
JOURNAL OF CONSTRUCTIVE THEOLOGY

Gender, Religion and Theology in Africa

Journal of the Centre for Constructive Theology

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EDITORIAL POLICY STATEMENT

The Journal of Constructive Theology is a semi-annual publication of the Centre for Constructive Theology, an initiative of the former Faculty of Theology, University of Durban-Westville. From 2004 its articles will focus on researched papers, which are relevant to gender religion and theology in Africa. The editorial committee will consider for publication submissions of a scholarly standard from any of the theological disciplines or related fields of inquiry, which provide useful perspectives in the area of gender, religion and theology in Africa. Particular areas of interest include the gendered analysis of: innovations in contextual theological education; theological and ethical reflection on social transformation; the significance of new religious movements and African-initiated churches; the role of women in religion and society; interfaith dialogue; peacemaking and reconciliation.

The Journal of Constructive Theology seeks to promote dialogue and response not only within the academic theological community in Africa and beyond, but also faith practitioners working “on the ground” to build a more just society in the region. These may include clergy, other church professionals and laity across broad social spectrums who seek to read their faith against the critical issues confronting society today.

Written submissions to the Journal of Constructive Theology may take the form of researched scholarly articles or essays. Book reviews, brief responses to articles, conference reports and summaries of research projects are also welcome. Submissions are evaluated through an editorial committee screening process. Further, the articles are also sent to a maximum of two competent scholars working in a similar field of interest for peer-review. Prospective contributors of scholarly articles should send two copies of their manuscripts to the editor by post, typed double-spaced, include full documentation in the form of footnotes and bibliography, along with an abstract and a brief autobiographical statement. E-mailed copies should be in Microsoft Word or Rich Text Format. Requests for a copy of the **JCT Guidelines to Contributors** style-sheet should be directed to the editor, E-mail: PhiriI@ukzn.ac.za. Published contributors will receive three complimentary copies of the issue in which their work is published. Opinions expressed by contributors are solely their own, and do not necessarily reflect those of the editorial committee or the Centre for Constructive Theology.

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EDITORIAL

While this editorial is longer than usual due to this being a special double issue of the *Journal of Constructive Theology*, we are nevertheless proud to present to you what we trust will become a key resource, not only in feminist pedagogical method, but general theological pedagogy on the African continent.

It was Denise Ackermann in her recent book, *After the Locusts: Letters from a Landscape of Faith* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003) who suggested that our theological methods “reveal what in essence we think about how knowledge is acquired and transmitted, and which categories of thought are more important than others” (2003:xv). The essays in this double volume suggest that not only our theological methods, but also our pedagogical approaches, have much to reveal about how we believe knowledge is both acquired and transmitted.

Drawing from a wide variety of perspectives from which pedagogy can be approached and each utilising a gendered narrative as a dialogical tool, the following scholars at the School of Religion and Theology in the University of KwaZulu-Natal, agreed to co-teach from their particular sub-disciplines the module ‘Theory and Method in Religion and Theology RELG702’: Ministerial Studies (Edwina Ward); History of Christianity (Philippe Denis); Biblical Studies—Old and New Testament (Gerald West and Patricia Bruce); Systematic Theology (Anthony Balcomb and Xolani Sakuba)¹; Gender and Religion (Sarojini Nadar); African Theology (Isabel Phiri); Public Theology (Steve de Gruchy).² Their resultant essays reveal how “knowledge is acquired and transmitted.” More than this, they also make plain their theological and social commitments to offer their students contextually relevant theological skills and tools.

This is Kerina’s story, in the form it was used in the module:

Kerina has been married for sixteen years now, and has two children (Selvan aged fifteen and Levin aged nine). Her husband, Peter, has been beating her periodically, for a number of years.

¹ Due to varying circumstances, the reflections of Balcomb and Sakuba are not included in this collection of essays.

² While the Public Theology section of the course was not offered in 2008, we have included in this issue of the journal the reflection offered by Steve de Gruchy on his section of the course on Public Theology offered in 2007.

They both come from working class backgrounds, with little education. Kerina works in a shoe factory and Peter works casually. He is an alcoholic. They belong to an Evangelical church, one that does not ordain women, nor allow women to participate equally in the life and activities of the church. Kerina's suffers from asthma. Her youngest son Levin also suffers from asthma and epileptic seizures.

The last beating that Kerina received from her husband was particularly severe. X-rays showed that she had a fractured skull. Her youngest sister, Simi, advises Kerina to leave her husband, because "until death do us part, should not mean 'until he kills me.'" Kerina decided she wanted to end her marriage. Because they were living with her mother, she asked Peter to move out. Her pastor, Rev. Bobby Naidoo and his elder, Brother Rajen Moonsamy, immediately came over to visit, telling Kerina that:

- 1. The Bible says that divorce is wrong*
- 2. The man is the head of the woman therefore she is supposed to submit to him*
- 3. By not cooking and doing other household chores—which a wife is supposed to do for her husband—she inevitably brought on the abuse*
- 4. Through submission and prayer, her husband will change. She has to persevere.*

Kerina's mother, Mrs. Rani Naicker gives Kerina some motherly advice: "You see, Kerina, according to our culture, you are not a good wife. You should wake up early in the morning and pack lunch for your husband. Peter says that you don't iron his trousers with a neat crease—how many times have I taught you how to do that? His clothes are not washed, ironed, folded and put into his cupboard on time, so that every morning he has to look for his socks; His food is not ready when he comes home really hungry. Kerina, you should really try to be a better wife. Then maybe Peter won't beat you so badly."

Kerina protests that she leaves home two-and-a-half-hours before he does, while it is still dark. She says that she comes home only after him therefore it is difficult to have food ready on time before he is home. She says that sometimes she has to take leave from work and spend the whole day in a public hospital with Levin, so that he

can receive treatment for his asthma and epileptic seizures. She protests that she is often very tired and very sick...

Kerina's protests fall upon deaf ears. Her mother tells her that marriage is for life, and things were much more difficult "in the old days." Rev. Bobby Naidoo tells her that she should return to her husband, pray for him, and submit to his will. Her friends at work also tell her that it is an open disgrace for a woman to leave her husband: "What would people say? Return to him," they tell her.

She does. The following week he punches her in the face again...

In her introductory essay, "**Sacred Stories**" as Theological Pedagogy, Sarojini Nadar argues that what emerged in the module was "that both the gendered nature of the case study and the method of using a narrative to teach resulted in each lecturer using principles of feminist pedagogy in their teaching, whether wittingly or unwittingly." It is these principles of feminist pedagogy which we wish to feature in this volume of the journal—a pedagogy that draws on a) creativity in content and method, b) social reality and experience, and c) which consciously chooses to be actively involved in social transformation. In order to reflect meaningfully on these important pedagogical processes, we solicited contributions from those who taught on the course, asking them to concentrate particularly on their pedagogical experience. Their resultant essays focus both on the pedagogical exercise of using a narrative to teach (each clearly revealing lessons in feminist pedagogy), and on what it meant to use the story of Kerina, a story of abuse and gender violence in the home.

How the course came into being, and what it means to use a narrative is further covered in the introductory essay, containing as it does a description of the history of the course and a critical reflection of three features of feminist pedagogical practice which emerged during the course: *Democratic Classroom*; *Social Constructionism* and *Consciousness Raising and Social Transformation*. As Nadar concludes, "Teachers who use feminist pedagogy utilise mutual and shared learning as the basis of knowledge creation rather than the traditional 'top-down' approach or what Freire characteristically calls the "banking" method of education..." This important commitment to Freirean pedagogy is clearly present in each essay offered by the various teachers on this course, reproduced here in more or less the order in which the module was originally offered.

Edwina Ward in her essay, **Pedagogy of the Case Study Approach** provides a clear and in-depth description of how to use a case study method

when teaching Pastoral Counselling. Ward rejects the notion that “students learn knowledge first and then apply this knowledge.” Instead, she argues that “The case study method is based on the principle that real education consists of the gradual accumulation and reordering of learning experiences and the ability to integrate learning from related disciplines so as to make sense of the whole discipline, namely Theology.” While not making an explicit case for a feminist pedagogical method, through an in-depth analysis of the process of crisis counselling—including the comprehensive role-play exercise of the case study, in which the students enthusiastically engaged—Ward is able to show the importance of narrative in Practical Theology pedagogy, which is of course a key principle of feminist pedagogy.

Sarojini Nadar’s second essay, **The Feminist Teacher: Pedagogy of the Oppressed Woman?** explicitly explores not only what it means to teach a course with feminist content, but what it is to teach as a feminist. Through her experience of teaching this course, Nadar is able to make two deductions: “(i) The identity of the feminist teacher is a dynamic of the pedagogical exercise and requires creative negotiation in the classroom; (ii) A careful strategy is needed when negotiating [what she calls] the ‘paradox of the democratic classroom.’”

Philippe Denis, in his essay, **Introducing History of Christianity to Postgraduate Theological Students**, shows how through the teaching of this course, he was able to steer students away from the “rather positivist view of history” they first tend to display in class. As he goes on to argue, “They [students] expect history to ‘tell the truth’ about the past in an ‘objective’ manner as if somewhere and somehow the truth about the past was waiting to be picked up by historians if they followed the right method.” While also not explicitly calling the content or the method of his teaching ‘feminist,’ he too draws on a key feminist principle of pedagogy in his teaching, namely, that truth is always dependent on who is telling it and from what perspective. Denis picks up on the link between history and power that exists in the story of Kerina, showing his students how to conduct a detailed analysis of the historical markers in the text. One such marker Denis explores in detail is that of marriage. As Thorsten-Marco Kirschner reflects in his review essay also published here, “It helped us to demythologise our depictions of marriage as a sacred institution that has always been beneficial for both partners.”

Gerald West, in the fourth essay in this collection, **Community Reconstructing Biblical Studies Pedagogy: The Case of Tamar and Kerina** reflects on what he terms “forms of pedagogy which blur the

boundary between classroom and community.” Introducing his class to the Contextual Bible Study method, West uses the biblical narrative of the rape of Tamar contained in 2 Samuel 13 to elucidate the theme of masculinity in Kerina’s story. He argues for a distinctive form of feminist pedagogical method which focuses on the three areas of *engagement*, *criticality*, and *contextualisation*. Through a comparative analysis and description of the ways in which male students in communities and the classroom react to the Bible study, West not only shows how potential lines of connectivity can be traced between sacred text and current context, but more importantly, why it is necessary to trace them.

In teaching the New Testament component of the Biblical Studies section, Patricia Bruce follows on from Gerald West in her essay, **Biblical Studies: From Text to Context**. Here, she analyses the effectiveness of introducing her students to the tri-polar contextual exegetical model of *distantiation*, *contextualisation* and *appropriation*. The context of the Kerina narrative was a distinct situation of gendered violence, hence in discussing the three poles, Bruce was not only able to show each exegetical step involved, but “how feminist concerns could be accommodated in various ways by selecting from a range of methodologies and a range of reading strategies within the selected theoretical framework.” Her choice to present a detailed and close reading of the texts relating to divorce in the New Testament (which the pastor in the narrative quotes) not only challenged the pastors’ own interpretation of the Bible, but also that of the students. As with Denis, this section of the course taught by Bruce served an advocacy role in showing the students that sacred texts were written, translated, and interpreted in contexts that are different from our own. Through an exegesis of Mark 10:1-12 and its parallel in Matthew 19:1-12 Bruce was not only able to show the importance of a critical reading of the Bible, but also explicate a key feature of feminist biblical scholarship.

Isabel Phiri argues in her essay, **African Theological Pedagogy in the Light of a Case Study on Gendered Violence** that one of the primary ways that Feminist and Womanist scholars in Africa have demonstrated the oppression of women in African contexts is through the use of narrative. Because stories are a key source in doing African Theology, the narrative of Kerina provided a good launching pad to discuss its methods and theories. Teaching how to use feminist cultural hermeneutics through a critical pedagogical method, Phiri helped her students reject the form of culture used in the case study. “Similarly,” as Phiri notes, “her pastor’s use of the Bible to keep her in an oppressive marriage relationship was rejected and labelled by the students as spiritual violence against Kerina.” Phiri concludes that African theological theories and methods such as Feminist

Cultural Hermeneutics and the Theology of Reconstruction can enable a critical pedagogy, which in turn is taken up by her students to meaningfully analyse contexts and thereby effect the social transformation of their own communities.

Steve de Gruchy argues in his essay, **Kerina as both Citizen and Christian: Teaching Pastors why the Gospel needs the Law in Our Public Life** that public theology draws the theologian into a dialogue with the social sciences in order to understand life in the public sphere. By focusing on Leonardo and Clodovis Boff's "socio-analytical mediation" in liberation theology, de Gruchy introduces his students to The Domestic Violence Act, Act 116 of 1998, showing clearly why in the case of Kerina, "the gospel is in need of the law—to constrain the evil doer (even where such persons claim the sanction of the scriptures) and to protect the rights of the abused." For de Gruchy, a crucial lesson offered by Public Theology is the understanding that "Kerina is a citizen as well as a Christian, and that the pastor needs to address her as both a woman of faith and a person protected by legislation..." By engaging in this process, and with reference to the case study, de Gruchy argues that the *telos* of theology itself is brought to judgement in this section of the module, thereby raising to prominence the importance of a life-giving and life-affirming orientation.

Simangaliso Kumalo in his review essay, **Teaching and Learning in Community with Others: A Transformation-centred Approach to Theological Education** draws upon his wide range of experience in the area of Christian Education. Ideally placed to respond to the essays presented in this volume, he offers both praise and critique of the various approaches presented. While appreciating the creativity involved in the teaching and subsequent pedagogical reflections in the essays, Kumalo laments that the module did not offer a practical component where students could put theory into practice. Additionally, Kumalo suggests "...it would have helped had there been reflection on the part of the educators following the course evaluation by the student participants so that they could hear how teaching from this perspective had impacted their lives and how Kerina's story had changed their attitudes towards gender violence and associated issues." While admittedly, this was not proffered by any of the authors, the final contribution to this volume of essays is a personal reflection by a German student on the way the module impacted him.³

³ While more contributions from other students were solicited, the call was unfortunately left unheeded.

Finally therefore, in his review essay **Reading from This Place: A German Student's View of Kerina's Story**, Thorsten-Marco Kirschner provides an alternative view of an outsider to the context. From the distinct perspective of an exchange student from Germany, Kirschner not only offers a helpful description and summary of the six sections of the teaching/learning module, but also engages with his own presuppositions regarding the case study. He further provides a useful comparative analysis of the pedagogical approach of a German university classroom and the 'Theory and Method in Religion and Theology RELG702' class as taught in Pietermaritzburg, finally reflecting on what he thinks are the practical implications of university theology.

While each essay explores from various disciplinary perspectives the experience of teaching a gendered narrative, what is clear, even from those who do not consciously refer to their method of teaching as being strictly 'feminist,' is that the gendered nature of the case study required a critical adjustment to each educator's usual method of teaching. Through the use of feminist principles of teaching such as a democratic classroom, a social constructionist approach to social reality and the need to socially transform society, all the essays in this volume show that as pedagogues we have much to learn from feminist methods in the classroom, not simply in being more creative, but in being more transformative in our communities.

Happy learning and happy reading!

Sarojini Nadar
Isabel Apawo Phiri
Editors

‘SACRED STORIES’ AS THEOLOGICAL PEDAGOGY

Sarojini Nadar

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That’s what the leadership was teaching me, day by day: that the self-interest I was supposed to be looking for extended well beyond the immediacy of issues; that beneath the small talk and sketchy biographies and received opinions people carried within them some central explanation of themselves. Stories full of terror and wonder, studded with events that still haunted or inspired them. Sacred stories... (Obama 1995:190).

Of Sacred Stories

In his 1995 autobiography, *Dreams from My Father: A Story of Race and Inheritance*, the newly-elected U.S. President, Barack Obama, reflects back on his years as an ‘organiser’¹ for social change. In this reflection, he recounts his conversations with several of the people with whom he worked as a community activist. Obama recollects trying to understand the rationale behind the kind of change that people wanted to see—why they were so interested in, for example, improving health care in a particular area when their own families seemed healthy enough. The answers he obtained were not based on lofty ideals buried in theoretical notions or ideological slogans, but in real human stories—or what Obama calls “sacred stories” (1990:190). An example he uses to great effect is of the woman who wanted her local hospital renovated:

And she told me how, in her twenties, she had almost lost her sight from cataracts. She had been working as a secretary at the time, and although her condition grew so bad her doctor declared her legally blind, she had kept her ailment from her boss for fear of being fired. Day after day, she had snuck off to the bathroom to read her boss’s memos with a magnifying glass, memorising each line before she

¹ The present author found the term ‘organiser’ a bit jarring in this story, evoking what instead in South Africa might be called a ‘community activist.’

went back to type, staying at the office long after the others had left to finish the reports that needed to be ready the following morning. In this way she had maintained her secret for close to a year, until she finally saved enough money for an operation (Obama 1995:89).

Such stories not only became the means by which Obama came to understand people's need for change (in this case the US healthcare system), but also the rationale that lay behind them. For Obama, everyone has a sacred story they can tell, if only we take time to listen.

But what does a desire for change have to do with the scholarly enterprise? Should the two be related at all? And can this desire be worked out in academic environments that are often designed to limit such radical notions as 'social transformation.'

Sacred Stories, the Academy and Transformation

Academic environments (the university is a prime example) as one of the supreme heirs to the great Enlightenment which promoted positivistic and overly-rational goals in terms of higher education and research, have had little time for, or interest in, social change.² Recently however, a shift has taken place—particularly in the Social Sciences—both institutionally and at the scholarly level which places primary emphasis on the relationship between scholarship and social context. For those of us within the domain of religious and theological studies, this translates into foregrounding the relationship between the biblical text and social context in all of our work. On an institutional level, the University of KwaZulu-Natal has as its primary goal to become the “premier university of African scholarship.” What African scholarship means exactly has yet to be defined but within this understanding it is at least a clear commitment to ‘our local context’

² Ironically, while many South African universities during the apartheid era provided a home for activists against the regime, apart from the fictional literature that was created as protest literature, such activism rarely found its way into the scholarship being produced. Indeed, the focus has seldom been on reflecting on what it means to use narrative for pedagogical rather than only research purposes. Instead, by utilising Ricœur, Frei and other doyens of narrative and theological criticism, the narrative use in theology often centred on method—that is, how to make the method of narrative more ‘academic.’ See for example the collection of essays in Hauerwas and Jones (1989).

and to community engagement.³ Situated within this framework of understanding, the School of Religion and Theology—as an integral part of the University of KwaZulu-Natal—is well-placed to undertake its own objectives which it forged even before the term ‘African scholarship’ became fashionable. Hence, as its website states:

Recognising both global and African challenges impacting on religion and culture, the School enables graduates to creatively, imaginatively and proactively participate in society.⁴

It is within the ambit of this imaginative, proactive and creative space that various lecturers within the school got together to develop a course for our Honours students⁵ called: ‘Theory and Method in Religion and Theology RELG702.’ Within this space, we decided to use a narrative case study to teach the course. While the course was already in existence for some years, unfortunately it did not ‘hang together’ well, simply because each lecturer taught out of her or his own specialisation, resulting in little or no connectivity between the different sections of the course. To overcome this deficiency, a number of the course lecturers met in 2006 to strategise around a new way of designing the course and it was here that the idea of using a case study as a teaching method was born.

