Genesis 19:5</th>
<th>“And they called unto Lot, and said unto him, ‘Where are the men which came into thee this night? Bring them out unto us, that we may know them.’” (KJV)</th>
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38 The Editors, “Editors’ Notes,” 3.
39 The Editors, “Editors’ Notes,” 3.
40 Van Der Jagt, “Ethical Concerns,” 103-4.
The substitutions in these passages (in bold) are instances of what Svirsky terms “the activist problematic,” which involves abandoning organisational structures such as restrictive ideologies and language (homophobic rhetoric, for instance) through processes of situational, direct engagement with the conditions and outcomes connected to these overarching frameworks.\(^{43}\) Altering the conditions of these structures first requires an interrogation of the existing conditions that support their existence in the initial text.\(^{44}\) In these verses, the organisational structure would be homophobic readings of the text, views that the editors address by investigating the conditions in the text that support these readings. This interrogation is then followed by an alteration of these conditions using language, thereby queering (in the sense of challenging\(^{45}\)) conventional readings of these texts. The need for activist engagement with these verses arises from the contemporary association of Sodom with sodomy and homosexuality, associations that lead to extremely negative understandings of homosexuality due to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, which is a strong image of divine punishment.\(^{46}\)

For example, in the Genesis verse, the editors draw on Genesis 19:7 where Lot requests the men of the neighbourhood (here referred to as “they”) not to attempt to “know” the angelic visitors (whom they call “the men” here) “wickedly” (Gen 19:7). The editors substitute “know” with “rape and humiliate” to indicate that the men of the city were intolerant towards strangers, highlighting rape in this context as an act of domination aimed at gaining power, as opposed to a homoerotic act.\(^{47}\) To emphasise their rationale, they substitute the implication of the KJV’s “wickedly” in Genesis 19:7 with that

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\(^{43}\) Svirsky, “Defining Activism,” 165.

\(^{44}\) Svirsky, “Defining Activism,” 165.


\(^{47}\) The Editors, “Editors’ Notes,” 4.
of “brutally” (which they then interpret as connected to rape), and link ‘humiliation’ to signify the intended act of domination implied in this situation. In response, Slick argues that while the Hebrew word for ‘to know’, yawdah, has often been translated as “rape,” no word that translates as “humiliate” ever appears in the Old Testament, thereby suggesting that the editors’ substitution of the word “humiliate” is unwarranted and unjustifiable.48

In the Jude verse, reflecting their Genesis alteration, the editors highlight the angelic status of the visitors, substituting the word “nonhuman,” presumably to discourage possible homophobic interpretations of “strange flesh.” Responding to this, Slick writes that while the Greek word heteros (“other”), meaning “another of a different kind,” supports the QJB version, for him the central issue is that the men in the Genesis passage desired sexual relations with men.49 Slick’s objections, however, reject the activist aspect of Bible translation. Since texts serve different communicative functions in contemporary and ancient contexts, equivalence standards can be transcended to permit the translation to serve a different purpose from that of the original;50 in this case, the translation aims to preclude homophobic interpretations.

Deletion (1 Corinthians 6:9-10 and 1 Timothy 1:10)

| 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 | Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind (9), Nor thieves, nor covetous nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God (10). (KJV) |
| Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor morally weak, nor promiscuous (9), Nor thieves, nor covetous nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God (10). (QJB) |

1 Timothy 1:10

| For whoremongers, for them that **defile themselves with mankind**, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine. (KJV) | For whoremongers, for them that **defile themselves**, for menstealers, for liars, for perjured persons, and if there be any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine. (QJB) |

Another strategy used to achieve the activist intentions of the QJB, deletion involves the erasure of words (in the Timothy verse) and the erasure of implications (in the Corinthians verse). While the editors retain their intention of not deleting entire verses, the deletion of words in this contemporary translation alters and destabilises the biblical text, reflecting the problematic nature of Bible translation. Here, both passages constitute a deletion of the connotation of arsenokoitas and malakoi (translated in the KJV as “**abusers of themselves with mankind**” and “**effeminate**” respectively). Deletion can be engaged with in relation to Lacayo's views on the potentiality of translation, which for him lies in the creative force of the process of translation, rather than in its end result: here, as he theorises, there is a process of creating a “queer futurity,” an engagement that arises in the form of possibilities of interpretation that emerge within the process of translation.

In the Corinthians verses, the editors situate the terms “**effeminate**” and “**homosexuality**” within Greek historical and translative contexts, thus involving retranslation. They note that “**effeminate**” is a translation of the Greek malakoi, meaning soft, in both physical and moral senses, such as lazy and easily influenced, traits associated with women at the time. They claim that the rest of the sins mentioned here suit people who were morally weak, justifying the change as follows: “whether or not they are effeminate by today’s standards has no bearing on it,” a claim which the editors do not explain, but which is presumably intended to highlight the disjunct between the rest of the sins being discussed and an individual's supposed 'effeminacy'.

