Condemnation of Female Homoeroticism

in the Hebrew Bible, Septuagint, Greek New Testament, Deuterocanon, and Patristic Sources

A Source-Critical Survey with a Masoretic–Septuagint Apparatus and Expanded Patristic Greek

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Critical editions: BHS · Rahlfs–Hanhart Septuaginta · NA28 / UBS5 · Robinson–Pierpont Byzantine Textform · Migne PG/PL · Sources Chrétiennes

Translations cited: Legacy Standard Bible (LSB) and New International Version (NIV); originals weighed against MT, LXX, and the Greek critical text

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Contents

Contents 2
Abstract and Central Finding 3
Corpus-by-Corpus Overview 3
Editions and Method 3
Part I — The Hebrew Bible (Masoretic Text and Septuagint) 5
1.1 The Two Levitical Prohibitions: MT – LXX Apparatus 5
1.2 Apparatus and Lexical Notes 5
1.3 Why the Silence? Scholarly Explanations 6
1.4 The Rabbinic Supplement (post-biblical) 6
Part II — The Greek New Testament: Romans 1:26–27 7
2.1 The Critical Text (NA28 / UBS5) 7
2.2 The Decisive Grammatical Point 7
2.3 Textual Apparatus: NA28 vs. Byzantine / TR 7
2.4 The Interpretive Debate 8
2.5 The Other NT “Clobber” Terms Are Male 8
Part III — The Deuterocanonical Writings 9
3.1 Wisdom of Solomon 14:23–26 9
3.2 The Remainder of the Deuterocanon 9
Part IV — New Testament Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha 10
4.1 The Apocalypse of Peter (2nd century) 10
4.2 Hellenistic-Jewish Pseudepigrapha 10
Part V — The Church Fathers (Patristic Greek and Latin Expanded) 11
5.1 Clement of Alexandria — Paedagogus 2.10 (c. 198 CE) 11
5.2 John Chrysostom — Homily 4 on Romans (PG 60:415–422; c. 390 CE) 11
5.3 Ambrosiaster — Commentary on Romans (CSEL 81; c. 370 CE) 11
5.4 Augustine of Hippo — the Dissenting Reading (354–430 CE) 11
5.5 Patristic Reception at a Glance 12
Synthesis and Conclusions 13
Select Bibliography and Sources 14
Critical Editions and Primary Texts 14
Secondary Scholarship 14

Abstract and Central Finding

The evidence is strikingly asymmetrical. Across the Hebrew Bible, the Septuagint, and the deuterocanon, male homoeroticism is prohibited repeatedly and explicitly, yet **not one verse directly condemns sexual relations between women.** The only candidate text in the entire biblical canon is *Romans 1:26*, and—as the Greek itself shows—that verse names no female partner; the female-female meaning is an *inference* drawn from the parallel structure of v. 27 and from later interpreters. The earliest *unambiguous* Christian condemnations of women with women are therefore not scriptural but post-canonical: the second-century *Apocalypse of Peter* and the patristic reception of Romans 1 (Clement, Chrysostom), with Augustine notably reading Romans 1:26 in a different sense altogether.

Plain-language summary. If you go looking for a biblical text that says "a woman shall not lie with a woman," you will not find one. The famous Leviticus prohibitions are written, grammatically, about men only. The New Testament has a single verse that many readers take to include lesbianism (Romans 1:26), but its wording is indirect and genuinely disputed among specialists. Clear, explicit condemnation of women-with-women first appears in early Christian writings of the second to fifth centuries, where it is read *into* Paul rather than stated by him.