The course was aimed at introducing students to the tools (theories and methods) employed by the various disciplines within the field of theological analysis. Its aim was to help students identify such tools and to learn how to use them to ask systematic and structured questions regarding theology and its relationship to the contexts in which we live. The various disciplines offered were: Ministerial Studies (Edwina Ward); History of Christianity (Philippe Denis); Biblical Studies—Old and New Testament (Gerald West and Patricia Bruce); Systematic Theology (Anthony Balcomb and Xolani Sakuba)⁶; Gender and Religion (Sarojini Nadar); African

³ University of KwaZulu-Natal. African Scholarship. <http://www.ukzn.ac.za/AboutUs/african_scholarship.aspx/>. [Accessed July 02, 2009].

⁴ Goals of SORAT. <<http://www.sorat.ukzn.ac.za/goals.htm/>>. [Accessed July 02, 2009].

⁵ In the South African education system, the Honours year of study is the year between a first degree and a Masters degree. It is considered postgraduate in the sense that it is undertaken after a degree is completed but is usually seen as a stepping-stone towards obtaining a Masters degree.

⁶ Due to varying circumstances, the reflections of Balcomb and Sakuba are not included in this collection of essays.

Theology (Isabel Phiri).⁷ The objective was to allow lecturers from within their disciplinary field to teach a particular section of the course, thereby introducing the students to the ways in which theories and methods are employed in their particular specialist field, using a case study as a frame of reference.⁸

This story utilised however, was no ordinary case study. It contained a highly gendered narrative, written and used by myself in different publications and settings to illustrate the problem of gendered violence.⁹ It is a personal story, a ‘sacred story,’ because it particularly deals with a member of my own family, where one of my sister’s is the protagonist, namely Kerina.¹⁰ The narrative was clearly and unambiguously crafted from my own feminist perspective, frustrated as I was with the advice given to my sister by religion and culture that was essentially life-denying towards her.

While recognising that the overtly feminist tone may have been a challenge to some students, it was deliberately maintained

What emerged in the course of teaching this module was that both the gendered nature of the case study and the method of using a narrative to teach resulted in each lecturer using principles of feminist pedagogy in their teaching, whether wittingly or unwittingly. While recognising that the overtly feminist tone may have been a challenge to some students, it was deliberately maintained. This was the point we wanted to demonstrate—that notwithstanding that the narrative might seem based more “on talent, intuition, or clinical experience [and] defies clear order and systematization” (Lieblich et al. 1998:1), when used in research, we did not want to naively take them as comprehensive and precise depictions of truth. In other words, we recognise that all texts have a bias and an ideology embedded within. As Lieblich et al. have concluded through their study on narrative:

We believe that stories are usually constructed around a core of facts or life events, yet allow a wide periphery for the freedom of

⁷ In addition to the above, we have included in this issue of the journal the reflection offered by Steve de Gruchy in 2007 on his section of the course on Public Theology.

⁸ A full outline of the course appears at the end of this article as Appendix #1

⁹ See, Maluleke and Nadar (2002); Nadar (2008).

¹⁰ Not her real name

individuality and creativity in selection, addition to, emphasis on, and interpretation of these ‘remembered facts’ (1998:8).

As a result, the ‘remembered facts’ which I presented in my narrative were related to a host of factors. The physical beatings and the pastor’s subsequent refusal to allow my sister Kerina to leave her husband, referred to in the narrative, happened at a time when I was, ironically, about to leave to attend a conference in Ghana on violence against women. This is when I realised that to deal with gendered violence simply on the level of theory is just not enough. Theory alone can never capture the extent of violence—neither can a narrative told in the third person. And yet, that is how I chose to write it, thereby giving expression to the anger I felt inside.¹¹

In Obama’s autobiography referred to above, he reflects back on his interview for a job as a community activist (what he calls “an organiser for change”), with a man we get to know in the narrative as Marty:

“I sat down and told him a little about myself.”

“Hmmp.” He nodded, taking notes on a dog-eared legal pad. You must be angry about something.

“What do you mean by that?”

He shrugged. “I don’t know what exactly. But something. Don’t get me wrong—*anger’s a requirement for the job* [emphasis added]. The only reason anybody decides to become an organiser. Well-adjusted people find more relaxing work.” (Obama 1995:141)

Such anger is a requirement for the job! As a feminist activist intellectual, this is often the emotion I get—an anger which is not only a prerequisite for driving transformational change (Harrison and Robb 1985:3-21), but without which such activism would prove suspiciously false! Another kind of false anger is that of self-righteousness, the variety which causes one to judge the world around with an air of superiority. As James and Evelyn Eaton Whitehead confirm:

Anger remains an underlying energy of social transformation, fuelling personal commitment and sustaining social resolved (2003:82).

¹¹ I will say more about the experience of constructing this narrative in my own reflection on teaching the course from a gender studies perspective in my article elsewhere in this journal.

But the question remains—does one need this kind of anger and emotion in a scholarly exercise? Surely not, one may argue. After-all, the scholarly world is about the rational, critical search for answers, not about “getting together to drink tea and tell stories,” as one student described our African Women’s Theologies class, an elective we offer at Honours level at the school. And yet, the fascination with stories has nevertheless impacted the scholarly world, at least at the level of research. The term ‘narrative research’ has thus begun to occupy a significant space within the academy—Psychology, History and Sociology to quote a few pertinent examples, together with the rise of postmodern research methods and the commensurate decline in the positivistic method. In fact, as Lieblich et al. argue, “narrative methodologies have become a significant part of the repertoire of the social sciences” (1998:1). But this is only at the level of research. What happens when we bring narrative into the classroom for the purpose of teaching?

‘Other’ Sacred Stories in the Service of Theological Pedagogy

Using Kerina’s narrative to introduce postgraduate students in the school to the theories and methods within theological disciplines raises important pedagogical questions. What were the questions that each particular discipline would ask of the story in order to formulate a theoretical position? What was common in the reflections on the pedagogical exercise which emerged? Do these reflections indicate that principles of feminist pedagogy were adopted in the teaching of this module? This last question in particular is crucial to what it is we would like to focus on in this volume of the journal. While there have been extensive reflections on principles of feminist pedagogy,¹² here I would like to focus on three principles of feminist pedagogical practice which have emerged from the reflections offered in this volume. Perhaps the reader may find more?

Democratic Classroom

During the past two decades of feminist pedagogical practice, various scholars have shown how and why narratives work so well in “the feminist classroom” (hooks 1989:50) and in feminist discourse.¹³ It is because feminist pedagogy engages students “in a learning process that makes the

¹² See for example, Du Bois (1983); Harraway (1988); hooks (1989); Kenway and Modra (1993); Shrewsbury (1993).

¹³ See for example, Deats and Lenker (1994); Harraway (1988), Kenway and Modra (1993).

world “more real than less real” (hooks 1989:51). As hooks goes on to show:

The feminist classroom—is and should be a place where there is a sense of struggle, where there is visible acknowledgment of the union of theory and practice, where we work together as teachers and students to overcome the estrangement and alienation that have become so much the norm in the contemporary university...In my classrooms, we work to dispel the notion that our experience is not a ‘real world’ experience (1989:51).

This ‘real world’ experience is nowhere more important than in a teaching environment such as the School of Religion and Theology, that strives to be true to context—engaging with both our ‘contexts’ and our ‘texts’ as sacred texts. And so, using the narrative of Kerina to introduce the postgraduate students in our school to the variety of theories and methods which exists in our various disciplines was the ideal way of achieving our goal of bringing our contexts into dialogue with our theological method and theory. In making this choice, we were consciously using a different kind of ‘sacred story’ (that is different to our biblical sacred stories) in the service of theological pedagogy. This inevitably meant that we were choosing to use a different pedagogy.

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All the contributions in this issue of the journal reflect on the lively and active participation of the students. This democratisation of knowledge is made possible, I would argue, precisely because we were using a narrative on which to hang our theoretical knowledge and skills which we wished to impart. Of course, there are other ways of getting students to participate in classroom discussion, but narrative provided a space for our students to enter into the world of the story in a way that a lecture could not.

Edwina Ward’s section on counselling in Practical Theology was the ideal example of a democratic classroom which those who adhere to feminist pedagogical principles strive toward. Ward began her section of the course asking the students to role-play the characters in the case study. What emerged was an energetic and animated characterisation that brought each of the protagonists to life. In fact, it is hard to forget the enthusiasm with which the students launched into the exercise, including the spirited

discussion that ensued afterward—some students identifying with the pastor and husband, others feeling Kerina’s pain, while still others felt the frustration of Simi, her sister. The point was that the students were able to find different entry points into the story. This process enabled Ward to talk of the role of empathy in counselling, as well as ‘boil’ the story down into its various components—the ‘boil down’ being the ‘B’ of the ‘ABCD’ method of counselling introduced to the students.

The case study also provided the space for the lecturers to engage the students in small group work. This was the most common teaching method employed by the majority of course lecturers. Philippe Denis reflects in his article, how this worked in his class:

The work in small groups is followed by a plenary session during which the key findings are written down on the board and discussed in common. My role as a lecturer is to help the students unpack the historical message present within the text. When necessary, as the rest of this essay will illustrate, I provide additional historical information.

This collaborative learning environment is a distinct feature of feminist pedagogy. The role of the teacher is to allow all voices in the classroom to be heard—and to encourage rather than silence discussion even, and particularly, where divergence of opinion may begin to emerge. Indeed, in this course of lectures, many heated debates ensued within the class, particularly between male and female students who tended to take sides in the story based on gender. This was an excellent outcome because it created an environment of what Barbara Du Bois calls “passionate scholarship” (1983:112). An interesting observation made by a male German student, Thorsten-Marco Kirschner, which we have included in this issue of the journal, is that he thought the chosen case study “was made up and portrayed a highly unrealistic scenario.” Coming from Germany, Kirschner could not comprehend such a story whereby a church minister actually encourages a woman to persevere in an abusive marriage:

It is possible that an abusive alcoholic husband beats his wife. So far I could go along with the story. Furthermore, I could imagine that church ministers and family members could be non-supportive of the victim. But that a minister is more concerned about the issue of divorce than about the life and security of one of his parishioners seemed to me highly unlikely.

In contrast, many of the African women students in the class identified with the story in its totality and felt that they could simply replace the names in the narrative with any number of their own relatives and friends. Notwithstanding the oppositional ways in which the students identified with the narrative, it was clear that using the narrative was one way to make the process of learning “more real than less real” as hooks asserts (1989:51).

Social Constructionism

A second feature of feminist pedagogical practice which almost all the contributions in this issue of the journal draw attention to is the need to present students with a social constructionist approach to theology. In other words, each section of the course seemed to highlight the fact that:

...human experience, including perception, is mediated historically, culturally and linguistically. That is, what we perceive and experience is never a direct reflection of environmental conditions but must be understood as a specific reading of these conditions. This does not mean that we can never really know anything; rather it suggests that there are ‘knowledges’ rather than ‘knowledge’ (Willig 2001:7)

In his article on Public Theology for example, Steve de Gruchy notes that one of the biggest problems our students have is what he calls “the arrogance of the assumed correctness of the Christian voice.” As he goes on to state:

It is what I call the ‘epistemological privilege of the ordained,’ namely that because pastors and theologians assume that they have access to divinely inspired knowledge in a holy book, they simply ‘know’ things. Yet a whole list of contemporary issues would suggest that this is not the case, and that the church has much to learn by first listening to the wisdom that comes from others: abortion, capital punishment, school discipline, same-sex relationships, domestic violence, rape, climate change, food security, safe water, condoms, crime, legalising prostitution, and the like.

The idea is to present the students with the notion that knowledge is indeed varied as is truth. Narrative research as Lieblich et al. seek to explain, “differs significantly from its positivistic counterpart in its underlying assumptions that there is neither a single, absolute truth in human reality

nor one correct reading or interpretation of a text” (1998:2). For Denis, this is a central concern in the introduction to history he gave to his students:

Students at first tend to have a rather positivist view of history. They expect history to ‘tell the truth’ about the past in an ‘objective’ manner as if somewhere and somehow the truth about the past was waiting to be picked up by historians if they followed the right method.

Instead, what Denis wants to show his students is that:

History is a narrative of past events. It is what can be said about the past. History is by definition selective. Historians only write about what they know from historical evidence and they know very little. They write at a certain time, in a certain place and from a certain perspective. They write what they believe has happened. The history they write will never equate to the past because the past is infinitely more diverse and multi-faceted than what they will ever perceive.

Through this effective and dramatic entrance into the narrative of the case study, students were thus able to discern that all biblical interpretation is socially, politically and ideologically motivated

Similarly, in the two sections taught on Biblical Studies, students become very aware that the Bible does not say anything in and of itself, until it is picked up and read. As the convener of the course in 2008, I sat in on the course and witnessed first-hand the pedagogical creativity which each lecturer employed in their classes. In his first session with the class, Gerald West held up a Bible. He asked the students to hold up their Bibles too and to put them to their ears. Although giggling and shuffling uncomfortably, his students nevertheless nervously complied. West asked them if they could hear anything audible, and if so, what it was saying? Of course, by this time, the entire class was in gleeful uproar, all in agreement that the Bible was silent. West’s point was made very clearly. The Bible does not ‘say’ anything in and of itself, until it is interpreted. Through this effective and dramatic entrance into the narrative of the case study, students were thus able to discern that all biblical interpretation is socially, politically and ideologically motivated.

Utilising an insight from Walter Brueggemann, Patricia Bruce made a similar observation in the New Testament section of the course:

The human dimensions of the interpreter have to be taken into account because the Bible does not interpret itself. Brueggemann (2000) argues that the Bible actually insists on human interpretation and that this is inevitably subjective, provisional and open to dispute. The Bible may be inspired but our interpretations are not!

Consciousness Raising and Social Transformation

According to the Brazilian educationalist Paulo Freire, such a liberative pedagogy "...makes oppression and its causes, objects of reflection by the oppressed, and from that reflection will come their necessary engagement in the struggle for their liberation. And in the struggle this pedagogy will be made and remade" (1972:25). This is at the heart of feminist pedagogical practice—the need for social transformation. As Kathleen Weiler confirms:

Like Freirean pedagogy, feminist pedagogy is based on assumptions of the power of consciousness raising, the existence of oppression and the possibility of ending it, and the desire for social transformation (1995:28).

Accordingly, consciousness-raising was a central goal in each of the classes. Students—like the pastor in the narrative—tend to have a singular view of the world, of marriage, divorce, culture, the Bible, religion, even their view of counselling. To highlight this, Ward deliberately setup a mock counselling session through the use of role-play as an effective strategy to show students what not to do in a counselling session.

Another clear example can be found in Bruce's examination of the historical background to the New Testament texts on divorce in the New Testament. Here, students who had previously assumed that the Bible spoke with one voice on the subject of divorce were significantly challenged. Through the exercise of comparing the Gospel accounts of Matthew and Mark, Bruce states that:

It became clear that Matthew changed Mark's account in a number of significant ways. The students discovered that the similarities could be explained by source criticism (Matthew has used Mark), while redaction criticism accounts for the differences (Matthew is writing for a different community—a Jewish community with different concerns from those of the Gentile community for which Mark was writing). Use of these tools led them to read the texts very

closely and carefully and to explain their findings. It enabled them to achieve critical distance and produced interesting results.

Bruce was thus able to show her students how certain understandings of the Bible can be life-denying if interpreted through narrow, fundamentalist lenses.

How this new-found consciousness about the world and society would influence the ways in which they as future religious and community leaders will affect social transformation remains to be seen, but the seeds were certainly planted...

Other lecturers contributed to consciousness-raising in the classroom in more ‘radical’ ways. For example, Steve de Gruchy, in his section on Public Theology raised the question of how to contribute theologically in a public debate on the issue of same-sex marriage. In such a public space, the Bible may not be viewed as a norm or guide to daily-living practice. Some students were offended by this notion, and wanted to know why they could not use the Bible in the public space—after-all, the freedom of religion clause in the South African Constitution surely allows them to hold an opinion based on what “the Bible says.” Students were asked by de Gruchy which version of the Bible they would use—the Good News Bible, the New International Version, the Revised Standard Version or the King James Bible? The point was that different Bible translations will often expose different meanings. When one of the students confidently chipped-in that he would use the King James Version, de Gruchy replied without batting an eyelid, “Did you know that King James was a homosexual?” In a class of predominantly Evangelical-Pentecostal students who held-on fiercely to their King James Version Bibles, this was indeed a serious moment of consciousness-raising! How this new-found consciousness about the world and society would influence the ways in which they as future religious and community leaders will affect social transformation remains to be seen, but the seeds were certainly planted through the pedagogical exercise which was undertaken in this class.

Conclusion

This course of lectures has shown conclusively that teaching feminist pedagogy theory is different to traditional teaching in at least three ways: its form, its content and its goals.

Form

Teachers who use feminist pedagogy utilise mutual and shared learning as the basis of knowledge creation rather than the traditional ‘top-down’ approach or what Freire characteristically calls the “banking” method of education, where knowledge is considered “a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing” (1972:46). The focus on student responses to the narrative of the case study and the theories and methods arising from its analysis through the various theological disciplines clearly demonstrated their eager participation in the creation of knowledge.

Content

The content and process in feminist pedagogy is markedly different from the traditional classroom. Whereas in the traditional classroom, teaching begins with theory and proceeds to practice, in a feminist classroom, teaching begins with actual experience with the ultimate aim being to unravel the theory out of this. Hence, we began with the case study of Kerina—reading her experience through particular lenses.

Goals

The goal of feminist pedagogy is always that of advocacy—how to raise the consciousness of students to understand the individual biases and prejudices each bring to their interpretation and analysis.

Finally, this interdisciplinary teaching module, ‘Theory and Method in Religion and Theology RELG702’ proved to be a useful resource in developing and enhancing liberative pedagogical practice in the study of theology among our Honours students, thereby providing them with the necessary tools and knowledge to creatively and proactively engage their own societies for transformational change.

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PEDAGOGY OF THE CASE STUDY APPROACH

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Introduction

In this article, we will look at the approaches made in the Theory and Method module offered to postgraduate students in the School of Religion and Theology, University of KwaZulu-Natal.

This module seeks to introduce the learners to the different disciplines within the broader field of Theology and to find a link between each area. We chose to use a case study¹ as a common learning tool and then for each discipline to analyse it within their own methodology. In the following pedagogical study we are introduced to the case study method through the focus of Practical Theology with a specialised focus on Pastoral Care and Counselling.

The module for Theory and Method at the School of Religion and Theology at the University of KwaZulu-Natal has changed in its format over the past few years as we have worked with it and analysed the needs of the learners. The postgraduate students who are studying for a B.Th. Honours or a Masters in Theology are required to attend this Theory and Method module at the beginning of the academic year which gives them a basis for postgraduate interdisciplinary critical analysis. The numbers range from fifty to sixty students who come from many countries within Africa and some from Europe and the United States of America. The diversity of the students challenges the School of Religion and Theology to demand some level of integration and common understanding of the requirements of the theology degrees being pursued. Within the School of Religion and Theology, there are twelve postgraduate programmes offered which cover the main areas of academic theology.

¹ For a full version of the narrative case study of Kerina which we used for this module refer to the Editorial in this volume.

Linking the Disciplines

How were we to link Practical Theology, Systematic Theology, Church History, Biblical Studies, Gender and Religion, African Theology and Public Theology so that students could see the integration of theology as a whole as they entered the postgraduate programme?