Another claim made is that while the Greek language did have words for same-sex intercourse at the time, none of these Greek words were used as synonyms for the term arsenokoitas in the initial Greek texts, thus further justifying the use of the term

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52 *The Queen James Bible*, 8.
53 Lacayo, “A Queen,” 221.
54 The Editors, "Editors' Notes," 7.
55 The Editors, "Editors' Notes," 7.
“promiscuous,” which conveys disrespect for both body and health without the connotations that accompany the KJV phrase “abusers of themselves with mankind.” The editors identify the phrase “abusers of themselves with mankind” as a translation of the Greek arsēnokoitai, which they translate as “the male who has many beds,” thereby equating it with promiscuity. Slick, however, cites the Greek context of the term arsēnokoitai as follows: “Arsēnokoitai comes from two words, “árēn, a male, and koitē, a bed. A man who lies in bed with another male, a homosexual,” and further refers to derivatives of the term: “ἀρσενοκοίτης, ou m: a male partner in homosexual intercourse—‘homosexual’” and “ἀρσενοκοίτης, ou, ὃ, arsenokoitēs, male homosexual,” implying that the editors have digressed from the contextual meaning of the term. Similarly, in the Timothy verse, the editors align their alteration with the rest of their interpretations, removing the negative connotation associated with the reference to homosexuality in the KJV verse. Slick notes that the term included in the Greek text is again arsēnokoita, a context removed by the editors.

Despite disputes regarding the connotation of these Greek terms, the QJB translation of these terms by way of deletion reflects a need to understand the original contexts in which these verses were written, rather than ascribing contemporary formulations of homosexuality to them: deleting these contexts is an activist attempt to prevent misrepresentation.

**Insertion (Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Leviticus 18:22</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thou shalt not lie with mankind, as with womankind; it is an abomination. (KJV)</td>
<td>Thou shalt not lie with mankind as with womankind in the temple of Molech; it is an abomination. (QJB)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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56 The Editors, “Editors’ Notes,” 7.
57 The Editors, “Editors’ Notes,” 7.
59 The Editors, “Editors’ Notes,” 8.
Leviticus 20:13

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KJV</th>
<th>QJB</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>If a man also lie with mankind, <strong>as he lieth with a woman</strong>, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them. (KJV)</td>
<td>If a man also lie with mankind <strong>in the temple of Molech, as he lieth with a woman</strong>, both of them have committed an abomination: they shall surely be put to death; their blood shall be upon them. (QJB)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The editors specify that these verses are commonly used to prove that homosexuality is a sin, thus rendering them an important edit to make, despite what the editors consider their outdated nature. They claim that Leviticus is specifically a code for Jewish priests, and that the word “abomination” is a translation of the Hebrew to’evah, which has the connotation of “scandalous,” referring to a transgression that was not always punishable by death. There is a wide body of scholarship on the former claim. With regard to the definition of the word to’evah, scholars acknowledge that while it is generally translated as “abomination”, in reality, it is difficult to find an exact alternative in English, and that it could refer to ritual uncleanness rather than sexuality. Thus, given that the death sentence at the end of verse thirteen (“they shall surely be put to death” (Lev 20:13)) indicates that the act being discussed is punishable by death, the editors choose to draw on the historical context of the text. They reference the preceding verses and pagan rituals including child sacrifice and copulating with male temple prostitutes to state that the sin referred to here is the pagan idolatry involved in this latter act, rather than homosexual acts themselves.

Slick, on the other hand, terms this “prejudicial translation and alteration to suit a particular sexual behaviour,” on the basis that the editors selectively link these verses to ones that mention Molech, ignoring those that refer to other contexts such as bestiality. As he states, “Perhaps later we might see a pro-bestiality Bible that inserts the words “in

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63 The Editors, “Editors’ Notes,” 4.
64 Several works identify Leviticus as establishing a ‘Holiness Code’ that provides moral guidelines (See for example Henry T. C. Sun 1992 and Jacob Milgrom 2000).
the temple of Molech” into Lev. 20:15, just as the pro-homosexual editors did in verse 13.”

In other words, Slick views the editors’ avoidance of applying their changes to verses that discuss bestiality, for instance, as indicating an incohesive, selective application of their changes that could ultimately destabilise their translations.