Corpus-by-Corpus Overview

Corpus	Direct condemnation of female–female sex?	Textual basis / nature of evidence
Hebrew Bible (MT)	No	Lev 18:22; 20:13 are grammatically male-only (זָכָר zākār). No female counterpart anywhere in the Torah.
Septuagint (LXX)	No	Renders the male-only scope faithfully (ἄρσενος). No added female clause.
Greek New Testament	Contested — one verse	Romans 1:26 (θήλειαι … παρὰ φύσιν). Names no female partner; meaning debated. arsenokoitai terms are male.
Deuterocanon	No	Wisdom 14:26 (γενέσεως ἐναλλαγή) is general at most; not female-specific.
NT Apocrypha (non-deuterocanonical)	Yes (apocryphal)	Apocalypse of Peter: women "who lay with one another as a man with a woman."
Church Fathers	Yes — first clearly here	As reception of Rom 1:26: Chrysostom (yes); Clement (likely); Augustine (no — reads it as non-procreative heterosexual).

Note. "Female homoeroticism" follows Brooten's usage: women sexually involved with other women, whether in ongoing relationships or otherwise.

Editions and Method

Original-language readings below are given in the standard critical editions and weighed against one another:

- **Masoretic Text (MT):** Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia (BHS), reproducing the Leningrad Codex (B19a, 1008 CE).
- **Septuagint (LXX):** Rahlfs–Hanhart, Septuaginta (rev. ed., Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2006); Göttingen editions where extant.
- **Greek New Testament:** Nestle–Aland 28th ed. (NA28) = UBS5; compared with the Robinson–Pierpont Byzantine Textform (2005) and the Textus Receptus (TR).
- **Patristic texts:** Migne, Patrologia Graeca (PG) / Patrologia Latina (PL); Sources Chrétiennes (SC); M. Marcovich, Clementis Alexandrini Paedagogus (Brill, 2002); CSEL for Latin Fathers.

Biblical citations in modern English use the **Legacy Standard Bible (LSB)** and **New International Version (NIV)**; the older ASV and KJV-tradition renderings appear only where a public-domain patristic translation is being quoted verbatim.

Part I — The Hebrew Bible (Masoretic Text and Septuagint)

There is no explicit condemnation of female homoeroticism anywhere in the Hebrew Bible. This is a real lacuna, not an artifact of translation. The two Levitical prohibitions in the Holiness Code are restricted, grammatically and lexically, to males in both their active and passive roles.

1.1 The Two Levitical Prohibitions: MT – LXX Apparatus

Leviticus 18:22

Witness	Text
MT (BHS)	וְאֶת־זָכָר לֹא תִשְׁכַּב מִשְׁכְּבֵי אִשָּׁה תּוֹעֵבָה הִוא
Translit.	*wəʾet-zākār lōʾ tiškab miškəbê ʾiššâ tôʿēbâ hîʾ*
LXX (Rahlfs)	καὶ μετὰ ἄρσενος οὐ κοιμηθήσῃ κοίτην γυναικός· βδέλυγμα γάρ ἐστιν.
LSB	And you shall not lie with a male as one lies with a female; it is an abomination.

Leviticus 20:13

Witness	Text
MT (BHS)	וְאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁכַּב אֶת־זָכָר מִשְׁכְּבֵי אִשָּׁה תּוֹעֵבָה עָשׂוּ שְׁנֵיהֶם מוֹת יוּמָתוּ דְּמֵיהֶם בָּם
Translit.	*wəʾîš ʾăšer yiškab ʾet-zākār miškəbê ʾiššâ … môt yûmātû*
LXX (Rahlfs)	καὶ ὃς ἂν κοιμηθῇ μετὰ ἄρσενος κοίτην γυναικός, βδέλυγμα ἐποίησαν ἀμφότεροι· θανάτῳ θανατούσθωσαν, ἔνοχοί εἰσιν.
LSB	If there is a man who lies with a male as one lies with a female, both of them have committed an abomination; they shall surely be put to death.

1.2 Apparatus and Lexical Notes

(a) The prohibited parties are male throughout. The object is זָכָר (*zākār*, "male"), the LXX equivalent being ἄρσην (*arsēn*). In 20:13 the active subject is אִישׁ (*ʾîš*, "man"). Both the one who penetrates and the one penetrated are male; the law has no grammatical room for two women. The Holiness Code simply does not legislate female-female relations.