After meeting with other lecturers in the School, we decided on a common case study from which each discipline would extract their methodology, and so demonstrate that a real life situation could be analysed, synthesised and interrogated within the theological disciplines. As the Director of Practical Theology, I was able to use the background of the case study pedagogy within my own field of specialisation, namely, Clinical Pastoral Education (CPE) where a form of the case study method was first introduced in 1925 by Richard Cabot, as a method of learning pastoral practice. Anton Boisen, now known as the father of CPE enlarged the concept to include the case study method of theological inquiry—a study of the “living human document” (Hiltner 1975:24) As CPE developed, the case study method has changed over the years and has been well researched by theorists in the field of pastoral care and counselling. These include, Seward Hiltner (1975); Charles Gerkin (1984); Patricia O’Connell Killen and John de Boer (1994); James and Evelyn Whitehead (1995); John J. Mueller (1984); and Colette T. Dollarhide, to mention but a few.²

The Case Study Method in Practical Theology

The case study method is based on professional education which associates knowledge directly with action. This would reject that students learn knowledge first and then apply this knowledge. The case study method is based on the principle that real education consists of the gradual accumulation and reordering of learning experiences and the ability to integrate learning from related disciplines so as to make sense of the whole discipline, namely Theology.

Case studies are real-world problems used as a focus to challenge the students to learn skills that will be appropriate to deal with practical problems that they will face in future ministry

Underpinning the case study method are two fundamental principles. The best learned lessons are the ones the students teach themselves, through their own struggles and gradual assimilation. A second learning comes

² All authors are referenced in the Bibliography at the close of this article.

with practical experience and application of new shared knowledge learned. Case studies are real-world problems used as a focus to challenge the students to learn skills that will be appropriate to deal with practical problems that they will face in future ministry. At the same time, they learn to use the other disciplines in theology to make sense of the links between theory, reflection and action.

This means students are helped to make connections, integrate key messages and to make sense of their learning and reading. The outcome of this learning is that students learn how to analyse and criticise and to uncover their learning objectives.

Teaching through the case study method allows the lecturers to address specific pedagogical issues and develop a specific set of skills in students. Careful planning of the lecture is necessary and a systematic approach helps to keep the content focused. The use of the case study method needs time in preparation as the lecture periods are few in number. Let me express a few pedagogical issues which are highlighted in the case study method.

The Need for Theory

We usually teach the theory first and then use an example to demonstrate the theory. This means that the theory becomes the focus and the application is the example. If students do not understand the purpose of the theory, it is uninteresting, impractical and irrelevant in ministry. In the case study method, the problems that the students are expected to solve are at the centre of the case they discuss. Soon they realise that they do not have any tools to help them through the case and they are open to learning the theory. At this stage the information and facts are kept to a minimum, as the students will be able to read further notes between the two weeks allocated to Practical Theology.

The Theory Applied

Many examples which are selected are near perfect to demonstrate the theory, yet in the case study method students are forced to look for the best application to work with the situation. The student is thus required to select the best method for a particular case and so identify the most appropriate theory to address the problems being discussed.

The Limits of Selected Theories

One of the most difficult aspects of applying theoretical analysis is the understanding that the methods may vary within each case study. Particular students will focus on one aspect of the case, for example, the class status of the family, or the race of the family, or the gender balance of the family or the religious aspects and dynamics at play within that same family. This indicates a level of ministry which is the deepest of human experiences shared between persons in the family. This is what John Patton calls “relational humanness” (1983:72) This diversity means that students have to sort out for themselves the raw material and comment on it before they can begin to solve the problems within the context of practical theology with a special focus on pastoral care and counselling.

Developing Appropriate Skill Levels

I do believe that the case study method is an effective way in which students can increase their knowledge, comprehension and application of practical theology and develop the appropriate skill levels of analysis, synthesis and the ability to personally interact across the various academic disciplines of theology.

Our task within the case study method is to find a complimentary method of intervention which includes the learned theories, methods and skills required for appropriate pastoral care

The Theory and Method Module

Our given case study is analysed and synthesised so that students can offer a variety of pastoral care approaches which may be catered for to suit the specified needs of the family under discussion. The critical analysis and further critical evaluation is mainly concerned with the ability to judge the value of the material offered for the given purpose. The main reflection is on the approach of the pastor selected to work with this family in distress and who is himself a symbol of a caring and loving God. This role brings with it various burdens and implications within the community. Our task within the case study method is to find a complimentary method of intervention which includes the learned theories, methods and skills required for appropriate pastoral care.

Stage One: Emphasising Pastoral Care and Counselling

At the beginning of the lecture session the students are clearly informed that they are to be dealing with practical theological aspects with a focus of pastoral care and counselling. They also understand that practical theology consists of other sub-disciplines within the whole context of theology. Here, we do not deal specifically with homiletics, worship, liturgy, or Christian Education. While these elements do have their place in practical theology, for the purposes of this module, through the case study method, the concentration will be upon developing appropriate counselling skills. Briefly, we discuss the role of the minister or pastor, the identity of the pastoral counsellor and the skills required to be a pastoral counsellor. This takes up a good hour of the first double session. Note at this stage that we have not discussed theories and methods, nor have we practiced any skills for counselling.

The lecture tools I utilise are mainly overhead projector slides which can be read from the back of the lecture room, brief lecture notes, and the blackboard. These visual aids are not a replacement for face to face contact with the lecturer, but enhance the skill of memory retention of simple facts.

Stage Two: Reading the Case Study

The next stage is to read the case study we are going to use for all the theological disciplines.³ The group is divided into smaller groups of six or seven to give a reality to this family. During our initial reading we ask the following questions: Who are the members of the family? What are their ages, names, role within the family? Who is the 'identified patient' and who have allegiances to one another? Where do we place the blame and who is suffering? What do we feel is necessary to help this family? What methods can we use? What theories or skill sets are required?

By now the case study has taken shape. It is the narrative story of a real family, real people and real suffering. No longer are we dealing with a fictitious story which does not have meaning to the students. Each student needs to identify the best theory to assist them in working with the family in the case study and identify the skills they would use along with counselling knowledge and understanding the role of the pastor or minister.

At this point we ask for volunteers to prepare for the presentation of the case study when we meet the following week. Each of the six role-players

³ The case study of Kerina is given in the Editors introduction.

is asked to study her or his character and to find time with the other role-players to prepare the action for presentation to the group. The following characters were identified in the story: Kerina who is the identified patient; her husband Peter, who is jobless, an alcoholic and is violent; her younger sister, Simi, who is colluding with Kerina to leave home and get a divorce; Kerina's mother, Mrs Rani Naicker, who is firmly traditional and has deep cultural values; a narrow-minded Evangelical minister, Rev. Bobby Naidoo, who has a fundamental belief in the Bible; and finally, Brother Rajen Moonsamy who is the puppet of Rev. Bobby. There are other identified persons in the case study but these do not appear in the role play as they are younger children of Kerina.

Stage Three: Introducing Crisis Counselling Theory

At the beginning of the second week, I outline a little of the Crisis Counselling methodology we could be using.⁴ The process is one I have successfully used in my own counselling sessions. Comprising of a four-step approach, it is simply called, "The ABCD method of Crisis Counselling" and is a methodology devised by Warren Jones in the 1970s and expanded later by Howard Clinebell. Simply understood, the counsellor takes the client through four specific phases within the counselling session in order to ascertain where the crisis is, where the support systems are, and how a future action should take place so as to relieve the client from the crisis they are currently experiencing.

- A—means that the counsellor should *achieve contact* with the client so as to build up a trusting and open relationship.
- B—means that together the counsellor and the client should try and *boil down* the present central problem of the crisis and focus on how to work through it so as to bring some form of balance and growth into the next phase of the client's development.
- C—means to look at how the client can *cope* with the situation. Where are the support systems? To whom should the client go for help? Where does the client turn for guidance?
- D—is the final stage of *developing a plan of action* together, where the client can work on helping her or himself to make life changes and thereby become a healthy and whole person.

⁴ This methodology is explained in some depth in chapters four and five of David Switzer's book, *The Minister as Crisis Counsellor* (1986). Reading notes taken from these chapters were given out to the students prior to the second week of lectures as a lead-in to the field of Practical Theology, Pastoral Care and Counselling.

In counselling sessions, I have found that this process can be achieved at an initial level within the first time we meet. What this does is immediately offer some hope and relief to the client, who then gradually gathers more courage and strength in dealing with the crisis over the next few counselling sessions. The feeling that we are achieving something is often expressed by many clients who immediately sense that their anxiety, fears, hurts and anger are being put into proper perspective.

The Need to Make Counselling Transparent

The case study method is designed to make students struggle and cope with realistic situations in the practice of counselling through reflection, problem solving and the creative use of an eclectic model of pastoral counselling (Pyle and Seals 1995:5-6). Students develop confidence in the counselling interventions taught through classroom practice which are translated into actual counselling practice. This means that students begin to think as pastoral counsellors.

...a realistic case study offers active student participation which in turn requires them to implement the theories, skills and knowledge they have attained during the process of learning

Thinking as a pastoral counsellor involves any number of dimensions and counselling skills. Effective pedagogy in counselling theories improves students learning which enhances cognitive processing. Regina Coll (1992:47) considers that lecturers should place students in problem-focused situations and then have them work in groups to find solutions. In this situation we have used case studies where the central problems are brought to the surface through role playing. This means that a realistic case study offers active student participation which in turn requires them to implement the theories, skills and knowledge they have attained during the process of learning.

The Case Study of Kerina

In the particular case study of Kerina and her family that we used in this theory and method module, the role players are put on the spot within a 'real' situation where they try to work out an adequate pastoral approach. The remainder of the students watch, listen, and take notes of what is taking place in the role play. Some are asked to watch the different characters within the role play, some to watch for family alliances, while still others are asked to watch out for cross-cultural inferences and gender

biases. Within a short period of time the whole family crisis of Kerina is unpacked.

Common Themes and Outcomes

As a group, the role players stay in their roles so that we can work with feelings, reactions and behaviours after the role play has ended. While it is impossible to offer in this short article what happens each time, as each year the outcome is different, what broadly takes place is that certain themes arise and are brought to the fore:

- Kerina longs for freedom but is caught in the family system and the Indian culture and traditions. She feels guilty that her marriage is not working and that she is possibly the cause of the failure of her relationship with her husband. She also blames herself for the illness of her younger son, and the fact that she does not honour her mother and the church to which they all belong.
- Peter, the husband does not usually acknowledge his drinking problem, nor does he admit to violent behaviour towards Kerina. He sides with his mother-in-law and with Rev. Bobbie Naidoo. He continues with his patriarchal dominance of his wife, which is expressed through verbal and sometimes physical violence.
- Simi, Kerina's younger sister becomes the 'identified patient'. She is seen as the trouble-maker. She is the driving force behind Kerina's need for freedom. It is Simi who stands out within the family as being disobedient to their Indian traditions and culture and to the beliefs of the Evangelical church. She usually isolates herself from all the other members of the family, except Kerina.
- Mrs Rani Naicker keeps the tone of the traditional Indian mother who keeps the family customs and who respects both her pastor and her son-in-law to the exclusion of her two daughters. In her role we see the power that the man plays in this family. In fact, Rani is the sort of woman who has never experienced any freedom, liberation and self-esteem in her married life. She is under the control of the men in her life, be they son-in-law, pastor, or assistant pastor.
- Rev. Bobby Naidoo and his assistant, Brother Rajen Moonsamy are clones of the patriarchal church structure. They misuse the Bible to reinforce the subjugation of women in society. They stress that all broken marriages are caused by the woman and they threaten Kerina and Simi with dire consequences if they do not

obey the 'Word of God' as they interpret it, or obey their husbands or male leaders in the community.

Identifying Appropriate Pastoral Care and Counselling Skills

After the students have identified the themes and outcomes at the end of the thirty-minute role play, it is time to receive comments from the students who were the observers. Feelings often run high as much of the male dominance present in Kerina's family and church is both identified and discussed. While some students pick up on the pastoral identity of the Indian family involved, others discuss the role of the pastor in the counselling relationship.

At this stage, the students are asked to identify the pastoral care and counselling skills, theories and methods that have been learned. What would they consider to be a method which would assist the pastor in dealing with the crisis presented within this family? Now we can see the need for learning theory, application of the theory and some of the limitations of the theory and method that has been covered. What has been particularly demonstrated in class is the need for further knowledge, the application of that knowledge, critical analysis and identifying the appropriate skills required in the pastoral counselling of a family in crisis.

...students can become so involved with the characters they played that a lot of personal 'baggage' rises to the surface and can be carried into their every day life

The Final Stage

The final stage is always the debriefing. The role players are asked to relinquish their roles in the case study and to again resume their normal characters. This is important, as sometimes students can become so involved with the characters they played that a lot of personal 'baggage' rises to the surface and can be carried into their every day life. One year, a student who played the role of Kerina identified so much with the character that time had to be set aside for her to unpack her own crisis of childhood abuse by her father. After debriefing, the main points of the learning process are clarified and the objectives of our lectures together restated. Because students have worked in small groups, buzz groups, and have

actively participated as observers or as role-players, they have a 'feel' for the skills necessary in the case study method.⁵

Conclusion

Practical Theology in our Theory and Method module is the foundation for all the other disciplines, as we set the tone, explore the case study and provide the link between Systematic Theology, Historical Studies, Biblical Studies, Gender and Religion Studies, African Theology and Public Theology. The ability of the students to find common links within the various theological disciplines is further explored as each sub-discipline is taught and revealed at postgraduate level.

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THE FEMINIST TEACHER: PEDAGOGY OF THE OPPRESSED WOMAN?

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Introduction

One of the most important values of a feminist pedagogy¹ is the creation of a ‘democratic classroom’—where knowledge is democratised and both student and teacher have a voice. Often however, when employing not only a feminist pedagogy, but also teaching feminism (Carillo 2007:28-40), a ‘democratic classroom’ can easily become a space for “vulgar relativisms” i.e., where anything goes (*cf.* Macklin (1999:41-44)). Such can happen, for example, when a male student responds to a definition of patriarchy with the terse statement, “But this is part of my culture!” As a feminist teacher, I have often tried to negotiate between the tensile poles of advocating my own position too strongly—because this may end up leaving the student feeling oppressed; or simply allowing the student his voice—resulting in my experiencing a personal sense of oppression.

The identity of the feminist teacher is a dynamic of the pedagogical exercise and requires creative negotiation in the classroom

Teaching the Gender Studies component of the ‘Theory and Method in Religion and Theology RELG702’ module encouraged me to consider these contradictory tensions more carefully, resulting in the following two deductions:

- i. The identity of the feminist teacher is a dynamic of the pedagogical exercise and requires creative negotiation in the classroom;
- ii. A careful strategy is needed when negotiating what I might call the ‘paradox of the democratic classroom.’

¹ See, Bidy, and Mohanty (1981); Hooks (1989); Kenway and Modra (1992); Haraway (1988); Deats and Lenker (1994); Du Bois (1983); Schniedewind (1993); Shrewsbury (1993).

Practicing as a feminist scholar, the best way I know to appraise these deductions is through experience. My experiences of teaching for almost a decade, firstly as a young tutor to that of a senior lecturer in a university setting, reveals a number of pertinent observations which I believe must be taken seriously if we are to construct a more just and inclusive pedagogical theory and practice, not only for the student, but for the teacher as well! While I recognise that the constant references to my own experiences in what follows can be considered a self-indulgent exercise in navel-gazing, I can argue together with Denise Ackermann and other feminist scholars, that “my experience is not something private” (2003:38). As Ackermann goes on to argue:

My experience is limited, yes, but it is shaped and tested by my relationships and is made up of different perspectives. We do not live alone on islands! This kind of experience, tested and revised by being in conversation with others, is the starting point for [my] theology.

Indeed, I find further agreement with Ackermann, who, in drawing on the work of Shawn Copeland, contends that it is helpful to think of personal experiences in terms of patterns:

Some of our experiences are biological, others psychological, some are artistic, and others practical. Some are mystical and others are intellectual. Although my experiences are solely mine, experiences can overlap. Writing from experience means being aware of the different patterns of experience and how they connect to one another (2003:38).

By relating the following personal stories and experiences, I am hopeful that patterns will emerge and connections can be made, thereby producing critical reflection and becoming catalysts for change. After all, this is one of the core functions of a feminist pedagogy—a critical reflection on experience which leads to change.

Identity Dynamics in a Democratic Classroom

A few years ago, I taught the biblical hermeneutics component of a course on Feminist Theology to second and third-year level students at the St. Joseph’s Catholic Theological Institute, Cedara, South Africa. On the first day that I was due to teach, my husband happened to have the day off from work and decided to accompany me to class to witness first hand my skill (or lack thereof) as a teacher. When I arrived at the class, I firstly

introduced myself, and then my husband who took a seat at the back of the class, while I explained his presence in the class. Before I began teaching, I did what I normally do when classes are small enough to permit this kind of interaction. I asked the class, made up of about ten male and two female students (who remained mostly silent during the conversation until the close) what they expected from my section of the course. My question was followed by a long period of awkward silence, until I again prompted them to engage with me regarding their expectations. In response, a student rather reluctantly put up his hand and began to articulate what he did *not* expect. To my astonishment, his expectations had nothing to do with the content of the class, but with my own identity! His remarks were rather brusque in tone: “We did not expect you to be married, because we thought that feminists don’t marry and we did not expect you to be so young.” Upon hearing this, the class broke out into raucous laughter, nodding their agreement. We then spent half an hour discussing my identity as a feminist before we could begin the class proper.

Notwithstanding the humour inherent in the incident described above, my experience at St. Joseph’s reveals a significant factor, of which we must take cognizance, when reflecting on what it means to teach gender studies in general, and feminist theology in particular. This incident reveals the role that the identity of the teacher plays in the power dynamics extant between the student and the teacher. We cannot simply presume that the teacher has power over the student by virtue of the teacher’s position. The gender, race, class and teaching subject of the teacher must also be taken into consideration.

In noticing this gap in liberative pedagogical research, Kathleen Weiler makes the following important observation:

[Paulo] Freire acknowledges the power of the teacher by virtue of the structural role of teacher within a hierarchical institution, and, under the best of circumstances, by virtue of the teacher’s greater experience and knowledge. But Freire does not go on to investigate what the other sources of ‘antagonism’ in the classroom might be. However much he provides a valuable guide to the use of authority of the liberatory teacher, he never addresses the question of other uses of power held by the teacher, by virtue of race, gender or class that might lead to ‘antagonisms.’ Without recognising more clearly the implicit power and limitations of our position as teachers; calls for a collective liberation or opposition to oppression slide over the surface of the tensions of teachers and students as subjects with

conflicting interests and histories and with different kinds of knowledge and power (1995:24).

In the classroom, I am constantly aware of the limitations of my position as a teacher, and the conflicting interests and histories which together the students and I possess. As a feminist teacher, I have to understand that my students—both female and male—may be in a very different place from where I am. Sometimes, this may create ‘antagonisms,’ which we cannot simply gloss over with a politically correct paintbrush that requires all our students to speak the appropriate feminist language. Historically perhaps, feminists may have reacted in negative ways to such students’ expectations—i.e., that the identity of a male teacher would be of little concern and as such would have been a typical sexist response. However, there is another way of looking at this. As Meredith Miller argues:

Although the term feminism is so over (and under) determined as to present significant problems and gaps in understandings between ourselves and our students, identity work can move into and beyond the semiotic problem of feminism as a term, into the dynamics of identity and power that we as feminist educators seek to understand and shift (2007:7).

...by facing the dynamics of identity head-on rather than burying our heads in the sand, we may be able to unravel those issues of power and gender which otherwise seek to perplex us as teachers

In other words, by facing the dynamics of identity head-on rather than burying our heads in the sand, we may be able to unravel those issues of power and gender which otherwise seek to perplex us as teachers. As Freire asserts:

I cannot be a teacher without exposing who I am. Without revealing, either reluctantly or with simplicity, the way I relate to the world (1998:87).

Reflecting back, one of my chief regrets and perhaps greatest misjudgements in utilising the case study of Kerina in the ‘Theory and Method’ module was to conceal from my students that I was in fact Simi, the younger sister of Kerina, and furthermore, that I was the one who constructed the entire narrative. The students may have guessed this, given the overtly feminist perspective in the narrative, and that the family being described in the narrative was South African Indian; instead, I chose to maintain a sense of ‘cultural objectivity.’