Given the differences in historical situation between contemporary readings of the Bible and its ancient contexts, it is useful to consider Lacayo’s understanding of translation as involving unknowability and irreducibility, a move towards an interval that is also a simultaneous retreat from complete appropriation. With reference to these passages, the QJB editors seemingly attempt to appropriate the initial text by constraining it with their own interpretation. However, translation is a process where texts do not surrender to each other, instead surrendering to the space in between them, which is viewed as containing the possibility of translation and the potential for multiplicity and variation. In this respect, the editors’ insertions both interact with this space in between the two texts and are a product of it, being two of the numerous possibilities that could arise during translation.

**Rearrangement (Romans 1:26-27)**

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<tr>
<th>Romans 1:26-27</th>
<th>QJB</th>
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<tr>
<td>For this cause God gave <strong>them</strong> up unto vile affections: for even the women did change <strong>the</strong> natural use into that which is against their nature (26). And likewise also the men, <strong>leaving the natural use of the woman,</strong> burned in <strong>their lust one toward another</strong>; men with men working that which is <strong>unseemly,</strong> and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet (27). (KJV)</td>
<td>Their women did change <strong>their</strong> natural use into that which is against nature: And likewise also the men, <strong>left of the natural use of the woman,</strong> burned in <strong>ritual lust,</strong> one toward another (26). Men with men working that which is <strong>pagan and unseemly.</strong> For this cause God gave <strong>the idolators</strong> up unto vile affections, receiving in themselves that recompense of that error which was meet (27). (QJB)</td>
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The most complex change in the QJB, this passage also draws on a rejection of paganism to destabilise homophobic readings of the text. This alteration can be analysed using Spurlin’s notion of the performativity of translation, where translation exists as a “site of struggle” (and not as a facilitator of communication) in the negotiation and production of meaning, a struggle that indicates pre-existing possibilities of counter-translation.\(^71\)

The editors first rearrange the verses to avoid interpretive ambiguity, which they justify by noting that in the KJV, God is described as abandoning the people in the lines before those that introduce the motif of homosexual sex, thus causally linking the two and furthering condemnations of homosexuality.\(^72\) However, it is unclear how the reversal in the QJB alters this causal relationship. Furthermore, as in the Leviticus passages, the editors contextualise these verses within pagan idolatry and the sexual rituals involved in pagan worship.\(^73\) Slick argues against the unjustified addition of words that were not in evidence in the Greek texts, highlighting that the KJV has no occurrence of the word “ritual” in the entire Bible, while the New King James Version only includes it in the Old Testament: thus, to him, the word ritual is added merely in support of the editors’ aims.\(^74\) Additionally, the editors avoid the issue of interpreting what exactly the “unnatural” use of a woman referenced, stating that it could refer to pagan dancing, but that they “have no idea” what it means. Here, while there are reactions against their edits, the editors display how subjectivity in translation interacts with and completely alters the structures and meanings of sources.

Considering the four categories listed above as activism, the QJB translations and the reactions that ensue reflect an agonistic, dialogical base for activism, where conflict contributes to social change.\(^75\) The discussions created as a result of the QJB’s activist project reflect the dialogical nature of contestation, which creates alternative spaces through its use of subversive, confrontational tactics to challenge heteronormative structures of power and meaning.\(^76\)

\(^71\) Spurlin, “Queering,” 7.
\(^72\) The Editors, “Editors’ Notes,” 5.
\(^73\) The Editors, “Editors’ Notes,” 5.
\(^76\) Ganesh and Zoller, “Dialogue,” 77.
Conclusion

To conclude, queer theory provides a suitable framework for analysing the QJB due to its representation of translation and given the QJB’s intention of subverting homophobic understandings of the Bible. While the alterations in the QJB (which have been categorised as substitution, deletion, insertion and rearrangement) significantly alter the KJV texts, thereby causing adverse religious and scholarly reactions, the editors cite an intention of retaining the integrity of the KJV, thus implying an attempt to maintain ethical standards. Along with the verses, the prefatory material functions to create a space for the LGBTQI community by challenging conventional readings of the Bible. As a result, the QJB can be analysed as an activist queer translation that exemplifies the intersections between ethics, translation, and activism, and that demonstrates how queer spaces can be developed within religion. It is also interesting to note, as the above analyses suggest, that the QJB surpasses its aim of being a “gay-friendly” Bible, and that a case can be made for it as a queer text that creates its own hermeneutical space within the Bible’s location in terms of the LGBTQI community.