(b) The crux מִשְׁכְּבֵי אִשָּׁה ("lyings of a woman"). The Hebrew uses a **plural construct** (*miškəbê*), literally "the lyings-down of a woman," an unusual idiom found only here and in 18:22. The LXX flattens it to a **singular**, κοίτην γυναικός ("bed/intercourse of a woman"). Saul Olyan (*Journal of the History of Sexuality* 5 [1994]: 179–206) argues the phrase denotes a specific act (male anal penetration); Jacob Milgrom (*Leviticus 17–22*, Anchor Bible) likewise restricts the scope. **On every reading the referent is an act between males**; nothing in the construct extends to women.

(c) The LXX coinage that later shaped the NT. The LXX pairing ἄρσενος … κοίτην ("male … bed") is the lexical quarry from which Paul's ἀρσενοκοῖται (*arsenokoitai*, 1 Cor 6:9; 1 Tim 1:10) is almost certainly built—**again a male-only formation** (ἄρσεν, "male" + κοίτη, "bed"). The Greek term therefore inherits, rather than removes, the male restriction.

1.3 Why the Silence? Scholarly Explanations

The Hebrew Bible's failure to legislate female homoeroticism is usually explained by the androcentric and procreative logic of the Holiness Code:

- **No "wasting of seed."** Female acts involve no emission of semen, the locus of much priestly purity concern.
- **No status inversion of a male.** Olyan and others tie the male prohibition to anxiety about a man being "used as a woman." Two women trigger no such inversion in the legislators' frame.
- **Androcentric drafting.** The law speaks to and about men; women's sexuality is addressed chiefly as it relates to a man (adultery, virginity, incest).

1.4 The Rabbinic Supplement (post-biblical)

Later Judaism noticed the gap and could fill it only by analogy and at a far lower level of penalty—itself evidence that the Torah supplies no direct verse. The Talmud (*b. Yevamot* 76a) discusses women who are מְסוֹלְלוֹת (*məsoləlot*, "who rub against one another"); the *Sifra* on Lev 18:3 reads the ban on "the practices of the land of Egypt" as including woman-with-woman unions. Maimonides (*Mishneh Torah*, Issurei Biʾah 21:8) accordingly forbids it as "the practice of Egypt" but explicitly notes **there is no biblical penalty, because no specific verse prohibits it.** The rabbis themselves testify to the scriptural silence.

Part II — The Greek New Testament: Romans 1:26–27

The entire weight of any New Testament condemnation rests on a **single verse**, Romans 1:26—the only place in the Bible widely read as referencing women with women.

2.1 The Critical Text (NA28 / UBS5)

> [16] διὰ τοῦτο παρέδωκεν αὐτοὺς ὁ θεὸς εἰς πάθη ἀτιμίας· αἵ τε γὰρ **θήλειαι** αὐτῶν μετήλλαξαν τὴν φυσικὴν χρῆσιν εἰς τὴν **παρὰ φύσιν**, [17] ὁμοίως τε καὶ οἱ ἄρσενες ἀφέντες τὴν φυσικὴν χρῆσιν τῆς θηλείας ἐξεκαύθησαν ἐν τῇ ὀρέξει αὐτῶν εἰς ἀλλήλους, **ἄρσενες ἐν ἄρσεσιν** τὴν ἀσχημοσύνην κατεργαζόμενοι …

LSB (1:26–27): "For this reason God gave them over to dishonorable passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, and likewise also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, males with males committing what is shameful …"

NIV (1:26–27): "Even their women exchanged natural sexual relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women …"

2.2 The Decisive Grammatical Point

Verse 26 names no female partner. It states only that θήλειαι ("females") μετήλλαξαν ("exchanged") the φυσικὴν χρῆσιν ("natural use/function") for τὴν παρὰ φύσιν ("that contrary to nature"). Contrast v. 27, which is explicit: ἄρσενες ἐν ἄρσεσιν, "males with males." **There is no corresponding "females with females" clause.** The lesbian referent of v. 26 is supplied entirely by (a) the connective ὁμοίως ("likewise") opening v. 27 and (b) the history of interpretation.