Commenting on the work of Paulo Freire, Rosalie Romano notes the limitations on critical consciousness which such a position imposes:

If a teacher does not reflect on the impact of culture upon his or her identity, the ramifications for students are immense. Freire argues that a teacher's cultural identity is the engine that moves whatever happens in the classroom....If a teacher is critical in the Freirean sense, that is, has a depth of awareness of herself as in reciprocal relation to her students, an awareness of connection and justice, then the teacher will work towards the well being and critical consciousness of her students—on their behalf, not hers (2008:88).

In concealing my identity as the narrative's author and actor in the story, I have to ask what motivated me to make such a deliberate choice. The answer lies in at least three possible areas:

- i. Antagonisms in the feminist classroom: The antagonisms which a female teacher—not only in feminist pedagogical practice—sometimes experiences;
- ii. Identity politics and authority: We cannot merely assume—as liberative pedagogy (e.g., Freire) has done—that the feminist teacher is always in a position of authority simply because of her status as teacher;
- iii. The Dilemma of Reflexivity in Pedagogy: Theory vs. Practice.

In what follows, I will focus on each area briefly.

Antagonisms in the Feminist Classroom

Another experience I had a few years ago serves to illustrate the point of antagonisms in the classroom. I was teaching a first year introductory course on the Hebrew Bible. I walked into a very rowdy class and stood in front. Undeterred by my presence, the class continued to chatter among themselves. Clearing my throat, I asked if we could begin. As the class began to quieten down, one of the students exclaimed rather confidently, "We are waiting for the lecturer." I began to write my name on the blackboard. This gave a whole new meaning to 'seeing the writing on the wall.' The class began to chuckle. I retorted by asking why they did not think that I could be the lecturer? Besides intimating at my apparent youth, at least three students in the class stated bluntly that it was because I was a woman. Even after discussing my qualifications at length and addressing their concerns regarding my 'feminist take' on the Hebrew Bible, I still sensed resistance to my position as teacher from some clearly conservative

and older African male students. By allowing the students their voice, I wanted to stay true to the principles of the democratic classroom. Nevertheless, I had to address the negative vibes I was receiving from the class. How was I to foster an environment where knowledge was intended to be created, when I as a teacher already felt excluded? Should I pretend to be a ‘mature,’ ‘objective’ and ‘professional’ teacher, or should I deal with the antagonisms head on? Michael Penn captures this tension well:

Recognising that authority and experience can exclude and silence, the professor must move attention away from her own voice to that of her students’. At the same time, she must enter the classroom as a whole individual, not a disembodied spirit whose erasure of body creates the illusion of objectivity (1997:219).

I could not simply erase my body from the dynamics of teaching in this antagonistic environment. With this thought firmly in mind, I spent the entire class focusing less on the content of the course material proper, and more on what it meant to the students to see a woman standing at the front of the class. Eventually in seemingly complete exasperation, one of my students said how if he had a choice between two people—a woman and a man—for a job that required that person to be at work on a consistent basis and not take a leave of absence, he would not employ a woman because she may have mothering responsibilities that would keep her away from work. “Such was the nature of women’s responsibilities” he declared. Again, strategy was required. I responded, “If I had a choice between two people—a black man and a white man—for a job that required that person to be at work on a consistent basis and not take a leave of absence, I would not employ a black man because he may have responsibilities to his ethnic group—such as a funeral—that could take him away from work for weeks at a time. “Such was the nature of black men’s responsibilities” I declared. In a class, whose demographics were entirely black, the parallel between sexism and racism was clearly and inevitably drawn. I could not state with any sense of confidence that this strategy resolved the tension of my suitability as a teacher, but what it did reflect was the constant negotiation (and perhaps even defence) of identity which must often take place in a classroom that seeks to foster feminist liberative knowledge.

Identity Politics and Authority

Perhaps my choice not to reveal that I was the narrative’s architect and supporting actor in the case study utilised in the ‘Theory and Method’ module reveals something of the weariness that feminist educators often feel with regard to identity politics in the classroom. Yet in retrospect, I see

that by avoiding being so-recognised, I was in fact failing to respect both my role as teacher and that of my students. Freire recognises this too when he writes:

This is the road I have tried to follow as a teacher: living my convictions; being open to the process of knowing and sensitive to the experience of teaching as an art; being pushed forward by the challenges that prevent me from bureaucratising my practice; accepting my limitations, yet always conscious of the necessary effort to overcome them and aware that I cannot hide them because to do so would be a failure to respect both my students and myself as a teacher (1998:69).

Yet, the relationship between teacher and student goes beyond the question of respect. If truth be told, it is deeply rooted in questions of authority and authoritarianism. Revealing that I was the author of the narrative meant dialoguing with the students on a personal level, which for me meant exposing some of my vulnerabilities and thus giving up some of my authority as a teacher—an authority that was already on shaky ground given my gender! Freire refutes this anxiety by arguing that “dialogue between teachers and students does not place them on the same footing professionally; but it does mark the democratic position between them” (Freire, 1994:116-117). In his 1985 work, *The Politics of Education: Culture, Power, and Liberation*, Freire goes on to argue:

I have never said that the educator is the same as the pupil. Quite the contrary, I have always said that whoever says that they are equal is being demagogic and false. The educator is different from the pupil. But this difference, from the point of view of the revolution, must not be antagonistic. The difference becomes antagonistic when the authority of the educator, different from the freedom of the pupil, is transformed into authoritarianism. This is the demand I make of the revolutionary educator. For me, it is absolutely contradictory when the educator, in the name of the revolution, takes power over the method and orders the pupil, in an authoritarian way, using this difference that exists (1985:76).

Here, in presuming the authority of the teacher, Freire precludes the possibility that the teacher may indeed be teaching from a position of oppression (rather than authority). As a result, the power dynamics in the class may actually be the reverse of what he describes as the authoritarianism of the teacher. In Freire’s understanding, the purpose of liberative education is to conscientise the oppressed to become more aware

of the ways in which they have been asked to participate in their own oppression through an education system that enforces the *status quo*. Yet, what happens if the purpose of the liberative education is to conscientise students (particularly male students) of the ways in which they are asked to participate in *my* oppression as a woman? The authority and power dynamics are clearly shifted in this case, and liberative pedagogical reflection would do well to take note of such. In this, it seems clear that Freire wrote from his position as a male educator.

The Dilemma of Reflexivity in Pedagogy

In encouraging her students to question whether the theory/practice dilemma truly exists, Marjorie Jolles affirms:

I do this in order to push them beyond reproducing received ideas and toward developing their skills in reflexive thinking, or meta-thinking. Thus, my goal is not only to expose students to how the dilemma has been debated, but to help my students develop the skills to appreciate the very organisation of debates themselves, to help them see that a dualist framework that structures this theory/practice dilemma is itself a product of a particular moment in the history of theorising, itself situated in relations of economic, social, and cultural power (2007:75).

This dualistic understanding of theory and practice—that theory is what exists in the academy, while practice exists in the ‘real’ world and with ‘real’ women—makes students constantly question whether our feminist theory is applicable to ‘real women’ outside of the academy. It precludes the possibility that real women with real problems may exist within the academy too—hence, in theorising oppression we are not divorcing ourselves from it.

If I were to disclose that I was Simi in the narrative, it would have required me to make this jump. Ironically, even as a feminist scholar who subscribes to the notion that experience is a legitimate starting point for theorising, I was not willing to reveal this fact to my students. Instead, it seemed right to do so, on paper.² Reflecting on this problem from the perspective of

² The issue was not ‘ethical clearance’ which bogs down so much of academic discourse on narrative, because permission was sought from my sister to use her story in the very first publication (Maluleke and Nadar 2002) in which it appeared. Instead, the issue is what it meant to reveal *my* real ‘flesh and blood’ position in the classroom.

students' identification with 'real' women, Jolles shows this can equally be applied to the teacher:

Although my students' questions about whether feminist theory is accessible and relevant to other women are understandable and in some ways encouraging, the very structure of their questions creates and maintains the conditions for these gaps. In making these distinctions between themselves and real women, students imply that they are neither 'real women' nor inhabitants of the 'real world.'³ Perhaps most troublingly, and most indicative of their tendencies to exempt themselves from descriptions of 'reality,' students suggest that those in need of theories of oppression and transformation are women other than themselves, located in places other than our classrooms. Thus, at the outset, students posit a pre-existing (yet artificial) gap that limits the scope and potential of their theorizing within a space already destined to hierarchise women's studies students over 'real women.'

In a sense, my almost anti-reflexive position in not revealing my 'realness' served also to 'hierarchise' the professor and 'real women.' Taking a reflexive position could have had the opposite effect of drawing conservative male students into the discussion so that they could see the 'tangibility' of the discourse, but moreover, also understand that education never occurs outside a given context.

My reticence to be reflexive was perhaps born out of a concern that the reflexive position is "simply understood as looking at oneself" (Jolles 2007:85). The notion that feminist reflection is "endlessly self-absorbed, only emphasising the 'personal' part of the 'personal is political' mantra," is a caution called for by Jolles (2007:85) which we must take seriously. The practice of reflexivity cannot become a selfish exercise in navel-gazing!

³ One big difference between Jolles and other feminist pedagogues on this issue is that their reflections are based on teaching women within 'Women Studies' courses who actually believe in liberation for women. The 'Theory and Method' module was a required course for all first year postgraduate students and consisted mostly of male students who were clearly not committed to the cause of liberation for women. This reality created quite a different power dynamic.

Drawing upon the epistemological assumptions of Pierre Bourdieu, Jolles nevertheless holds out hope for reflexivity within the academy when she asserts that:

Reflexivity is not simply a matter of looking at oneself. Despite its emphasis on self-consciousness, Bourdieuean reflexive epistemology is, by its nature, an anti-narcissistic endeavour. It is not concerned with the “private person” or the “self-fascinated observation of the observer’s writing and feelings”....Instead, its focus includes the social, political, economic, and cultural fields of production that uphold disciplinary boundaries, of which the observer is simply a product and, potentially, an agent of its reproduction. Reflexivity is invested in the production of knowledge, not merely individual idiosyncrasy or personality (2007:85).

...while feminist pedagogy espouses democracy within education, it requires criticality within that democracy; while it is narrative, it requires rigour in analysis; while it is personal it is indeed political

Judith Bowker and Pamela Dunkin thus describe the feminist professor’s task as “introducing the personal as knowledge without sacrificing credibility” (1992:262). If I had resolved the dilemma between credibility and personal knowledge, perhaps my students in the Gender Studies component of the ‘Theory and Method’ module would have benefited from a greater understanding of feminist pedagogical practice? By so-doing, this would have better achieved the objective of showing them that while feminist pedagogy espouses democracy within education, it requires criticality within that democracy; while it is narrative, it requires rigour in analysis; while it is personal it is indeed political.

The Paradox of the Democratic Classroom

A democratic classroom, according to Alice Christie is “a community of learners where power is shared and where participatory democratic processes help learners develop independence” (1997:148). The establishment of a democratic classroom destabilises the hierarchy between teacher and student and gives the student a voice, in opposition to the traditional classroom where the professor is the all-knowing, all-powerful subject of knowledge. However, what happens when we allow the student their voice, but that voice is in opposition to the values of feminism we want to impart? Moreover, what happens when we “teach feminism in

classrooms where many students have a hostile relationship to the word itself?" (Miller 2007:3). If our intention is to allow for the democratisation of knowledge and encourage the students to find their voice, to what degree do we as feminist teachers allow ourselves to assume a position of advocacy with regard to our own views? The paradox between a democratic classroom and feminist advocacy becomes a tension which feminist teachers need to come to terms with. Miller captures this paradox well:

Many of us now see ourselves as struggling with students to establish both the importance and the 'true meaning' of feminism. Given our own feelings about the nature of pedagogical power and the contingency of truth, how do we deal with the widening gaps between ourselves and our students around the meanings of feminism? How do we establish that the popular understanding of feminism, to which many of our students are attached, is false and that ours is true? Is this even what we should be doing? We cannot move forward with these questions until we acknowledge that our goal of disseminating a particular version of truth implicates us in the very pedagogical relations of power we are struggling against (2007:3)

This paradox is further captured by an experience I had a few years back while teaching a first-year Ethics course on 'Gender, Religion and Ethics' at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. In wanting to explain the term 'gender' I employed an oft-used anecdote which exposes the ways in which our biases are nurtured through gender-stereotyping.⁴ The story goes like this:

A father and son are travelling in a car. They meet with an accident and unfortunately the father is immediately killed in the crash, while the son is rushed to a hospital where it is deemed that he needs emergency surgery. The surgeon who has to operate on the boy walks into the operating room, and exclaims "Goodness, this is my son."

My question to the class of almost four hundred students was "How is this possible?" Only about twenty students knew the answer—the surgeon, was of course the mother! While this revelation created quite a flurry of conversation in the class, it enabled me to lead into a discussion as to why the students could not imagine the possibility of the surgeon being the

⁴ See Nadar (2009) where I also use this anecdote.

mother. Most students came to realise that it was because society is often socialised to think of certain jobs or careers as being associated with women or men only. The class even gave examples of careers they thought were for men only, e.g., engineers, priests, truck drivers etc.

While as a class we were going through this exercise, I realised that there were three male students who were sitting in the front who were clearly uncomfortable with the feminist direction that the conversation was taking. Eventually, one put up his hand and announced that, notwithstanding his agreement with the facts regarding gender construction, the question that remained for him was that if there were statistically more male doctors than female doctors, then did that not prove that men have a higher intellectual capacity to be medical doctors than women? Unsure if the statistics he was quoting were indeed correct, I decided to share with him some statistics of my own. At the time, in our university, almost 90% of all Full Professors were white and male.⁵ My question to him and the class was thus: Was this because white people had a higher intellectual capacity than black people and black women, in particular, to be professors? A strange hush came over the class and the three students who happened to be black quickly changed their tack and began to explain how apartheid had actively prevented black people from gaining access to equal education and other opportunities in South Africa. We then engaged in a discussion about how women too were actively prevented from pursuing their own interests through systemised and even naturalised patriarchy.

In teaching the Gender Studies component of the 'Theory and Method' module and in my experience of teaching gender studies, particularly feminist hermeneutics and theology in general, I have come to learn and appreciate that the pedagogical task at its most primary and basic level is that of advocacy. While this might seem at odds with the principles of a 'democratic classroom' where the role of the teacher as the all-knowing subject is ideally minimised, such an advocacy role need not be seen as a dominating act, but rather as an exercise in collaborative learning. The ability to connect with the student and suggest an alternative view using

⁵ As at January 2009, the current contingent of white male academics employed at the University of KwaZulu-Natal looks like this: Of the 188 Full Professors, 100 are white male; Of the 176 Associate Professors 66 are white male, and of the 292 Senior Lecturers 87 are white male. For fuller details on these figures see <https://dmi.ukzn.ac.za/ukznstats/staff_equity/> [Accessed June15, 2009].

race instead of gender as a category, pointed to an engaging rather than patronising pedagogy. A democratic classroom is not a classroom that espouses the values of a non-critical “vulgar relativism.” Rather, as Christie asserts, it is an “active, collaborative classroom where risk-taking is encouraged; where intellectual excitement abounds; and where power is viewed as energy, capacity, and potential, rather than domination” (1997:148). The idea that power can be viewed as capacity and potential rather than domination is what is crucial to the advocacy task.

This advocacy task becomes all the greater depending on one’s social location and context of teaching. The class to which I refer in the above illustration comprised of students drawn from either a general B.A. or B.Soc.Sci. Degree course. However, when teaching students who are registered for a degree in Theology, the task of teaching feminist studies or gender studies becomes even more of a challenge and an advocacy task. Here, I deliberately use the terms feminist studies and gender studies interchangeably. Before I continue to explore what it meant to teach the Gender Studies component of this module, let me first offer a word of explanation.

**A democratic classroom is not a classroom that espouses the values
of a non-critical “vulgar relativism”**

When the Gender and Religion programme first came into being within the School of Theology at the University of Natal,⁶ a number of debates, particularly with regard to the naming of the programme took place. These debates centred mostly on whether to include the term feminist in the name of the programme or not.⁷ The committee eventually decided to go with the term ‘gender’ for at least three reasons. First, the negative association attached to the word ‘feminism’ in Africa, as a Western import, was a point that could not be discounted. Second, it was felt that the term ‘feminism’ is itself contested by those who subscribe to different versions of it, e.g., womanist, Mujerista, African women’s theology perspectives etc. Third, the term ‘gender’ was used as a way to distinguish the programme from

⁶ Following the amalgamation in 2000 of the (previously white) University of Natal with the (previously South African Indian) University of Durban-Westville to form the University of KwaZulu-Natal, and the incorporation of Religious Studies with Christian Theology, a new School of Religion and Theology was formed.

⁷ Another debate on whether to call it gender and religion or gender and theology also took place at a later time, but that is beyond the scope of this present discussion.

Women's Studies. Not only did we want male students to take the courses, but we wanted also to study the phenomenon of masculinity as a discourse, hence the 'Issues of Masculinity and Gender' course which was later introduced as an elective in the programme.

Because of time constraints in the Gender Studies component of the 'Theory and Method' module,⁸ I deliberately chose to introduce students to the theories and methods of feminist theology as one of the fields of study within Gender Studies.⁹ This is where the advocacy begins with immediacy! Indeed, we have discovered over the years that most students who study theology at the University of KwaZulu-Natal come from highly conservative/fundamentalist Christian backgrounds. Hence, when a teacher decides to use the 'F'¹⁰ word in the very title of her section of the course she has to be prepared for the advocacy task which lies ahead. This task becomes even more imperative when it is found that students usually hold mutually-affirming views on the role of women in religion and the domestic sphere. Experience has thus taught me to begin with concrete life experience first and not abstract theory. The illustration of real life experiences or narratives then becomes the basis on which I build the knowledge that gender is a social construct.

It cannot be taken for granted that students are aware of the ways in which gender is socially and culturally constructed. While relating sexism to racism, as was done in the above story is one strategy,¹¹ other strategies have to be adapted when teaching theological students who approach their subject from the perspective of faith and the Bible with a predominant hermeneutic of trust, i.e., the Bible as 'word of God.' I cannot simply launch into an attack of this faith approach to theology, believing that to educate is a practice of freedom—when the point is to allow voices that are silent to speak. Drawing upon this Freirean concept, bell hooks can assert:

To educate as the practice of freedom is a way of teaching that anyone can learn. That learning process comes easiest to those of us who teach who also believe that there is an aspect of our vocation

⁸ It was impossible to cover all aspects. Hence, Gerald West, in his Old Testament section of the Biblical Studies component of the 'Theory and Method' module dealt—at least in part—with the issue of masculinity.

⁹ See the course outline in Appendix 1 of the introduction to this journal.

¹⁰ A jovial reference to the word 'feminist.'

¹¹ The interconnectedness between race, class and gender has received much attention in feminist discourses. *Cf.* Childers and hooks (1990); Mohanty (1988).

that is sacred; who believe that our work is not merely to share information but to share in the intellectual and spiritual growth of our students. To teach in a manner that respects and cares for the souls of our students is essential if we are to provide the necessary conditions where learning can most deeply and intimately begin (1994:13).

Narrative and personal story can create the necessary conditions for learning. Beginning and ending the Gender Studies component of the 'Theory and Method' module with the story of Kerina provided an easy access point to a discussion on how patriarchy can be a controlling framework within religion. Among my course objectives was the intention to introduce the class to terms such as 'patriarchy,' 'gender,' 'natural law' and 'androcentricism.' I did not intend however to introduce these terms in a vacuum, or expect my students to learn them 'off by heart' and thereby regurgitate them back to me in an exam. Instead, I used the narrative approach to illustrate the meaning of these texts through identification with the events which unfolded in the story itself. A vivid example of this is the concept of natural law theory in the study of gender.