Appendix: QJB Reviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reviewer</th>
<th>Review Title</th>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Review</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Casey</td>
<td>Just Say No</td>
<td>1.0/5</td>
<td>June 18th 2018</td>
<td>This isn't the word of God, you've created your own religion with a fake God that does not exist.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Shantina     | Fear God and give glory unto | 1.0/5  | December 15th 2018 | Revelation 22:18-19 KJV
18 For I testify unto every man that heareth the
| Him; for the hour of His judgment is come. Revelation 14:7 KJV | words of the prophecy of this book. If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book. 19 And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book. |

### Hamza Philip

Rewriting history with a misinformation campaign. The honest way would be to say "we disagree with what these verses say".

| 1.0/5 | August 3\textsuperscript{rd} 2018 |

As a Libertarian, I don’t care how other people live their lives, so long as they don’t violate the constitutional rights of any citizens. So, if someone wants to change verses in the KJV and make the Bible say whatever they want it to say, that is their right as an American citizen, so long as they don’t force their changes on others.

As for the Bible and description given, the information given about the KJV is patently false. Genesis 19, for instance, states that the men of Sodom wanted to know the men staying as quests in the home of Lot. Over 3 decades ago, I heard a speaker on Public Radio state that all the men of Sodom wanted to do was know who the men are who were staying in Lot’s home. I knew the speaker was misrepresenting the passage at the time. So, I know the claim made in the description that:

"Homosexuality was first mentioned in the Bible in 1946, in the Revised Standard Version. There is no mention of or reference to homosexuality in any Bible prior to this - only interpretations have been made. Anti-LGBT Bible interpretations commonly cite only eight verses in the Bible that they interpret to mean homosexuality is a sin; Eight verses in a book of thousands!"

is patently false and an attempt to rewrite history.

By claiming falsely that those verses were improperly interpreted and then issuing their own translation, the group responsible for the
publication of this translation seem to want rewrite history and then claim that anyone who reads chapters like Genesis 19 in context is in error. Hence:

"The Queen James Bible seeks to resolve interpretive ambiguity in the Bible as it pertains to homosexuality: We edited those eight verses in a way that makes homophobic interpretations impossible."

The group responsible for this translation is actually slandering everyone who holds what is the traditional view for Millennia about these passages. Apparently, many LGBT really do want to force their ways on anyone and everyone who holds the traditional view. What's next? Making a law against owning a copy of the King James Bible? These are clear violations of the guaranteed constitutional rights of American citizens. By rewriting history a la Orwell's 1984, it is clear that many LGBT want to be able to oppress citizens who hold what was the view universally for millennia!

Why not just say "we disagree with some passages in the Bible and so we are publishing a bible that fits what we truly believe". That would be the honest thing to do.

"Know" in Genesis 19 is a figure of speech. Adam knew Eve. That's how they had children. So, why would Lot ask the men of Sodom not to act wickedly? Why would he offer his two daughters instead? Lot was a judge in Sodom, a magistrate. If a male mob came to an American judge's door and demanded to "know" two male visitors, and the judge in fear offered his daughters instead, that mob would be arrested by the police. Further, the context has Lot attempting to save the male visitors from a male mob. Why try to get the male mob to take his daughters instead? The reason is obvious: They male mob wanted to know the male
visitors in the same way Adam knew Eve.

So obviously, some in the LGBT community wants force those who believe these Bible passages to read a bible that does not state God is angry at homosexuals for their practices.

There is a much better way to do things. Why not publish a KJV bible where these verses are bracketed off with marginal notes. An even better way is to write a book using modern biblical scholarship to demonstrate that Moses did not write the Torah.

I think many in the LGBT community, now that they have more rights in Secular America, which is guaranteed to them by the US Constitution and Bill of Rights (which allows Freedom Of Religion and Freedom FROM Religion) now want to take rights away from those Christians who believe those passages in the Bible. They want to do so by forcing the issue and using the Queen James Bible to eliminate any possible interpretation of Bible passages that offends the LGBT community.

Just as violating the constitutional rights of members of the LGBT community is a crime, so is violating the rights of Bible Believing Christians.

This goes to show that some in the LGBT community are just as hateful and selfish as some Bible Believing Christians who want to force their Rule of Law on Americans.

Now, if the publishers of the Queen James translation came clean and said they wanted to publish a KJV Bible with verses showing God as described in the Bible to have no problem with the LGBT community, I wouldn’t have bothered to write this review. I would have ignored the product. However, with the agenda stated in the
description so clearly showing they want to force their views on others, I have to complain.

I don’t want the LGBT community controlling my life anymore than I want Bible Believing Christians controlling my life. However, under the US Constitution and Bill of Rights, both have the right to freedom of speech, so long as they don’t infringe upon the rights of others.

By the way, I am NOT a Bible Believing Christian!

Ryan A book for the obstinate. 1.0/5 June 18th 2018 If you’re buying a book that suits your flesh, by definition, you are ignoring what you know to be true and refusing to repent. I don’t think under such circumstances this book will do you much good. If you repent, save yourself $20 and buy a real Bible.

Bibliography


*The Queen James Bible*. Queen James, 2012.