Lexical observations. Paul uses the biological terms θῆλυς / ἄρσην ("female / male") rather than the ordinary γυνή / ἀνήρ, echoing Genesis 1:27 LXX (ἄρσεν καὶ θῆλυ). The verb μετήλλαξαν deliberately recalls v. 25 (μετήλλαξαν τὴν ἀλήθειαν, "exchanged the truth"), binding sexual "exchange" to idolatrous "exchange." The phrase παρὰ φύσιν is a Stoic and Hellenistic-Jewish commonplace (Plato, *Laws* 636c; Plutarch, *Erotikos* 751c–e; Philo, *On Abraham* 135).

2.3 Textual Apparatus: NA28 vs. Byzantine / TR

The verse is text-critically stable. No significant variant in the major manuscript tradition supplies an explicit female-female object in v. 26. The Robinson–Pierpont **Byzantine Textform** and the **Textus Receptus** agree with NA28 in substance for 1:26–27; differences are limited to minor orthography and word order with no bearing on the sense. **The crucial consequence:** the ambiguity of v. 26 is *not* a problem that a different reading could solve. It is exegetical, not text-critical—present in every text-form alike.

Feature	NA28 / UBS5 (eclectic)	Byzantine (RP 2005) / TR
v. 26 wording	αἵ τε γὰρ θήλειαι αὐτῶν	αἵ τε γὰρ θήλειαι αὐτῶν (agrees)
Female partner named?	No — only "natural use → contrary to nature"	No — identical silence
v. 27 wording	ἄρσενες ἐν ἄρσεσιν (explicit, male)	identical ἄρσενες ἐν ἄρσεσιν

Feature	NA28 / UBS5 (eclectic)	Byzantine (RP 2005) / TR
Net effect	Lesbian sense is inferred, not stated	Same — no text-critical resolution available

2.4 The Interpretive Debate

Because the wording is indirect, two scholarly camps have formed around v. 26:

Majority view: female homoeroticism

Bernadette J. Brooten, *Love Between Women: Early Christian Responses to Female Homoeroticism* (University of Chicago Press, 1996)—the most comprehensive treatment of the subject before the early modern period—argues that v. 26 does refer to female homoeroticism, which Paul labels "unnatural" because it disrupts a woman's "natural," subordinate, passive role. Brooten places Paul squarely within contemporary Greco-Roman attitudes: his condemnation, she concludes, reflects and helps maintain a gender asymmetry built on female subordination (pp. 216, 244, 302). The reading is shared by **Robert A. J. Gagnon** (*The Bible and Homosexual Practice*, 2001) and **Richard B. Hays** ("Relations Natural and Unnatural," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 14 [1986]).

Minority view: non-procreative heterosexual acts

James E. Miller, "The Practices of Romans 1:26: Homosexual or Heterosexual?" (*Novum Testamentum* 37 [1995]: 1–11), argues that only when modern "homosexual / heterosexual" categories are imposed does v. 26 appear to speak of lesbianism; he reads it as women in non-procreative (*e.g.*, anal or oral) acts with men, reserving same-sex reference for v. 27. **Diana M. Swancutt**, **Jamie A. Banister** ("Ὁμοίως and the Use of Parallelism in Romans 1:26–27," *JBL* 128 [2009]: 569–590), and **Dale B. Martin** (*Sex and the Single Savior*, 2006) develop the reading of "contrary to nature" as excess rather than orientation. **John Boswell** (*Christianity, Social Tolerance, and Homosexuality*, 1980) earlier argued the passage targets people acting against their own (heterosexual) nature. **Mark D. Smith** ("Ancient Bisexuality and the Interpretation of Romans 1:26–27," *JAAR* 64 [1996]) rebuts Miller and defends the same-sex reading.