**Narrative and personal story can create the necessary conditions
for learning**

A definition of natural law as provided in the *Dictionary of Feminist Theologies* states:

Natural law equate(s) nature with biology and understands law as obligation. It then proscribes actions deemed unnatural and legitimises the status quo (Russell and Clarkson 1996:192).

To simply expect students to learn by rote this definition outside of a realistic example is at best impractical. Instead, the students were able to identify very clearly in the narrative, how appeals were made to 'natural law' and culture to justify why Kerina as a wife had a duty to prepare a lunchbox for her husband and iron his clothes, when actually this did not work out practically when she had to leave for work an hour-and-a-half before her husband, and return home after him! There seemed to be nothing 'natural' about this situation for Kerina, except to legitimate the status quo of men being the beneficiaries of women's labour.

The abstract theory about natural law seemed to find its most tangible meaning through the narrative and Kerina's expectations based upon her

biological sex.¹² If feminist theology—as I have argued above—is first and foremost an advocacy task, sophisticated methodological discussions only follow as a result of knowledge gained through basic strategies and examples. The combination of the narrative and advocacy strategies helps overcome “those boundaries that would confine each pupil [*sic*] to a rote, assembly-line approach to learning” (hooks 1994:13). A simple strategy such as responding to the assertion that “The Bible says that women must submit to their husbands,” with a statement such as “The Bible also says that slaves should be submissive to their masters,” goes a long way to engaging students on a level they can understand.

The problem in the academy is that ‘interventionist’ or ‘advocacy’ methods are often considered unsophisticated, to the point that they have no place in a university setting. As Stanley Fish has written in a recent Op-Ed for the *New York Times*, when commenting on a professor who required that students in a social work class sign a letter to the Missouri State Legislature supporting Gay adoption:

What the professor was requiring of his class was public advocacy, and it doesn't matter whether an individual student would have approved of the advocacy; advocacy is just not what should be going on in a university (2007).

Notwithstanding that said professor, by compelling any student to sign a petition was abusing his power, for Fish to declare that “advocacy is just not what should be going on in a university” betrays a positivistic bias towards education that should compel us to work even harder towards an advocacy stance in teaching. The idea that education is value-free and objective presupposes that because we do not get our students to write letters to government on particular issues, that we are not participating in advocacy. This is the problem with traditional forms of teaching—it is presumed that it is not a political act. But as Freire and countless other scholars have shown, teaching is a political act.¹³ What is needed is what bell hooks characteristically calls a “decolonisation of ways of knowing” (2003:3). In other words, the classroom should not be the place where

¹² Freire relates this to the skill of the “problem posing educator” as opposed to the “banking” method. “The role of the problem-posing educator is to create, together with the students, the conditions under which knowledge at the level of doxa is superseded by true knowledge, at the level of logos (1970:81).

¹³ See, Deats and Lenker (1994); Freire (1985); Luke and Gore (1992); Orner (1992).

students are simply indoctrinated to imbibe the knowledge they receive from their teachers, but instead are able to engage critically with such knowledge, knowing that all knowledge is ideological, not just “the knowledge of those with whom we disagree” (Dant 1991:1). Advocacy teaching is not the same as “banking education.” It is education as a practice of freedom. Unlike Fish, those of us who understand education as a practice of freedom have to be especially cautious that our ‘democratic classrooms’ do not become sterile environments which allow for diversity of opinions, yet without critical engagement and questioning. As long as injustice exists in the world, advocacy has to remain a crucial component of education. As hooks rightly claims:

The classroom with all its limitations remains a location of possibility. In that field of possibility we have the opportunity to labour for freedom, to demand of ourselves and our comrades an openness of mind and heart that allows us to face reality even as we collectively imagine ways to move beyond boundaries, to transgress. This is education as the practice of freedom (hooks 1994:207).

...those of us who understand education as a practice of freedom have to be especially cautious that our ‘democratic classrooms’ do not become sterile environments which allow for diversity of opinions, yet without critical engagement and questioning

Conclusion

I conclude this discussion with a poem describing the dilemmas faced by a feminist teacher:

The Dilemma of the Feminist Teacher

Speak up! You must find your voice,
 I urge the students
 But alas their voice is not mine, I discover
 Shut up!
 Your voice is not:
 Feminist enough
 Tolerant enough
 Liberal enough
 Enlightened enough
 Ethical enough

Hang on...
Haven't I heard this somewhere before?

Speak up! The academy tells me
But alas my voice is not theirs
Shut Up!
Your voice is not:
Male enough
Right enough
White enough
Academic enough
Scientific enough

Good enough? ...

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INTRODUCING HISTORY OF CHRISTIANITY TO POSTGRADUATE THEOLOGICAL STUDENTS

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Introduction

Since 2005, a group of lecturers from the School of Religion and Theology, University of KwaZulu-Natal of which I am part, jointly teach a postgraduate interdisciplinary module called 'Theory and Method in Religion and Theology RELG702.' In an effort to give more coherence to the project across the disciplines, we decided, in 2007, to discuss the same text—the story of Kerina, a young South African Indian woman suffering abuse in a Christian family.¹ Between twenty-five and thirty students usually follow this module.

History of Christianity is one of the components of the module. The purpose of this article is to show how the reading in class of a story—and, more specifically, of a gendered story—as a historical text can help postgraduate theological students develop an understanding of the historical methodology. By the end of the section, they are expected to be able to write an essay on the difference between the historical methodology and the theological methodology (which is discussed in other sections of the module).

The time allocated to History of Christianity in the module—two double lectures—is too short to give the students the opportunity to undertake a literature survey, let alone make use of historical sources, written, oral or archaeological, on any given topic. From experience, the method consisting in interrogating a literary text—the story of Kerina in this case—on what it says on the past and from there, engaging in a discussion on the nature of history is a much better way to reach the desired goal.

¹ The full story which we used as a case study appears in the Editorial to this volume.

I begin by giving a short introduction on the methodology of history. I then ask the students to identify ‘historical markers’—direct or indirect references to the past—in the text. Once this is done, I use my personal knowledge or the literature at my disposal, to show how each of the historical references identified in the text could develop into a full research project. On each topic I give a small lesson of historical methodology. The methodology I am following is essentially inductive. I adapt my teaching to the students’ findings. The more they find in the text the more I have to say.

My concern here is based on the History of Christianity section of the Theory and Method module as it was taught in the first semester of 2009. It reflects the contents of the teaching in that particular year.

**Students at first tend to have a rather positivist view of history.
They expect history to ‘tell the truth’ about the past in an
‘objective’ manner as if somewhere and somehow the truth about
the past was waiting to be picked up by historians if they followed
the right method**

What Is History?²

My first aim in introducing History of Christianity to postgraduate theological students is to explain how historians understand their own discipline. Students at first tend to have a rather positivist view of history. They expect history to ‘tell the truth’ about the past in an ‘objective’ manner as if somewhere and somehow the truth about the past was waiting to be picked up by historians if they followed the right method. Things are, of course, more complicated. The historian’s task is to establish *wie es eigentlich geschehen* (‘how it really happened’), to use the famous phrase of the German historian, Ludwig Ranke. But there are many lenses between us and the past. To help the students understand the complexity of our relationship to the past I draw their attention to the difference between past and history. The past is anything that has ever happened anywhere at any time. What I ate this morning is part of the past. The red car which overtook me on the highway last week is also part of the past as is the liberation of Nelson Mandela from jail on February 11, 1990. The past has no limits. Billions of events, some memorable, others not, are part of the past. Most of them are immediately forgotten. If the red car which overtakes me on the highway provokes an accident in front of me, I may remember it. Otherwise the image of this car will be erased from my

² The heading is consciously borrowed from Carr (2002).

memory for ever. Most of what constitutes the past is irremediably lost to historical consciousness.

History is a narrative of past events. It is what can be said about the past. History is by definition selective. Historians only write about what they know from historical evidence and they know very little. They write at a certain time, in a certain place and from a certain perspective. They write what they believe has happened. The history they write will never equate to the past because the past is infinitely more diverse and multi-faceted than what they will ever perceive.

It is true that the common language can be confusing. When we say 'the history of South Africa' we mean two things: all the things that have happened in South Africa in the past or a narrative of past events in South Africa. Here we only speak of history in this second sense.

Each academic discipline has a subject matter. Geographers are interested in space, psychologists in behaviour, mathematicians in numbers and theologians in God. The subject matter of history is time. Specialists of all disciplines are aware of the temporal dimension of things, but for historians time is more than a dimension: it is the main focus of their work. Temporality is the essence of their work. Their first question will always be: when did it happen? They look at the before and the after. They try to reconstitute the sequence of events, hence their interest in dates. To make sense of the past they cut it in slices or, as they prefer to say, in periods. This rather arbitrary operation of the mind is called periodisation. Historians pay attention to continuities and discontinuities. They always ask when the phenomena they observe have started to change and if they have not changed, what made them remain constant.

To illustrate this point, I ask the students what happened in November 1989, three months before the African National Congress (ANC) was unbanned and Nelson Mandela was freed from jail. The answer is the fall of the Berlin Wall. Why is it important? The ideological cement of apartheid was anti-communism. To sell this abhorrent system to white public opinion in South Africa and decision makers all over the world, the apartheid bureaucrats presented it as a response to the red menace. In a famous debate in 1988, the then State President, P. W. Botha accused Archbishop Desmond Mpilo Tutu of being the Trojan horse of communism. With the fall of the Berlin Wall, the rapid disintegration of the Soviet block and the end of the Cold War, this argument suddenly lost value. At the same time, the fall of the Berlin Wall destabilised large segments of the political left which had found an ideological anchor in

Marxist political economic theory. The ANC and its allies were also forced to think differently. The way was thus paved for a change of political regime in South Africa. Without attention to dates, this important connection would have been missed.

How Do Historians Work?

Since the past is gone and gone for ever, all historians can do is to look for footprints of the past. As with judges in a court case, historians search for evidence. Evidence is what demonstrates that something has happened. Historians have a word for this: they speak of ‘sources.’ They make use of different types of sources: written, oral, audiovisual, archaeological or monumental.

At this point of the lecture, I ask the students how they know that Nelson Mandela was freed from prison on February 11, 1990, since presumably none of them were there to witness the event. Some answer that they saw it on television or read of the event in the newspaper. Others venture to say that they could find some records in the State archives proving that the first president of the new democratic South Africa was indeed freed from jail on that day.

An historian’s work consists therefore in looking for sources—the past’s footprints—in order to document the past

An historian’s work consists therefore in looking for sources—the past’s footprints—in order to document the past. The quality of their work depends on the quality of their sources. They may find them or not. Finding sources requires hard work, but also luck. There is something unpredictable in historical research. Two equally qualified historians working on the same topic may write two very different histories. A woman, for example, will look at the history of a political revolution or a military conquest in a different way than a man. In a subtle fashion, the manner in which historians choose their topic, select their sources and construct their narratives is determined by their upbringing, their education, their life circumstances and their institutional setting. This is particularly true in a post-colonial context. The descendants of the colonisers and of the colonised do not consider their common history in the same way.

History and Power

From there I move to another topic which brings us closer to the story of Kerina: the relationship between history and power. All institutions—

families, governments, political parties, churches, traditional authorities, sports unions—need legitimacy to function harmoniously. History is one of the best providers of legitimacy. Leaders, who can claim some form of continuity between themselves and the founders of the institution they are leading, command more respect than those who do not have the same credentials. This is why people in positions of power pay so much attention to history. They find it essential to control how the history of their institution is written. They function as gatekeepers.³ Reference to history and tradition is never neutral.

Institutional authorities do not relate to history in the same way as academic historians. They do not base their account of the past on the critical use of historical sources. They tend to rely on oral tradition and claim that their knowledge of the past is based on the most authentic sources. They do not like to be challenged and when they are, they mimic the language and methodology of academic historians to dismiss alternative views of the past.

Yet the gatekeepers of tradition often distort the past. They tend to ‘invent’ traditions (See, Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983), in other words, to legitimise recent changes by claiming that they correspond to the oldest tradition. The case of the appointment of bishops by the pope in the western church illustrates this point. It is often assumed that bishops in the Roman Catholic Church have always been appointed by the pope. The Holy See unquestionably asserts this right even when doubts are expressed about the wisdom of certain Episcopal appointments as was recently the case in Austria.⁴ Historians of institutions know that this supposedly ancient tradition only goes back to the fourteenth century (Southern 1990:156-159). Until then, bishops were elected by the canons of the local diocese, sometimes on the recommendation of lay authorities.

³ The term ‘gatekeeper’ is used by anthropologists and social historians to call the community members designated by traditional leaders to transmit oral traditions to outsiders. See Mchunu (2008:136).

⁴ In February 2009, Pope Benedict XVI appointed Gerhard Wagner, a priest known for his extremist views, as bishop of Linz in Austria against the wish of the diocese and without consulting the local bishops. Wagner had declared J. K. Rowling’s Harry Potter books to be satanic and commented that the destruction of New Orleans by Hurricane Katrina in August 2005 was the will of God. The deans of the diocese and the Austrian bishops’ conference openly criticised his appointment and he eventually offered his resignation.

This raises the issue of the relationship between history and orthodoxy. Students of Christian history may be confessing church members. In fact, sharing Christian beliefs is an advantage because non-Christians often find it difficult to grasp the intricacies of church organisation and Christian theology. But there will always be tension between historians of Christianity and church authorities. By virtue of their position, church leaders are the custodians of the faith. Their job is to affirm the authorised interpretation of the Christian Scriptures and the traditions of the church—overtly as in the Roman Catholic Church and some Pentecostal churches, or in a more indirect way in mainline Protestant churches. Historians often challenge the interpretation given by ecclesiastical authorities of the history of their church. They ask for evidence. The history of the church is a contested terrain.

Historians often challenge the interpretation given by ecclesiastical authorities of the history of their church

Kerina's Story

After these preliminaries I move to Kerina's story. The students know the text. Aspects of it have been discussed during other sections of the module. We break the class into six or seven small groups. Each group is asked to identify 'historical markers' in the text. By this I mean, sections of the text—words, phrases, sentences or paragraphs—which contain, implicitly or explicitly, a reference to the past. Such passages make a statement on the past. The work in small groups is followed by a plenary session during which the key findings are written down on the board and discussed in common. My role as a lecturer is to help the students unpack the historical message present within the text. When necessary, as the rest of this essay will illustrate, I provide additional historical information.

The first lesson the students gain from this exercise is that there are different layers of history in the text. We should first consider the text, its author, its date, the circumstances of its composition, its style and its intended audience. We do not know much about this text except that it has been introduced—and in fact written—by Sarojini Nadar, the module coordinator. In the text itself, the first layer is the history of Kerina and her family. The second is the history of the suburban area in which she grew up and where she currently resides and of the social group to which she belongs. The third is the history of her church—an unnamed Evangelical church—and of Christianity, the religion permeating the life of her family. The fourth, closely related to the third, is the history of South African Indian culture which shapes the life of her family

The history of Kerina's family clearly comes out in the text. We are told that she has been married for sixteen years, that she has two children, that she has a husband who beats her, that both come from a working class background, that she is the only one with a permanent employment and that she is asthmatic while her youngest son is epileptic.

The phrase "in a previously Indian only dormitory township" makes reference to the history of South African townships, dominated by apartheid after the promulgation of the Group Areas Act in 1950. In Pietermaritzburg, for example, the city where the university campus of the School of Religion and Theology is primarily located, a committee of the Groups Areas Board was convened in 1954 to examine, on the one hand, the joint proposals of the municipal council and the Natal Local Health Commission and, on the other, those of the Planning and Reference Committee which had been specially constituted. They also studied the counter-proposals of the Natal Indian Organisation. These three proposals differed regarding the extent of the areas to be allocated to South African Indians. The Natal Indian Organisation, as was to be expected, opposed the expulsion of South African Indians from the city centre and the south-east areas of Pietermaritzburg (Horrell 1956:110-116). The proclamation of the group areas of Pietermaritzburg took place, in 1960. On the whole, it was the propositions of the municipal council and the Natal Local Health Commission that were adopted. South African Indians were the principal losers: up until then they had been spread throughout the entire city, henceforth they were relegated to the eastern section of the original grid and to an area situated in the extension of this part, to the east of the town. Some 3, 500 South African Indians were forced to leave Upper Church Street, the western part of the city where they had lived for several generations, and almost 2, 500 were removed from Pentrich, a new residential area in the southern suburbs. Through such forced removals, whites were given the entire central part of the city, with the exclusion of the eastern section, as well as all the northern and southern suburbs (Wills 1991:94-96).

In the same paragraph reference is made to Kerina's social class. We read that she comes from a working class background and that she had "little education." The impression is given that she did not receive much formal education because of her social background, a form of discrimination resulting from colonialism and apartheid. Students from similar backgrounds, particularly black female students, easily relate to this situation.

There are numerous references to the Christian religion in the text. None of

them is explicitly historical, but they contain, often in an indirect way, a statement on this history of the church. Kerina is said to belong to a “very conservative Evangelical church.” If the church in question was Pentecostal, a very likely occurrence in view of the religious tonality of the text, its tradition was by definition of short duration since the oldest Pentecostal church in recent times was the one established in Azusa Street, Los Angeles, in 1906 (Hyatt 2006). Most modern-day Pentecostal churches are not older than a few decades. Pentecostal churches, however, claim to have immediate access—through the Holy Spirit and in reference to the Bible—to the original apostolic experience. The message carried in the text is that anything that Kerina’s church does and says is what Christians have always done and said since the establishment of the Christian church in the first century.

The message carried in the text is that anything that Kerina’s church does and says is what Christians have always done and said since the establishment of the Christian church in the first century

The ‘biblical mandates’ which Kerina’s pastor invokes to justify her marital abuse implicitly contain a statement on the past. If the young woman needs to submit to the will of her husband, it is because the Bible asks her to do so. If the Bible has so much authority, it is because it contains a universal and eternal truth. Implicitly, the pastor affirms the inerrancy of the scriptural text and its absolute simplicity. He claims to profess what ‘true’ Christians have believed from the beginning of Christianity. Reading the Bible is like entering in contact, in one instant, with the entire body of Christian believers.

Historical research shows exactly the opposite: all forms of ecclesiastical organisation and religious doctrines are subject to change. They keep adapting to a mutating social, political and cultural context. There are some permanencies of course. One can say, for example, that the sharing of the bread and wine has always constituted a key element of the Christian liturgy. But even stable elements such as the Eucharist receive different meanings over time and the modalities of their execution vary considerably.

Has Marriage always been Sanctioned by the Church?

Marriage is an essential feature of the story. No one denies that Kerina’s spouse is violent, but she is asked—by family elders and church authorities—to take on abuse because she is tied to her husband by marriage:

Whenever Kerina has made an attempt to leave the marriage, the pastor always comes up with all the religious reasons that she should not. He cites several biblical mandates to justify the abuse...He goes further to dissuade her from initiating separation proceedings, citing from the bible, that divorce is not permissible.

From the text we can infer that the pastor makes two statements on the past. The first is that marriage has always been sanctioned by the church and the second that the Bible has always been interpreted as teaching the indissolubility of marriage. In a further section of the course I point out that these two statements can be disputed on the basis of historical evidence.

A formal marriage has not always been a requirement of the church. The early church accepted concubinage as a second, inferior form of union as can be seen by the seventeenth canon of the Council of Toledo in 400: "A man should satisfy himself with one woman, wife or concubine" (Gaudemet 1987:102). Until the sixteenth century, marriage was essentially a private matter—between two families or, with the apparition of the doctrine of consensualism in the late Middle Ages, between two consenting adults. The church gradually developed a doctrine of marriage, with the idea that marriage was a sacrament, but it did not impose a public ceremony in the presence of religious authorities:

In the first Christian centuries marriage had been a strictly private arrangement. As late as the tenth century, the essential part of the wedding itself took place outside the church door. It was not until the twelfth century that a priest became part of the wedding ceremony, and not until the thirteenth century that he actually took charge of the proceedings. Nevertheless, it remained understood that, even as a sacrament, marriage sprang from the free consent of the two partners, and that therefore neither the parents nor the priest nor the government could affect its validity. It thus became possible for couples to get married secretly if they could not obtain anyone else's approval (Haeberle 1983).

The situation began to change in the sixteenth century under the double impulse of civil and ecclesiastical authorities: the Protestant Reformation on one side and the Council of Trent on the other one. The ecclesiastical ordinances of the city of Geneva, promulgated in 1541 under the influence of John Calvin, made it a requirement that all marriages be celebrated in the presence of a minister (See, Jelsma 1998). In 1563, the Council of Trent in Session #24, held on November 11, 1563, demanded that all marriages take place before a priest and two witnesses (in Tanner

1990:753-757). Until then, not only secret marriages, but also common informal marriages, had been widely practiced. These, similar to the old Roman marriages by *usus*, were based simply on mutual consent without formal ceremony. In England, they came to be called 'common law marriages,' and since Henry VIII had broken with Rome, they continued to be permitted until 1753, when the Church of England was put in charge of all marriages (including those of Roman Catholics, but excluding those of Quakers and Jews) (Stone 1992). This development did not affect the English colonies, however, and thus common law marriages remained possible in North America. As recently as 1970, they were still recognised in several U.S. States (Haeberle 1983).

The Indissolubility of Marriage

Even more disputed was the doctrine of the indissolubility of marriage. At the present moment there are considerable differences of opinion on this question between the Roman Catholic Church and many Pentecostal churches, on one hand, and mainline Protestant churches, on the other. These differences stretch far back in history.

The principle of the interdiction of divorce only gained wide acceptance among theologians and authors of canonical collections in the thirteenth century

At the onset of the Christian era, divorce was easily granted. Men usually had the advantage when they could simply dismiss their wives, but in many instances women could also sue for divorce. In ancient Rome, couples could divorce each other by mutual agreement (Gaudemet 1987:40-41).

In the early church, the canonical legislation was ambiguous concerning divorce and remarriage. Augustine was not in favour of remarriage after divorce but he also said, perhaps jokingly, that it was better to remarry during the lifetime of an adulterous spouse than to kill him in order to marry again (Gaudemet 1987:74). The Council of Laodicea in the fourth century merely imposed penance on remarried spouses (Gaudemet 1987:76). It was not until the sixth century that the church made attempts to enforce the indissolubility of marriage, however with limited success (Gaudemet 1987:119). The principle of the interdiction of divorce only gained wide acceptance among theologians and authors of canonical collections in the thirteenth century. To allow separated spouses to remarry, the church started to resort systematically to the practice of marriage annulment (Gaudemet 1987:239-263). The scholastic doctrine of marriage and the corollary interdiction of divorce were then reaffirmed by

the Council of Trent at its twenty-fourth session in 1563.

Divorce was reintroduced during the time of the Reformation. In 1537, Martin Luther in his *Sermons on the Gospel of Matthew*, declared that “divorce and separation are sinful except in the case of adultery because then it is God himself who puts an end to marriage” (quoted in Gaudemet (1987:284)). A decade later, Martin Bucer claimed that divorce was permissible not only in the case of adultery, but of impotence. In 1643, the Puritan John Milton, in his *Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* even advocated self-divorce without the involvement of either church or government. For him, marriage rested entirely on the full compatibility of both partners. Where mutual love was lacking, marriage was a sham and had to be dissolved. However, this philosophy was too far ahead of its time. The English Parliament began to grant some divorces, but the procedure was so cumbersome and expensive that few couples could take advantage of it (Haerberle 1983).

This brief survey shows that the claim made by Kerina’s pastor that marriage is indissoluble in all circumstances only represents one view in the history of the church. The doctrine of the indissolubility of marriage has always been, and still is, one of the most disputed in the community of believers.

The Cultural Roots of Gender Oppression and Domestic Violence

The last historical marker in Kerina’s story relates to culture. According to South African Indian culture, Kerina is told that a woman does not complain even when her husband beats her:

A good wife is one that wakes up at the crack of the dawn to pack lunch for her husband...one that irons his trousers with a perfect lined crease, one that cooks and cleans and waits on her husband hand on foot.

Other parts of the text refer to culture, as for example, the opening description of Kerina with downcast eyes.⁵ This phrase often triggers sympathy among South African Indian and African female students. Like

⁵ In 2007, a more descriptive case study was used—one which began with the sentence, “Kerina’s eyes are downcast.” While this version of the case study was subsequently replaced with a less descriptive and more ‘factual’ account of the narrative, students were able to pick-up on this description of Kerina in the narrative as a historical marker of culture.

Kerina, they have been told since they were young that a woman should never look at a man in the eyes and that they should maintain a subdued attitude at all times. A woman never challenges her husband even when he clearly makes a mistake.⁶

I explain that a discourse on culture always implies a statement on the past. The argument invoked in patriarchal societies to justify the submission of women to their husbands—even in the case of abuse—is that in all countries and at all times men occupy a superior position and therefore should command respect. Aristotle, one of the most influential philosophers in western history, argued that women were naturally inferior to men and should never hold public offices:

The courage of a man is shown in commanding, of the woman in obeying....Silence is a woman's glory, but this is not equally the glory of man.⁷

Theologians such as Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, Melanchthon and Beza uncritically followed Aristotle's doctrine of women's natural inferiority. Up to this day, it permeates attitudes and thought patterns in the entire Christian church including in Africa.

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As a matter of fact gender issues need to be seen in context. It is not true that women always occupied a subordinate role as Aristotle and his modern followers would like us to believe. In early human societies there were gender divisions, but that did not mean that women occupied inferior and men superior status. More critical in determining status were women's and men's relative abilities to control resources vital to the survival of the group. Gender divisions developed not as a product of 'human nature' but historically alongside the emergence of private property, social stratification and political centralisation (Frader 2006:26-46). In ancient Egypt for example, men and women enjoyed equal legal status even though literate men were especially valued in government positions. Elite women served as queens, pharaohs and priestesses in Old Kingdom Egypt (Frader

⁶ For examples of culture-related gender oppression in a South African township, see Denis (2004).

⁷ Aristotle, *Politics*, 1260a.

2006:31). In reference to the history of gender in South Africa, Cheryl Walker (1990) speaks of a new “traditionalism” characterised by the re-invented ideology of deference on the part of women towards men.⁸ The old familial structures—which subordinated women to men while assuring them of a certain protection (Guy 1990:33-47)—have been retained while stripped of their purpose of protecting women. No alternative structure to regulate conjugal or parental relations has been substituted for what was lost. As they have watched the erosion of their social status, men have reinforced their power over women. The patriarchal system has become increasingly dysfunctional. Insecure and badly paid, the men have assumed a parasitical relationship with the rural economy which the women, against all odds, have continued to submit to. This phenomenon of male instability has persisted to this day, although the South African population is concentrated in the towns and cities. Continually in search of work and unable to pay the high price of *ilobolo* (bridewealth), if they wish to marry according to traditional custom, the men engage in multiple short-lived relationships, leaving the children to be cared for by the mothers and grandmothers (Hunter 2004:104-123).

Conclusion

The story of Kerina proves to be an excellent medium to present the History of Christianity methodology to postgraduate theological students. The time was too short for an in-depth introduction to standard historical techniques such as archival research or oral history interviewing, but at least the students were given the opportunity to identify historical markers in the story and learn how to unpack references to the past in the text. More importantly they are exposed to the work of a historian. They discover that there is no end to the knowledge that can be gained on the past.

Centring the lecture on a story is a helpful pedagogical device to aid students to historicise apparently immutable concepts. The class exercise, which was the focal moment of the lecture, would have been impossible without the story of Kerina. The fact that the story was gendered helped the students to deconstruct common stereotypes on religion, culture and gender.

Is this enough to successfully transfer skills in historical methodology to theological postgraduate students? As a stand-alone module, this couple of double lectures would of course be insufficient to reach this goal. It is useful for students having already attended classes in History of

⁸ See also Bozzoli (1991) and Gasa (2006).

Christianity. The quality of the learning process is assessed by way of an essay in which the students are asked to spell out the difference between a historical perspective and a theological perspective. Using some of the themes identified in Kerina's story they explain what topics historians, as compared to theologians, would emphasise, what methodology they would follow and what would be the outcome of their work.

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**COMMUNITY RECONSTRUCTING BIBLICAL
STUDIES PEDAGOGY:
THE CASE OF TAMAR AND KERINA**

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Introduction

While most Biblical Studies pedagogy, across a range of very different contexts, tends to concentrate on what happens in the classroom, the last decade has ushered in forms of pedagogy which blur the boundary between classroom and community (Segovia and Tolbert 1998). Locating itself within this pedagogical tradition, where the boundary between academy and community is contested and transgressed, this article reflects on a case study¹ in a South African university, the University of KwaZulu-Natal, in which socially engaged biblical scholars have learned from their work in local communities and have sought to integrate this knowledge from outside of the university into the academy. Although the article is very much an analysis of pedagogy in a particular location, it contributes to a wider movement in which Biblical Studies is contested by context.

In 1991, the discipline of Biblical Studies in what was then the Department of Theological Studies (of the then University of Natal) was fortunate enough to be able to reconstruct its Biblical Studies programme and its pedagogy. Biblical Studies had prior to 1991 been taught both in the Department of Theological Studies and in the Department of Religious Studies. The focus of the former was on offering an in-depth training in the discipline to students in a B.Th. degree, and the focus of the latter was on offering a general introduction to the broad field of Biblical Studies to university students in a B.A. degree. More significantly, the pedagogical orientation of the former was shaped as much by the South African context and forms of liberation theology as it was by the discipline, while the pedagogical orientation of the latter tended to be shaped by the disciplinary

¹ The full story which we used as a case study appears in the Editorial to this volume.

conventions of a liberal arts tradition.

In addition to a social location that included political commitment to the struggle against apartheid, still a determining and destructive force in 1991, and forms of liberation theology, academic staff in Biblical Studies had also to engage with the vibrant Education Development Programme (EDP) in the Department. This Programme was initiated by the University of Natal and eagerly embraced by the Department of Theological Studies. The EDP was designed to enable academic departments across the University to reconstruct their pedagogy in ways that would address and redress the disadvantages encoded into apartheid's Bantu Education system. Given that the Department of Theological Studies then included about 65% black African South African students, a considerably higher percentage than in almost any other department of the University, the Biblical Studies discipline was quick and relentless in taking up the resources of the EDP. For example, staff in the Biblical Studies discipline invited an educationalist from the EDP to sit through our full first year programme in Biblical Studies and to advise us on how we might reconstruct it to create a more enabling teaching-learning environment. She not only made substantial recommendations for restructuring but also worked with us in implementing the changes, one of which was to swap the semesters in which we taught Old Testament and New Testament so that we now began with what the students were more familiar with, the New Testament, and then moved on to what was more unfamiliar, the Old Testament. In general terms, the EDP enabled us to move to what Nardia Hartman (1991) refers to as "deep level learning," a process through which there is an active acquisition of new knowledge by constant questioning and the integrating of new knowledge with existing knowledge and a relating of new knowledge to experience and context.

Alongside the significant contribution of the Education Development Programme, guided by our EDP tutor, Martin Mandew, a black African South African scholar, and Kathy Lockett and Fiona Bulman, the two EDP educationalists who worked closely with us, was another significant strand in the pedagogy of the Department of Theological Studies and Biblical Studies programme. The Contextualisation of Theological Education Project, supervised by Sid Lockett, a socially-engaged activist and intellectual, who was specifically employed using external funding for the express purpose, was an attempt to contextualise every feature of our work as a Department. Before it was fashionable to be specific about, let alone advocate, context, this project was an attempt to make sure that context was to be mainstreamed into what we did and how we did it. Context for us was more than the recognition of the presence of context in academic

discourse; it was the advocacy of the context of the poor and oppressed, granting such contexts an epistemological privilege (Assmann 1976; Frostin 1988:6).

Such contexts were given institutional form within the Department of Theological Studies through the Institute for the Study of the Bible (now named the Ujamaa Centre for Community Development and Research), founded in 1989 by Gunther Wittenberg, who taught Old Testament in the Department of Theological Studies (West 1991:174-180; 1995:216-238). Formed out of the violence that wracked our province in the mid-1980s, the Institute for the Study of the Bible (ISB) provided an interface within which socially engaged biblical scholars, organic intellectuals from black communities, and ordinary Christians from poor and oppressed communities could work on collaborative projects with the Bible as a significant resource.

Another strand in the reconceptualisation of Biblical Studies was an attempt to reconceptualise the entire academic project of the Department of Theological Studies by working across and not only within the disciplinary boundaries we had inherited from the encyclopaedic model of theological education (Farley 1982). We experimented in the early 1990s with contextually determined thematic modules in which broad themes provided the coherence and within which the different traditional disciplines of Biblical Studies, Systematic Theology, Practical Theology, and History of Christianity would collaborate and team-teach. The two most successful modules were 'History, Truth, and Modernity 101,' and 'Text, Interpretation, and Culture 210' (West 1996:62). Unfortunately, although there are residual elements of these modules which have survived into the present, the shift from a four-year B.Th degree to a three-year B.Th degree and the consequent claims of disciplinary space, as well as the apprehensions of some of the churches who send students to the School of Religion and Theology and the failure of the School to induct new academic staff into this alternative model of theological education, has meant that these modules are now firmly located within particular disciplines, with 'History, Truth, and Modernity 101' now being a Systematic Theology module and 'Text, Interpretation, and Culture 210' a Biblical Studies module.

This history has provided the groundwork for the most recent attempt in the School of Religion and Theology at the University of KwaZulu-Natal to offer an interdisciplinary module at the Honours (fourth year, post undergraduate degree) level. 'Theory and Method in Religion and Theology RELG702' is a module required of all Honours students and

those Masters students who have not completed this module. In the next section of this article I will focus on some of the theory that has been useful in the past project and how it has now been appropriated in this current instance.

The Contribution of Feminist Pedagogy

In attempting to theorise and find theoretical resources to make sense of and to shape the pedagogical dimensions of the kind of work described briefly above, some of us have drawn extensively on the work of feminist pedagogy (West 1992, 1996, 2004). Three related concepts lie at the core of our Biblical Studies pedagogy: engagement, criticality, and contextualisation. Engagement includes the faith, feelings, experiences, and commitments that our students (as well as us staff) bring to Biblical Studies, including of course, faith, feelings, experiences, and commitments about the Bible. In his 1929 essay, “The Rhythmic Claims of Freedom and Discipline,” Alfred North Whitehead captures this element rather nicely, arguing that ‘romance’ is the first stage of the rhythm of education (Whitehead 1929).

Three related concepts lie at the core of our Biblical Studies pedagogy: engagement, criticality, and contextualisation

More substantially, and from a quite different paradigm, post-modern feminist pedagogy emphasises the central role of emotion, feeling, and experience. Elizabeth Ellsworth points to the importance of both emotional and rational discourse (1989:320), and Kathleen Weiler argues that ‘feeling’ should be “looked to as a guide to a deeper truth than that of abstract rationality” and that ‘experience’ too can be “the basis for an opposition to dominant schemes of truth, provided it is interpreted through ideologically constructed categories” (1991:463). Neither Ellsworth nor Weiler reject analysis and rationality, but they question “the depth of critical understanding of those forces that shape our lives that can be achieved using only the rational and abstract methods of analysis given to us by dominant ideology” (Weiler 1991:465; see also Lorde 1984:100).

Engagement, then, is not contrary to ‘critical understanding’, but a component of it. This is a particularly important recognition in our context because the university has traditionally been seen as the citadel of critical thinking and so tends implicitly to marginalise the critical resources students bring with them. The case study used in this particular module that is being reflected on elicited more than a few emotional responses

from the students, both within the biblical studies component (as I shall show in my reflection on a robust exchange with a White male student) and in the other components such as the section on Counselling which involved role-play.

The concept of criticality has, of course, received careful attention from educational theorists.² Added to such conceptions of critical thinking Weiler and other feminist educators argue that feminist pedagogy is concerned to recognise and encourage the capacity of students to theorise and recognise their own power “by interrogating and analysing their own experience” (Weiler 1991:462), the partial nature of knowledge, and the power relations in the classroom (Ellsworth 1989:309). This awareness of criticality was fostered in this particular class through both the identification with, and repudiation of the case study. There were those in the class who found the narrative highly unlikely and the feminist voice too strong, while others found resonances with the story from within their own communities. This aided a discussion of the ideological nature of all texts, including and especially biblical ones.

This is where the third strand in the threefold cord is so significant, namely, contextualisation. I have argued that it is contextualisation which enables and facilitates the integration of engagement and criticality. There is a propensity among students from evangelical backgrounds to try to bracket their faith engagement with the Bible from their critical engagement with the Bible. Contextualisation—specifically working with the Bible in actual communities where the Bible is a resource for survival, liberation, life—provides a reality within which both faith and criticality are experienced to be of use, as particular local communities of the poor and marginalised draw on both sets of resources—in collaboration with socially engaged biblical scholars—in their daily struggles.

It is also in sites such as these, and through the various interfaces provided by the Ujamaa Centre, that the socially engaged biblical scholars work together with their university students. Here too feminist pedagogy has a contribution to make, for the research of Ellsworth and others suggests that social interaction between staff and students and student and student *outside the classroom* is the primary place for opportunities “to know the motivations, histories, and stakes of individuals in the class” (Ellsworth 1989:316-317). Ellsworth also speaks of the importance of ‘friendship’ in facilitating our following of others into their worlds. Friendship, she

² The other two stages of Whitehead’s rhythms of education are “precision” and “generalisation” (Whitehead 1929).

argues, “is an appropriate and acceptable ‘condition’ under which people become allies in struggles that are not their own” (1989:317), and in which we become partially constituted by work with other groups (Welch 1990; West 1993b). The formation of friendships is particularly apparent among the socially engaged biblical scholars, the organic intellectuals, and the Student Workers (those university students who are selected to work with the Ujamaa Centre during their undergraduate academic programme) who work together within the Ujamaa Centre.

The first area in which biblical studies pedagogy is contested is in the role, position, and authority of the teacher

This kind of community-based contextualisation foregrounds what feminist pedagogy refers to as the contestation of pedagogy. The first area in which biblical studies pedagogy is contested is in the role, position, and authority of the teacher. The Freirean image of the teacher who is a joint learner with students, argues Weiler, “fails to address the various forms of power held by teachers depending on their race, gender, and the historical and institutional settings in which they work” (1991:460; see also Ellsworth 1989:316). For example, the institutionally imposed authority of the teacher within a hierarchical university structure requires a role in which he/she “must give grades, is evaluated by administrators and colleagues in terms of expertise in a body of knowledge, and is expected to take responsibility for meeting the goals of an academic course as it is understood within the wider university” (Weiler 1991:460).¹ Such a role is clearly in tension, and even in opposition, to forms of community-based, collaborative, and contextual education.² However, by foregrounding, interrogating, and analysing our positionality, we can enable students themselves to become theorists of their own lives by foregrounding, interrogating, and analysing their own experience. As Weiler argues:

In an approach very similar to Freire’s concept of conscientisation, this strategy moves beyond the naming or sharing of experience to

¹ As Weiler notes, not only does the university structure impose this model of institutional authority, but students who find themselves in a heterogeneous group within a competitive and individualistic culture also expect it (1991:460).