2.5 The Other NT "Clobber" Terms Are Male

The remaining vice-list terms address men, not women: μαλακοί (*malakoi*, 1 Cor 6:9) and ἀρσενοκοῖται (*arsenokoitai*, 1 Cor 6:9; 1 Tim 1:10). The latter is morphologically male (ἄρσεν + κοίτη) and verbally echoes Lev 18:22 / 20:13 LXX. **Romans 1:26 thus stands entirely alone as the sole biblical candidate—and its meaning is exactly the contested point.**

Part III — The Deuterocanonical Writings

The deuterocanon contains no explicit prohibition of female homoeroticism either. The one text regularly brought into the discussion is general and not female-specific.

3.1 Wisdom of Solomon 14:23–26

Within a catalogue of the moral fruits of idolatry, the Wisdom of Solomon lists a string of disorders. The relevant clause in 14:26 is γενέσεως ἐναλλαγή:

> … θορύβους ἀγαθῶν, χάριτος ἀμνηστίαν, ψυχῶν μιασμόν, **γενέσεως ἐναλλαγήν**, γάμων ἀταξίαν, μοιχείαν καὶ ἀσέλγειαν.

Rendering and analysis. The clause is variously translated "interchange / confusion of sex (roles)," "perversion of birth," or "change of nature." **David Winston** (*The Wisdom of Solomon*, Anchor Bible 43, 1979) glosses it as "confusion of sex roles"—plausibly a glance at sexual disorder generally, possibly including homoeroticism, but **not female-specific and not a discrete condemnation of women with women.** The verse condemns a whole tangle of idolatry-born vices, not lesbianism as such.

3.2 The Remainder of the Deuterocanon

Ben Sira (*Sirach*) contains extensive—often severe—material about women (e.g., 25:13–26; 42:9–14), but it concerns the control of daughters and wives, not same-sex relations. *Tobit*, *Judith*, *Baruch*, and *1–2 Maccabees* contain nothing on the subject. **Conclusion: the deuterocanon yields no direct condemnation of female homoeroticism.**

Part IV — New Testament Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha

If the survey is widened beyond the deuterocanon to the broader early Jewish and Christian literature, the picture changes: here we meet the **earliest explicit Christian condemnation of women with women.**

4.1 The Apocalypse of Peter (2nd century)

The *Apocalypse of Peter* (c. 125–150 CE), listed in the Muratorian Fragment but ultimately non-canonical, gives a graphic tour of postmortem punishments. In ch. 32 (Ethiopic; cf. the Akhmim Greek fragment) it places women who have sex with women beside male offenders, both hurled repeatedly from a cliff:

> "… and these were they who defiled their bodies acting as women; and the women who were with them were those who *lay with one another as a man with a woman*." (trans. Roberts–Donaldson)

Significance. This is one of the earliest datable Christian texts to name female homoeroticism explicitly and to assign it the same penalty as male homoeroticism—predating, or contemporary with, the patristic commentary tradition. Brooten treats it as a key witness. It is **apocryphal, not deuterocanonical**: it never entered the canon, despite its early circulation.

4.2 Hellenistic-Jewish Pseudepigrapha

Pseudo-Phocylides (1st c. BCE – 1st c. CE), *Sentences* 190–192, condemns male homoeroticism and warns women against "imitating the sexual role of men," a line some read as touching female homoeroticism, though it is brief and disputed. The *Sibylline Oracles* (e.g., 3.184–186; 5.166–168) likewise denounce male ἀρσενοκοιτία. None of these supplies a sustained, unambiguous prohibition of women with women comparable to the *Apocalypse of Peter*.

Part V — The Church Fathers (Patristic Greek and Latin Expanded)

Explicit, sustained condemnation of female homoeroticism first enters the mainstream Christian tradition in the **reception of Romans 1:26**—not as fresh revelation but as exegesis. Brooten devotes a 55-page chapter ("Tortures in Hell") to precisely this material. Crucially, the Fathers did **not** read Romans 1:26 uniformly: Chrysostom is the clearest witness for the lesbian reading, while Augustine reads the verse otherwise.