² Significantly, questions concerning the role, position, and authority of the teacher are similar to questions concerning the role, position, and authority of the intellectual in democratic and collective social and political movements (Weiler 1991:461).

the creation of a critical understanding of the forces that have shaped that experience (1991:462).

Such a pedagogical orientation does not remove moments of vigorous engagement and even contestation in the classroom. But by foregrounding, interrogating, and analysing one's own positionality as an overt component of the pedagogical process, one shifts the primary medium in the classroom from hierarchical forms of knowledge to overlapping forms of experience. During one of the first occasions in which I was using the Kerina case study, which forms the basis for this article, as I was linking Kerina's abuse with the abuse of Tamar in the biblical story (2 Sam. 13), a white male student interjected that men were also victims of abuse. We had as a class become quite engaged in discussing the case study and the associated biblical story, and a number of students had shared their initial feelings about and appropriations of these two connected stories. So the comments of the white male student were not out of place. Though he was shifting the focus from the abuse of women to men, he clearly felt free to do this, perhaps emboldened by my presence (as another white male) as the facilitator of this class. At this point in the process I felt a tension between the facilitator who enables the sharing of different perspectives and the critical pedagogue who enables the foregrounding, interrogating, and analysing of positionality. Sensing a shift within the group as the women students went quiet and the male students, both black and white, began to snigger, I decided to explore this white male student's contribution. I acknowledged that I frequently heard men say things like this when discussing the abuse of women, for I regularly used the Tamar story in my work with the Ujamaa Centre. In most community settings I would not interrogate such observations, I told him, but as we were in a more critical context, I wondered, I asked him, what precipitated his observation. We engaged at some length, and with some emotion, almost forgetting those around us, as we vigorously interrogated our subject positions. Fortunately the tea-break was not too far off, and so we were able to adjourn to tea and to follow up our conversation in a more intimate manner. When we as a class reconvened after tea there was a palpable sense of 'space' in the room for even the more reticent students to participate. By vigorously foregrounding, interrogating, and analysing our positionalities we had created an enabling space for others to do the same.

This conscious attempt to construct pedagogy so as to acknowledge and encourage the capacity of students to recognise and theorise their own power (Weiler 1991:462), leads on to the second area in which pedagogy is contested, namely, personal experience as a source of knowledge and truth. As I have already indicated, feminist pedagogy recognises

“categories of experience and feeling as guides to theoretical understanding and political change” (Weiler 1991:463). Feelings or emotions are looked to “as a guide to a deeper truth than that of abstract rationality,” and are seen “as links between a kind of inner truth or inner self and the outer world—including ideology, culture, and other discourses of power” (Weiler 1991:463). Experience too “can be the basis for an opposition to dominant schemes of truth if what is experienced runs counter to what is set forth and accepted as ‘true’” (Weiler 1991:463).

Weiler acknowledges that ‘feeling’ and ‘experience’ have been “called into question as the source of unproblematic knowledge of the world that will lead to praxis” (1991:466), but argues that through self-examination, self-critique, collective exploration, and collective sharing, feeling and experience offer, in Michel Foucault’s terms, “a perspective from which to interrogate dominant regimes of truth” (Weiler 1991:465).

The third area in which pedagogy is contested, the question of difference, emerges from cultural feminism’s and post-modernist feminism’s critique of the notion of universal experience and subjectivity. Underlying this critique is the post-modern understanding that individual and communal selves are always in the process of being constructed and negotiated, and that we must therefore consider more carefully and exactly those forces “in which individuals shape themselves and by which they are shaped” (Weiler 1991:467). This understanding of subjectivity as “the constant creation and negotiation of selves within structures of ideology and material constraints” challenges “the use of such universal terms as oppression and liberation without locating these claims in a concrete historical or social context” (Weiler 1991:469). Clearly, recognizing that subjects are shaped by their particular experience of class, race, gender, and other social forces has powerful implications for pedagogy, “in that it emphasizes the need to make conscious the subject positions not only of students but of teachers as well” (Weiler 1991:470).

However, the challenge not only consists of the need “to articulate and claim a particular historical and social identity, to locate ourselves,” but also of the need “to build coalitions from a recognition of the partial knowledges of our own constructed identities” (Weiler 1991:470). For, as Weiler stresses, acknowledging the presence of difference “does not mean abandonment of the goals of social justice and empowerment” (1991:470). However, as we have come to understand in the more than twenty years of pedagogical experimentation in the School of Religion and Theology, “this kind of pedagogy and exploration of experiences in a society in which privilege and oppression are lived is risky and filled with pain” (Weiler

1991:470).

Each of the elements mentioned above has been appropriated in the case study to which I now turn. At the centre of this case study is the construction of a community of co-learners, including the students and myself, simulating a real-life situation. I have attempted to construct a relatively safe site in which we can all participate in an actual Contextual Bible Study, where my voice is not the dominant voice, where groups of men and women, working separately, can share their experience of their realities and of the biblical text, and where we can partially reconstitute ourselves and each other.

**At the centre of this case study is the construction of a community
of co-learners, including the students and myself, simulating a
real-life situation**

Tamar Meets Kerina

The interdisciplinary team-taught case study-based module ‘Theory and Method in Religion and Theology RELG702,’ pioneered by Anthony Balcomb and Sarojini Nadar, provides another site in the School of Religion and Theology, at a postgraduate level, to work within the framework of theory and resources outlined above. Centred on a case study of Kerina, a South African Indian woman from an Evangelical church background who is regularly assaulted by her husband and counselled by her pastor to pray and remain in the marriage,³ this module has placed serious challenges to biblical studies staff. Part of the rationale for this module is to bring Honours level students, the majority of whom have not come through the School of Religion and Theology’s undergraduate programme, ‘on board’ both with our contextually committed critical pedagogy and the fundamentals of each of the theological disciplines.

We are still feeling our way, but in the past two years we have begun to move more substantially into an experience-based pedagogy. My initial attempts in the early years of this module was to use a more lecture-based approach, in an attempt to introduce students with a very diverse background in contextual forms of biblical studies to the discipline as it has developed in our School. However, the effects of this approach were

³ The full story which we used as a case study appears in the Editorial to this volume.

that the students felt overwhelmed with detail and so concentrated on annotating the notes I had given them. Given that I do a great deal of work in local communities outside of the university with a process that has come to be known as Contextual Bible Study (West 2006), I decided to shift my approach to a more experiential one. While it is not possible within the constraints of this module to take the students out into actual local communities, we have been able to constitute the class of students themselves as a community. This is what I have attempted to do in the past two years in which I have participated in this project.

My contribution has been to share with the class a sense of what it means to experience a Contextual Bible Study, the process of community-based Bible study developed by the Ujamaa Centre over the past twenty years (West 1993a, 2006, 2009). By way of linking my component of the module to the case study, I inform the class that Kerina's pastor, Rev. Bobby Naidoo, has recently had a spate of abused women come to him for counsel. After much prayer, he now realises that there is far more abuse in his church than he could have imagined. Chastened, he recognises that he has been remiss in his ministry, and so he decides to invite the Ujamaa Centre to come to his church and facilitate a Contextual Bible Study with the whole church on the general subject of gender violence. I then proceed to do a version of the Tamar Contextual Bible Study (West and Zondi-Mabizela 2004; West et al. 2004). Given that the class is not a substantially safe site, I do not do the normal form of the Bible study, in which Tamar and violence against women are the focus. Instead, I do a recently developed variation of this Contextual Bible Study, one in which Amnon and masculinity are the focus.

The normal Tamar Contextual Bible Study has had an amazing capacity to draw men into the story without them becoming too defensive, though there are occasions when some male participants respond as the student in my earlier illustration did. Because, I think, the story offers men a range of male characters with which to identify, besides the rapist, they are able to accept some sense of culpability (for each of the male characters in the story participates in the rape of Tamar in some way) without being condemned as the rapist. Building on this capacity of the story to include men without alienating them, the Ujamaa Centre has begun to develop a new Contextual Bible Study based on 2 Samuel 13:1-22 as part of a series of Bible studies on 'Redemptive Masculinities.'

The emerging Contextual Bible Study has a similar shape to the Tamar study, but has quite a different focus, as the following questions reveal:

1. Have you heard this text (2 Sam. 13:1-22) read publically on a Sunday? Share with each other if and when and where you have heard this text read.
2. Who are the main characters in this story and what do we know about them?
3. What is the role of each of the male characters in the rape of Tamar?
4. How would you characterise Amnon's masculinity in this text? Consider:
 - a. What prevents Amnon initially from acting on his desire/lust for Tamar (v. 2)?
 - b. What is it then that enables him to act on his love/desire/lust (vv. 4-6)?
 - c. How does he react to Tamar's arguments (v. 14)?
 - d. How does he behave after he has raped Tamar (vv. 15-17)?
5. What does Tamar's response to Amnon's assault tell us about her understanding of masculinity? Consider:
 - a. What does she say (vv. 12-13, 16), and what do each of the things she says tell us about her understanding of what it means to be 'a man'?
 - b. What does she do (v. 19), and what do each of things she does tell us about her understanding of what it means to be 'a man'?
6. What are the dominant forms of masculinity in our contexts (in various age groups), and what alternative forms of masculinity can we draw on from our cultural and religious traditions?
7. How can we raise the issue of masculinity in our various gender and age-groups?

It is this Contextual Bible Study that I do with the class of 'Theory and Method in Religion and Theology RELG702.' Just as I would do with any local community, I divide the class along gender and age lines, forming four groupings, one of older males, one of younger males, one of older females, and one of younger females. Grouping the class in this way provides some sense of common identity and safety. During the regular report-backs from the small groups there is plenty of opportunity for each group to be partially constituted by the contributions of the other gender and age group.

Question #1 performs a similar function to that of the first question in the Tamar Contextual Bible Study, but draws attention to the absence of the text in the male-dominated world of church life. Questions #2 and #3, as

in the Tamar study, draw attention to the text itself and provide an overall orientation to the story. Questions #4 and #5 slow the 'reading' process down considerably, posing two related and quite difficult questions. In working with this 'Redemptive Masculinities' Contextual Bible Study we have kept reformulating these two questions in order to devise a form of question which combines a careful reading of the text with the participants' own understandings of notions of 'masculinity.' So far we have settled on a general question and then some prompting sub-questions.

Complicating problems are the socio-historical questions which hover in the background of the biblical text, and the paucity of studies on masculinity in the Ancient Near East

Because the notion of 'masculinity' is somewhat elusive, as any introductory textbook in the emerging field of masculinity studies readily admits (Bourdieu 2001), we have tried to come at it from a number of angles, using the biblical text as a resource. Complicating problems are the socio-historical questions which hover in the background of the biblical text, and the paucity of studies on masculinity in the Ancient Near East. As the helpful classified bibliography by Janice Capel Anderson, assisted by Stephen Moore and Seong Hee Kim shows (Anderson, Moore, and Kim 2003), there are a rich array of materials on masculinity studies in general and on the Greco-Roman period, as well as an emerging body of material on the New Testament, including the excellent *Semeia Studies* volume on *New Testament Masculinities* edited by Stephen Moore and Janice Capel Anderson in which this bibliography appears (Moore and Anderson 2003). Unfortunately, the material available on the Ancient Near East is rather sparse (Anderson, Moore, and Kim 2003), and so it is difficult to provide a 'thick' sociological setting for Hebrew Bible representations of masculinity.⁸ However, this socio-historical problem is an additional incentive to do community-based work, for our Redemptive Masculinities Contextual Bible Study has the capacity to suggest questions about masculinity with which we might interrogate the available Ancient Near Eastern material.

Notwithstanding the socio-historical difficulties, the text itself offers plenty to work with, both on its own terms and by way of enabling participants (whether students or community participants) to probe behind the text, and the Bible study has already proved to be a powerful resource for

⁸ But see the suggestive work in cognate disciplines (Linke 1992; Roscoe 1996; Melville 2004).

communities to talk about masculinity, not something they usually do. As a part of patriarchy (Whitehead and Barrett 2001), masculinity is an almost invisible thread woven through our African cultures, and so addressing it and thereby rendering it visible is itself a significant feature of this 'Redemptive Masculinities' Contextual Bible Study. But while participants do not find it easy to grasp the notion of 'masculinity,' they seem to have little difficulty in accepting the implication of our questions that there is more than one masculinity. This too is a significant recognition. By grappling with the notion of 'masculinity' and interrogating what local realities constitute the term, the local communities we work with are also making a contribution to the emerging field of African masculinities (Morrell 2001; Lindsay and Miescher 2003; Ouzgane and Morrell 2005; Richter and Morrell 2006; Cole, Manuh, and Miescher 2007), furnishing questions from their understanding to be taken up by socially engaged biblical scholars and other social scientists.

The biblical story provides a powerful dialogue partner in this regard, offering a number of potential lines of connection with their socio-cultural contexts. The first sub-question under Question #4, for example, is especially significant, pointing as it does to a feature of the text seldom noticed by the reader. By focusing on the moment of Amnon's restraint, before he acts on his desire—however this desire is characterised—Amnon is normalised. Amnon is not initially the demonised 'other,' the rapist; Amnon is the ordinary male who has desires but does not act on them. The second sub-question under Question #4 then creates space for participants to discuss what aspects of masculinity enable men to disregard socio-cultural norms of restraint. The third and fourth sub-questions are especially productive among participants as they draw attention to the irrational responses of Amnon to Tamar's rational arguments and the role of physical and socio-cultural force. What emerges from Question #4 is some interrogation of how masculine power operates.

Question #5 shifts the focus from the male Amnon to the kind of male he should be, as envisaged by Tamar. Each of the elements of what she says, for example, in vv. 12-13 summons forth a different kind of male, and participants eagerly construct the characteristics of this imagined male. Tamar summons forth, anticipates, hopes for, a man who understands 'No,' who understands what it means to be in relationship as a 'brother,' who is able to resist using force, who respects the socio-cultural traditions of his community, who is able to discern and desist from doing what is disgraceful, who considers the situation of the other, who considers the consequences of his actions for himself, who is willing to pause and examine other options, who is willing to listen to rational argument. These

characteristics in turn provide a potential reservoir from which to draw in their responses to Question #6.

In some of our Contextual Bible Studies dealing with gender violence, such as our Bible study on the David and Bathsheba story, men tend to become very defensive

In our work with this Contextual Bible Study thus far, including our work in the classroom, male groups have been remarkably frank and even vulnerable within their own gender and age groups in responding to Question #6, and imaginative and practical in their responses to Question #7. In some of our Contextual Bible Studies dealing with gender violence, such as our Bible study on the David and Bathsheba story, men tend to become very defensive. While the women's groups, particularly the younger women, always take the process seriously, men's groups sometimes take refuge in dismissive banter. But this was not the case here. For example, in responding to Question #6 the group of younger men, across different socio-cultural communities, have admitted that among themselves as young men they often play the part of Jonadab with each other, urging each other 'to take' a woman who seems unattainable. They confess that though they do not usually intend their compatriots to act on their advice, they nevertheless talk in this way among themselves. Younger men have also shared that they are able to envisage a range of masculinities, while many of the older men have found it difficult to grasp what was meant by 'alternative masculinities.' But across all age groups among male participants there has been a genuine willingness to talk about these issues, surprising themselves even, for most acknowledged that they would never have imagined themselves talking about 'such things in church.'

Given the constraints of time and the somewhat artificial 'community' context, we have to be content with providing a common experience for the class, from which we can then reflect on the Contextual Bible Study process and its potential in their own contexts. For the contribution of this component from the Biblical Studies programme goes beyond an experience of community-based learning, it also offers students a viable resource with which to engage more realistically around issues of masculinity and gender violence in their own churches and communities. Furthermore, the allusion to the Tamar Contextual Bible Study and the work of the Ujamaa Centre makes the class aware of other resources they can draw on and participate in. The assignment given to the class tried to take the process further, developing these dimensions. Students were asked

to write a letter to a leader in their church, explaining what they had done in this section of the module, with particular attention to their understanding of masculinity, and suggesting one process that they thought their church should engage in in order to address gender violence.

Here are extracts from three very different students, representing very different communities:

I think that Tamar can be a very important role model for young women in our church and the community. They can learn that abuse in any way is wrong, whether physical, sexual or verbal, and that they should not accept this at all. My request is that you start reading this text in our church and use it to make people aware of the realities of the Bible. It appears that not many people are aware that this text even exists and as pastors, we rob congregants of the truth.

One striking insight that challenged me about the type of man Amnon is that he is actually an ordinary everyday man—like my brother, my friend, my lecturer or my pastor. Amnon has not committed this type of violence before, and he even respected the cultural laws that forbade a virgin girl to be alone with a man. He was not going to rape her; he felt lust or love for her, but only took action after Jonadab reminded him of his power as a man and as son of the king. What does that say about the type of man that can abuse a woman, and in my context what does that say about my brother, friend, lecturer and pastor?

Gender violence and masculinity are largely avoided subjects in our church. I think that as a congregation in a relatively wealthy and predominantly white suburb, we practice a degree of denial, pretending that violence against women and domestic abuse are not issues for us, but rather for black communities or for the poor. If we were honest with ourselves we would have to acknowledge that women suffer abuse here too. Just like Tamar, being a member of a wealthy family did not save her from being raped. Suburb homes and bank accounts might be bigger, but they only help conceal the abuse.

Conclusion

The Biblical Studies programme offers a range of resources to ‘Theory and Method in Religion and Theology RELG702’ module. The ‘Redemptive

Masculinities' Contextual Bible Study is only one. A colleague, Patricia Bruce, has worked with the class through the various differing New Testament texts on divorce, drawing their attention to the differences that reside within the Bible itself and allowing students to work with historical, sociological, and literary methodologies. I have also done some work on the various New Testament masculinities, focussing on Matthew's portrayal of Jesus (Anderson and Moore 2003; Neyrey 2003).

However, it is experience of doing a Contextual Bible Study together—for I too am a participant in the process—which has the potential for deep level learning, and for students and staff to articulate and claim a particular historical and social identity—to locate ourselves—but also to build coalitions from a recognition of the partial knowledges of our own constructed identities. Kerina's story allows us to place our stories alongside her own, and this we have done, via a biblical story that enables us to trace lines of connection between sacred text and current context.

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BIBLICAL STUDIES: FROM TEXT TO CONTEXT

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Introduction

In 1988, I returned to lecturing after a few years' absence to discover that the university had undergone significant changes. For the first time, the students in my introductory Greek course included a number of black Africans. I was nervous about this and in the first class, as I went around the group trying to attach faces to the names on the attendance list that the students had just completed, I struggled with the pronunciation of some of the names. I came to one name on the list and concentrated on saying the name slowly and carefully, pronouncing each syllable. "You must be Me-care," I said. The student looked really puzzled and replied, "No, Mike!" At this, we all laughed and relaxed.

Sometimes our context can lead to significant new insights, at other times it can distort the way we read

The point that I want to illustrate with this story is that context affects reading. A familiar name or text can be read very differently when the context changes. Sometimes our context can lead to significant new insights, at other times it can distort the way we read. The fact that the teaching in this module was linked to Kerina's story meant that the nature of the case study,¹ and the obvious injustice of the treatment of Kerina, from the outset shaped the way in which the material was going to be presented. Was there a way in which the Bible could be a life-giving resource for Kerina, instead of being used as a means of oppression? Instead of presenting the theory and method in a vacuum, all the knowledge was applied knowledge with a distinct ideo-theological goal which was openly acknowledged in class.