5.1 Clement of Alexandria — Paedagogus 2.10 (c. 198 CE)

Edition: M. Marcovich, *Clementis Alexandrini Paedagogus* (Brill, 2002); GCS; PG 8. In his chapter on procreation Clement quotes Romans 1:26–27 directly and condemns intercourse παρὰ φύσιν. His argument turns on the principle that only procreative, role-appropriate intercourse is κατὰ φύσιν:

> τὸ γὰρ παρὰ φύσιν παραιτητέον … "one must reject what is contrary to nature."

Through his discussion of the (folkloric) hyena and weasel he rejects non-procreative and role-reversing acts and ties the whole to Paul. Brooten concludes that **Clement likely understood Romans 1:26 to include female homoeroticism** ("likely interpreted Rom 1:26–27 as a condemnation of lesbians").

5.2 John Chrysostom — Homily 4 on Romans (PG 60:415–422; c. 390 CE)

Chrysostom is the clearest patristic witness for the female-female reading. Preaching at Antioch, he treats the θήλειαι of v. 26 as women who abandoned the φυσικὴ χρῆσις. He stresses that they had no excuse of deprivation, because "exchanging" presupposes prior possession:

> τὸ γὰρ «μεταλλάξαι» τῶν ἐχόντων ἐστίν. "For the word 'to exchange' belongs to those who possess [the thing exchanged]." (PG 60)

Chrysostom underscores that **both** sexes are culpable—"of the women, that they changed the natural use"—and judges the passions the more shameful precisely because even women cast off the constraints of nature. The public-domain Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers (NPNF¹ 11) translation preserves the sense: "by saying of the women, that they changed the natural use … the changing implies possession."

5.3 Ambrosiaster — Commentary on Romans (CSEL 81; c. 370 CE)

Writing in Latin at Rome, "Ambrosiaster" shows the reading was **not** unanimous. Theodore de Bruyn ("Ambrosiaster's Interpretations of Romans 1:26–27," *Vigiliae Christianae* 65 [2011]) shows that Ambrosiaster initially construes v. 26 as women engaging in **unnatural relations with men** (non-vaginal heterosexual acts), only later in the tradition being harmonized toward the female-female reading. The ambiguity of Paul's Greek is thus already visible in the fourth century.

5.4 Augustine of Hippo — the Dissenting Reading (354–430 CE)

Augustine is the clearest patristic witness against the lesbian reading of Romans 1:26. In *De nuptiis et concupiscentia* 2.20.35 (CSEL 42) he cites "their women exchanged natural relations for those against nature" (*feminae … mutaverunt naturalem usum*) within a discussion of **non-procreative heterosexual** intercourse—"he who is moderate in what is natural makes good use of it; he who does not, abuses a good thing." Separately, *Epistula 211* (the so-called Augustinian "Rule," addressed to a community of nuns; PL

33 / CSEL 57) issues a **pastoral**, not exegetical, warning against improper, sensual love among women in the convent. The two passages neatly bracket the patristic spectrum.

5.5 Patristic Reception at a Glance

Father	Date	Work / Edition	Reads Romans 1:26 as …
Apocalypse of Peter	c. 125–150	ch. 32 (Ethiopic); Akhmim Gk frag.	Independent: women "lay with one another as a man with a woman" (not a Rom 1 comment)
Clement of Alexandria	c. 198	*Paedagogus* 2.10; PG 8; ed. Marcovich	Likely female homoeroticism; condemns acts παρὰ φύσιν
Ambrosiaster	c. 370	Comm. in Rom.; CSEL 81	Women in unnatural relations with men (de Bruyn)
John Chrysostom	c. 390	Hom. 4 in Rom.; PG 60:415–422	Female homoeroticism — clearest witness for this reading
Augustine	c. 419–420	*De nupt. et conc.* 2.20.35; *Ep.* 211	Non-procreative heterosexual acts — clearest dissent

Synthesis and Conclusions

1. **The Hebrew Bible and Septuagint are silent.** Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 are male-only in both the MT (זָכָר) and the LXX (ἄρσην). No verse of the Torah—or of the wider Hebrew canon—addresses women with women. The rabbis later filled the gap only by analogy and at sub-biblical penalty, themselves attesting the silence.

2. **The New Testament offers a single, contested verse.** Romans 1:26 is the only biblical text widely read as condemning female homoeroticism, yet the Greek names no female partner; the lesbian sense is inferred from the ὁμοίως of v. 27 and from reception history. The reading is defended (Brooten, Gagnon, Hays) and contested (Miller, Swancutt, Boswell) on exegetical, not text-critical, grounds—NA28, the Byzantine Textform, and the TR all share the same ambiguity.

3. **The deuterocanon adds nothing direct.** Wisdom 14:26's γενέσεως ἐναλλαγή is general at most.

4. **The earliest explicit condemnations are post-canonical.** The *Apocalypse of Peter* (2nd c.) names women with women directly; the patristic reception of Romans 1 (Clement, Chrysostom) supplies the first sustained exegetical condemnations—while Augustine reads the same verse as heterosexual non-procreation. The clarity that Scripture itself withholds arrives only with its interpreters.

Bottom line. The only candidate biblical text is Romans 1:26; its female-homoerotic meaning is an interpretive inference rather than an explicit statement; and the earliest unambiguous condemnations of women with women are patristic and apocryphal, not scriptural.

You've put your finger on exactly the hinge, and the distinction you're pressing is the right one. Let me separate two things my earlier answer collapsed, because the "asymmetry" I described is real but it lives at one level only.

Descriptive vs. normative. There are two different questions: (1) *What does the letter of each text explicitly say?* and (2) *What does the underlying principle condemn?* My survey answered (1) — and at that level the texts are male-focused. Your question is really (2), and at that level your inference is not only legitimate, it is the mainstream traditional reading. The surface asymmetry never meant women were morally exempt; it meant the explicit *statute* addresses men, while the condemnation of women is reached by inference from the principle. Those can yield the same practical conclusion (both condemned) while differing in how *directly* the text states it — which matters in halakhic and moral-theological reasoning even when the bottom line is identical.

On "isn't homosexuality just same-sex intercourse?" In modern usage, yes — "homosexuality" denotes same-sex eroticism regardless of the sex of the parties. But that unifying abstraction is a 19th-century coinage (Karl-Maria Kertbeny, 1869). Biblical Hebrew and Koine Greek had *no word for it* and no such category; the ancients reasoned by specific acts and gender roles — who penetrates whom, active vs. passive — not by a single orientation that subsumes both sexes. This is precisely why the surface asymmetry exists: adopt the modern act-category ("same-sex intercourse, full stop") and the inference to women is automatic and

obvious; stay inside the ancient role-category and the texts read as male-focused. Your question identifies the pivot exactly. When you say "isn't it the same act," you are applying the modern, sex-neutral category — and once that category is granted, women are included by definition.

Why the Romans 1 inference is strong (and is the traditional reading):

- The ὁμοίως ("likewise," v. 27) grammatically couples the women's "exchange" to the men's. If the men's act is male-male, the most natural force of "likewise" is parallel — female-female. This is why Chrysostom and the dominant patristic and modern line read v. 26 as lesbian.
- Paul deliberately uses the biological terms ἄρσην / θῆλυς (male / female) rather than ἀνήρ / γυνή, echoing Genesis 1:27 LXX (ἄρσεν καὶ θῆλυ). That invokes a *creational, complementarity* logic that is inherently sex-neutral — it cuts symmetrically across both sexes.
- παρὰ φύσιν ("contrary to nature") is likewise a structural category, not a gendered one. If the violation is "exchanging the natural use for the unnatural," that frame applies identically to women and men.

So on the level you're working at, the inference is the path of least resistance, and the great majority of interpreters (Gagnon, Hays, the whole natural-law tradition, Chrysostom) draw it.

The honest qualifier — why I still called it an "inference" rather than a statement. Two narrow points, not a loophole:

- Leviticus is textually male-only, and the tradition itself registered this. The rabbis forbade female-female relations but ruled they did *not* carry the biblical penalty — Maimonides classes it as "the practice of Egypt" precisely *because no verse states it* (Mishneh Torah, Issurei Bi'ah 21:8). Forbidden by analogy, yes; by explicit statute, no. Even the tradition that extended the ban acknowledged it was extending, not quoting.
- Romans 1:26 doesn't actually contain "with women"; the minority reading (Miller) takes it as women in non-procreative acts *with men*. So the female-female sense is highly probable but not linguistically forced.

Neither point exempts women. They only locate the condemnation of women in *principle + inference* rather than in an explicit female-specific verse.

Your deepest question: is the sin the unnatural act and the lust of the flesh? This is where your synthesis actually resolves the asymmetry, because every candidate answer except one is *sex-neutral* — and a sex-neutral sin necessarily covers women. The text itself holds both elements together: Paul indicts the πάθη ἀτιμίας (dishonorable passions — the disordered desire) *and* the χρῆσις παρὰ φύσιν (the unnatural use — the act). The main interpretive options:

1. **The act as such / created-order view** (Gagnon, Hays, classical natural law / Aquinas): the sin is same-sex intercourse itself, as a violation of the male-female complementarity grounded in Genesis 1–2. Gender-configuration is the whole point — but it is

symmetrical: male-male and female-female violate the same order. Your inference holds completely.

2. **The excess/lust view** (Dale Martin; much Greco-Roman usage of παρὰ φύσιν): "contrary to nature" frequently meant insatiable, boundary-breaking desire; the vice is uncontrolled ἐπιθυμία / ὄρεξις, with the same-sex act as its symptom. Here "lust of the flesh" is primary — and it too is sex-neutral. Inference holds.
3. **The idolatry-frame view** (the rhetorical logic of Romans 1): the acts are presented as the *consequence* of idolatry — "God gave them over." The point of the passage is that exchanging the Creator for creatures (v. 25) produces exchanging natural for unnatural use (vv. 26–27); the sexual disorder is the visible emblem of the deeper "exchange." On this reading the indicted sin is fundamentally idolatry, with disordered sexuality as its sign — still sex-neutral.
4. **The exploitation / specific-forms view** (Boswell, Scroggs): what's condemned is pederasty, prostitution, or exploitation — culturally specific configurations rather than the act-type per se. This is the *only* reading on which the extension to committed same-sex relations (of either sex) becomes genuinely contestable.

Notice the payoff: on readings 1, 2, and 3 — the act, the lust, or the idolatry — the offense is sex-neutral, so women are condemned on *exactly the same basis* as men, and the asymmetry dissolves entirely. The traditional integration (Paul, then Aquinas) is in fact "both, inseparably": a disordered appetite issuing in a disordered act, neither of which is sex-specific. That integration is itself the strongest argument for your inference — neither the disorder of the desire nor the unnaturalness of the act is something that attaches to maleness.

So, to answer you directly: Yes — if you locate the sin in the unnatural act and/or the disordered lust (which is the traditional and majority reading, and is well-supported by ὁμοίως, the Genesis-echoing ἄρσην/θῆλυς language, and the structural sense of παρὰ φύσιν), then the male-only grammar of Leviticus and the indirect wording of Romans 1:26 do not create a female exemption. They are filled out by the canonical and natural-law logic, and women are included by the same principle. The "asymmetry" is a fact about the *letter*; it disappears at the level of the *principle*. The only readings that resist your inference are those that relocate the sin away from the act/desire altogether — into idolatrous *cause* (where the sexual element is illustrative) or into specific *exploitative forms* (where committed partnership might fall outside) — and those are the minority positions.

If you'd like, I can fold this act-vs-disposition analysis — the four views on *what is condemned*, with the primary Greek (πάθη ἀτιμίας, χρῆσις παρὰ φύσιν, ἐπιθυμία) and the Aquinas natural-law bridge — into the document as a new section, since it complements the source survey rather than duplicating it.

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