My primary goal was to make sure that students were aware of the type of tools that are available for working with the Bible, but I consciously tried to show how these tools could be employed with reference to the selected

¹ The full story which we used as a case study appears in the Editorial to this volume.

passages to produce readings that contained liberatory elements useful in promoting the equality and well-being of women in situations similar to that of Kerina but, at the same time, readings that acknowledged the socio-historical and literary context of the text.

In the course handout, the objectives of the Biblical Studies section were outlined in the following terms:

In responding to the case study from the field of Biblical Studies, we will carefully consider both Old Testament and New Testament texts relevant to the issues of marriage, divorce, and violence. Students will be introduced to a variety of scholarly critical tools, especially socio-historical and narratological approaches to the Bible.

The emphasis will be on detailed exegesis of particular biblical texts, but we will also reflect on how we move from text to context. The relationship between Biblical Studies and Theology will also be explored, via this case study.

One of the outcomes we listed and hoped to achieve was to explain “the relationship between a critical engagement with the text and a critical engagement with a particular context.”

Background

I was responsible for half of the three seminars in the Biblical Studies section of the module (a total of four and a half hours spread over one and half seminars on two consecutive days). Since our students in the Honours programme come to us from very different backgrounds, our aim in the Biblical Studies section was to ensure that all of the students had a basic sense of what it meant to work critically with the Bible and to understand something of the complexities involved in interpretation. My brief was to focus on theoretical frameworks in Biblical Studies, in particular on the contextual theoretical framework used by many of our postgraduate students, and on one model for working within this framework—namely tri-polar contextual exegesis²—and on various methodologies or tools for working with the text and context. Using texts from the New Testament, it was also my responsibility to reinforce notions of reading behind the text,

² A member of our School, Professor Draper, has done extensive work on this model, as has Professor West. I have drawn on their work and on discussions that we have had in the School.

on the text and in front of the text to which the students had been introduced in the section on the Old Testament taught by Professor Gerald West (See, West 1993). The emphasis therefore was on theory and method within Biblical Studies, but, given our School's focus on contextual theology and the fact that we were working with a highly gendered case study, issues of gender formed a very significant part of the course. As a way of indicating how the course was implemented, I shall provide information about the type of content that was included in my section and how this content was presented to the students.³

A preliminary assignment was used to introduce students to the historical-critical tools. These tools help in understanding the processes that resulted in the New Testament texts. They are useful for working behind the text and with the past dimensions of the text: how the text took shape, the communities for which the text was intended and the culture or social location of the biblical characters, the author and his audience. In order to familiarise themselves with these tools, the students were required to read a set book on the Synoptic Gospels (Nickle 2001) and, drawing on this reading, to answer questions on two biblical texts on divorce, selected for their relevance to the case study.⁴ The assignment questions were designed to encourage a close and careful reading of the texts, requiring the students first to take note of the similarities and differences between the two texts and to attempt to account for the changes in the text from Matthew, and then, secondly, to bring the text into engagement with Kerina's context.⁵ The assignment was handed in before my seminars took place. My intention was to concentrate in class on the contextual theoretical framework and on tri-polar contextual exegesis.

The tri-polar exegetical model lends itself to working with a case study since it attempts to bring the text and its context into dialogue with the interpreter and her or his context in ways that lead to fresh insights into the

³ The course was taught with the help of prescribed readings (marked in the Bibliography with an asterisk), an assignment, class discussion, some formal instruction and through the use of an overhead projector.

⁴ I selected Mark 10:1-12; Matthew 19:1-12, both dealing with divorce.

⁵ The assignment topic was as follows: 1. How does synoptic scholarship help to account for issues of unity and diversity in the gospel tradition? Illustrate your answer by referring to the similarities and differences between Mark 10:1-12 and Matthew 19:1-12. (30 Marks). 2. If you were to counsel Kerina on the basis of these texts, what factors would you take into account in interpreting the texts before counselling her? (20 Marks)

implications of the text for the faith community (Draper 2001:152). This model presupposes an emic reading i.e., reading from within the religious or faith tradition (Draper 2001:153). The reader comes to the text as sacred text seeking understanding and transformation and it is the reader's context that shapes the questions brought to the text. However, in the academy it is necessary to adopt a critical approach to the text and to the context, in other words to ask systematic and structured questions about the text and our context.

The tri-polar contextual exegetical model is tri-polar because it has three poles, namely distantiation, contextualisation and appropriation. The model seeks to unpack what is meant by hermeneutics—it isolates the various moments in hermeneutics, although it is important to realise that these are not independent of each other. It does not really matter which of the first two one begins with: one can start out from distantiation or contextualisation. It is contextual because it highlights the fact “that there is no neutral or absolute meaning of a text or...of any human communication” (Draper 2001:149). Meaning is bound up with the context of the reader and here we foreground our context and the questions that arise from our context. In our class the case study (based on an actual case) and the gender concerns that it raised constituted the context from which questions were put to the text. The tri-polar model is also exegetical because it involves a critical study of the text (Draper 2001: 155)—as far as possible an attempt is made to read the text on its own terms.

This model asks systematic and structured questions of the text and the context. It produces critical consciousness of what goes into our interpretation of the text in the academy

This model asks systematic and structured questions of the text and the context. It produces critical consciousness of what goes into our interpretation of the text in the academy. There are different interpretive communities such as the church, the academy and the public. Before working with the tri-polar model, there was discussion in class about how the Bible was being used in the church to which Kerina belonged. The story of Kerina was analysed to illustrate the fact that a whole range of issues such as theological orientation, race, class and gender actually impact on the way the Bible is interpreted and appropriated by an individual or within a community.

In the case study, the Bible was being interpreted within a particular faith community, described as “an evangelical church, one that does not ordain women, nor allow them to participate equally in the life and activities of

the church.” The word “evangelical” immediately signalled that the context was one in which the Bible was taken seriously as the final authority on matters of faith and conduct. The case study referred to various texts dealing with the headship of the man, the submission of women (Gen. 3:16; 1 Cor. 11:3; Eph. 5:22 and Col. 3:18-19) and divorce.

However, the way in which these texts were interpreted in Kerina’s church was on the basis of an uncritical one-to-one correspondence: there was an attempt to apply what the Bible said in a literal way in their own particular context. What is more, only certain texts were selected—there were other texts that could have been used but were not; for example, nothing was said about the husband and the way he was behaving.

There was discussion on how interpretation is influenced by the faith community or church context in which the Bible is read. Within the wider church there are many different approaches. Faith traditions reach decisions based on somewhat different criteria and even within the evangelical tradition there would be varying interpretations: not all evangelical churches would have given Kerina the advice she received from her church.

Other factors also come into play. Mention was made of the community’s oppressive patriarchal culture that predisposed the members to certain interpretations. How a text is understood is influenced by the different social, economic and political contexts of readers and by differences of culture, gender, age and language. An interpretation may simply reflect a person’s own ideology or way of thinking or it may reflect a person’s vested interests and desire to hold on to or gain power. This can happen without the person even being conscious of his or her own ideology.

How we apply a text is also influenced by changing social conditions—for example, divorce has become far more common since the 1950s and these social changes have had an impact on the practical ways in which the church ministers to people who are divorced and want to remarry. Although a church may still uphold the ideal of marriage for life and be against divorce and remarriage, pastoral considerations may lead them to take a much less strict approach in practice. In Kerina’s church the members adopt a hard line on this issue.

After this general discussion about the complexities of interpretation we examined the three poles of the tri-polar model, making a number of observations under each heading.

Distantiation

This is the stage that acknowledges that the text was “intended for others” (Draper 2001:152). In this stage there is an attempt to attain critical distance from the text, by using various methodological options to work with the text, and to establish what the text meant in its own context. The authors of the texts had their own concerns that arose out of their own specific contexts. Using a particular theoretical framework does not lock a scholar into using a particular methodology. Within any given theoretical framework there are limited methodologies that can be employed in actually working with the text. Feminist biblical hermeneutics can use any of the tools.

The tools that can be used are limited. Three of the most common are the historical-critical, socio-historical and literary or narrative tools. These tools are designed to give the text a voice. The students employed historical critical tools (textual criticism, form criticism, source criticism, redaction criticism) in their assignment. Socio-historical tools ask questions about the social and historical context of the texts (for example, the situation regarding marriage, divorce and the status of women in first century CE Palestine) or use models drawn from sociology or anthropology to put questions to the texts. In addition, literary or narrative tools (introduced in the Old Testament section of the course) are used when the reader works with the text analysing its structure, its genre and its rhetorical goals (what arguments is it making?). Narrative criticism also asks questions about plot, setting, character, theme, time and style. Why Matthew and Mark placed the sections on divorce where they did in their narrative is a literary question. It is not necessary to employ only a single set of tools: it is possible to be eclectic and, by using a number of tools, to come at the text from different angles.

Contextualisation

Contextual exegesis assumes that there is no absolute or neutral meaning in the text. Readers help to create meaning and contextualisation involves understanding “who we are in the conversation” (Draper 2001:152, 156-7). What questions have driven us to the text? We need to examine our own context critically using tools from sociology, anthropology, psychology and other social scientific models. This stage is also very difficult and very important. If we have not analysed and understood the situation properly we are not going to come up with solutions. Sometimes the context is very complex and involves many factors as in the case of Kerina. In analysing this within a South African Indian context, various historical factors that

shaped it might be taken into consideration or a gendered analysis might be used or insights from sociology or psychology.

Appropriation

In this stage, the text is appropriated in the context of the readers. This is the goal of the entire process. There must be some cohesion between the analysis of text and context even if the appropriation opens up possibilities not foreseen by the author of the text. Albert Nolan, one of the pioneers of contextual exegesis, argued that the good news takes the shape of the teaching of Jesus, but is not confined by its content (1988:8-16)—the focus is on “the meaning for the text today”; this is determined by the reader in a community (Draper 2001:148-149). The reader’s own theological and ideological orientation which was present at the start of the whole process of interpretation will be active in determining the appropriation, but the processes of distantiation and contextualisation also have potential to influence and modify the reader’s orientation. Appropriation ideally results in new consciousness and new praxis (Draper 2001:158).

In discussing the three poles, I hoped to show more fully what each involved and how feminist concerns could be accommodated in various ways by selecting from a range of methodologies and a range of reading strategies within the selected theoretical framework. For example, are we working behind the text, on the text, or in front of the text (*cf.* West 1993)? Different methods produce different results. If we work behind the texts that discuss divorce, the texts impel the reader to take a very strong line against divorce (which in the socio-historical context of the New Testament probably constituted good news for women who became more vulnerable when divorced); but if we work in front of the text on the basis of theological or literary trajectories in the Bible, although the texts compel us to view divorce in a very serious light, we might not adopt such a firm line. We might be influenced by the shape of Jesus’ teaching rather than by its precise content. By this I mean that we might decide that in its own historical context, Jesus’ teaching on divorce was good news for the women of his time,⁶ but what constitutes good news for women today might not look exactly the same as it did in Jesus’ day—forcing Kerina to stay in the marriage would not be good news for her.

⁶ For details, see the section entitled, “Working with the Texts” later in this discussion.

In summary, to work within the contextual theoretical framework it is necessary to understand the theory of the framework and to have competence in the tools needed for the analysis of the chosen text and context—for example, in working with issues pertaining to violence against women it may be necessary to draw on historical, social or psychological tools in analysing the context. This was one of the important principles of this section which the students needed to understand.

Feminist Biblical Hermeneutics?

The time available in the course for Biblical Studies (as for the other theological disciplines) was severely limited. As a result, it was not possible to have a dedicated discussion of feminist hermeneutical principles. However in the overall course structure, a section was set aside for dealing specifically with gender issues. For this, the students were required to read the prescribed book by Susan Rakoczy (2004) that included a discussion of feminist biblical hermeneutics and of particular approaches adopted by certain leading feminist biblical scholars from various parts of the world.

The human dimensions of the interpreter have to be taken into account because the Bible does not interpret itself

My approach was a more general one designed to show that biblical scholars working within a contextual framework need not confine themselves to a particular methodology in working with the biblical texts. Nevertheless, my section of the course obviously raised concerns and issues very relevant to feminist biblical hermeneutics—for example, it was emphasised that the interpreter's background and ideology are factors that make interpretation such a disputed matter since interpreters emerge from a wide range of backgrounds. The human dimensions of the interpreter have to be taken into account because the Bible does not interpret itself. Brueggemann (2000:3) argues that the Bible actually insists on human interpretation and that this is inevitably subjective, provisional and open to dispute. The Bible may be inspired but our interpretations are not! In Kerina's context, the Bible was interpreted by men in a way that was oppressive towards women, while in the course an attempt was made to see whether the texts might be read in ways more liberating to women. In other words, one's life interests help to shape one's interpretative interests. In addition one of the readings (Okure 1995) was by a feminist Biblical scholar.

Working with the Texts

Against this background, I attempted to show how each of the methods of working with the text—historical critical (behind the text), narrative (on the text) and with a focus on trajectories in the text or on the reader (in front of the text) provided resources for use in feminist biblical hermeneutics. The two texts used were:

Mark 10:1-12 (NRSV)

¹ He left that place and went to the region of Judea and beyond the Jordan. And crowds again gathered around him; and, as was his custom, he again taught them. ² Some Pharisees came, and to test him they asked, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife?” ³ He answered them, “What did Moses command you?” ⁴ They said, “Moses allowed a man to write a certificate of dismissal and to divorce her.” ⁵ But Jesus said to them, “Because of your hardness of heart he wrote this commandment for you. ⁶ But from the beginning of creation, ‘God made them male and female.’ ⁷ ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, ⁸ and the two shall become one flesh.’ ⁹ So they are no longer two, but one flesh. ¹⁰ Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.” ¹¹ Then in the house the disciples asked him again about this matter. ¹² He said to them, “Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery against her; ¹² and if she divorces her husband and marries another, she commits adultery.”

Matthew 19:1-12 (NRSV)

¹ When Jesus had finished saying these things, he left Galilee and went to the region of Judea beyond the Jordan. ² Large crowds followed him, and he cured them there. ³ Some Pharisees came to him, and to test him they asked, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any cause?” ⁴ He answered, “Have you not read that the one who made them at the beginning ‘made them male and female,’ ⁵ and said, ‘For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh’? ⁶ So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.” ⁷ They said to him, “Why then did Moses command us to give a certificate of dismissal and to divorce her?” ⁸ He said to them, “It was because you were so hard-hearted that Moses allowed you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so. ⁹ And I say to you, whoever divorces his

wife, except for unchastity, and marries another commits adultery.”

¹⁰ His disciples said to him, “If such is the case of a man with his wife, it is better not to marry.” ¹¹ But he said to them, “Not everyone can accept this teaching, but only those to whom it is given. ¹² For there are eunuchs who have been so from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by others, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Let anyone accept this who can.”

Behind the Text

Here I picked up on aspects of the work covered in the assignment. Biblical Studies is all about reading texts closely and carefully. By doing this and by comparing and contrasting the two texts, some interesting similarities and differences emerged. It became clear that Matthew changed Mark’s account in a number of significant ways. The students discovered that the similarities could be explained by source criticism (Matthew has used Mark), while redaction criticism accounts for the differences (Matthew is writing for a different community—a Jewish community with different concerns from those of the Gentile community for which Mark was writing). Use of these tools led the students to read the texts very closely and carefully and to explain their findings. It enabled them to achieve critical distance and produced interesting results.

Most of the points listed below emerged from the students’ answers to the assignment or from in-class discussion.

- Matthew says “he cured them” instead of “he taught them” (Matt. 19:2).
- In Matthew’s account the question is different. In Mark the issue is whether or not divorce is permissible. In Matthew the Pharisees add “for any cause” (Matt. 19:2).
- In Matthew Jesus launches straight into his teaching, whereas in Mark he asks the Pharisees a question.
- In Matthew Jesus begins with the text from Genesis and proceeds to Deuteronomy 24:1-4,⁷ whereas in Mark he does it the other way round.

⁷ Deuteronomy 24:1-4 (NRSV): ¹ Suppose a man enters into marriage with a woman, but she does not please him because he finds something objectionable about her, and so he writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house; she then leaves his house ² and goes off to become another man’s wife. ³ Then suppose the second man

- In Matthew the Pharisees raise the question of Moses; in Mark it is Jesus.
- In Matthew the Pharisees use “command” with reference to Moses, while Jesus uses “allow.” In Mark Jesus uses “command” of Moses and the Pharisees use “allow.”
- The words in Matthew 19:9 are spoken to the crowd, while in Mark Jesus speaks them to the disciples in the house (Matt. 10:9) thereby unpacking some of the implications for his disciples alone.⁸
- Matthew allows an exception (“except for unchastity”) in Jesus’ words while Mark does not.
- Matthew leaves out the words “against her” in Mark 10:11 but his words do suggest that the wife had rights against her husband
- Matthew does not pick up on the words of Jesus in Mark 10:12 about the wife divorcing her husband and committing adultery.
- Matthew adds the section about the eunuchs.
- Matthew provides the reaction of the disciples to Jesus’ teaching.

In discussing these differences and their effects, the students were also introduced to relevant socio-historical factors, an awareness of which contributed to a fuller understanding of the texts in their own context. The following points emerged:

- Matthew’s change of context from teaching to healing serves to authorise the teaching of Jesus. Nickle (2001:115) says that the predominantly Jewish audience of Matthew’s gospel would look for miracles to validate teaching.
- Knowledge of the context made it clear that Matthew’s question was more orthodox and in line with the contemporary Jewish rabbinical debates (Hooker 1991:235) than the question in Mark. All Jews agreed that divorce was permissible for a man (although

dislikes her, writes her a bill of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house (or the second man who married her dies);⁴ her first husband, who sent her away, is not permitted to take her again to be his wife after she has been defiled; for that would be abhorrent to the LORD, and you shall not bring guilt on the land that the LORD your God is giving you as a possession.

⁸ Mark 10:11-12 is a “saying of the Lord” and in the words of Nickle (2001:32) belongs to “the subcategory of *legal sayings and community rules*.” The purpose of these sayings was to guide the church in how they were to live their Christian lives.

note Mal. 2:14-16 where God is said to hate divorce), but disagreed on the grounds for divorce. In Matthew, the Pharisees asked the question from the perspective of Beit Hillel (Moloney 2002:193 n.106). Beit Hillel permitted divorce for a wide range of reasons while Beit Shammai was stricter and only allowed for divorce in the case of unchastity (Beit Shammai understood the “shame of a thing” in Deut. 24:1 to refer to unchastity, while Beit Hillel interpreted it more loosely *cf.* Moloney 2002:193 n.106). In Mark, the question is not about the grounds for divorce but whether or not divorce is permissible. The question in Mark is unusual and may indicate that the Pharisees had some idea of Jesus’ radical thoughts on the matter (Moloney 2002:194 n.108) and were trying to stir up trouble for him if he contradicted Moses since Jesus’ views would not be popular with men. One should remember that John the Baptist had got into trouble because he criticised Herod for his non-Jewish conduct in marrying his brother’s wife, Herodias (Mark 6:17; *cf.* Moloney 2002:195 n. 118). Jesus was now moving into the territory where John had ministered and died (Mark 10:1): the narrative setting is that he has crossed the Jordan into Judea.

- Jesus and the Pharisees both appeal to the Pentateuch in discussing the matter but whereas the Pharisees appeal to the obvious text in Deuteronomy 24:1-4, Jesus casts his net more widely and includes scriptural material that the Pharisees might not have considered to be relevant (Gen. 1:27; 2:18-24 and 5:2). The order in which Matthew presents his material perhaps conforms more to scribal reasoning (Myers 1991:265): the Pharisees begin with the law (“Is it lawful?”); Jesus takes them back to “the beginning”; the Pharisees then raise the question of Moses’ command and in his reply Jesus corrects this to Moses’ permission and once again takes them back to “the beginning” before summing up his point of view in v. 9. In Mark, Jesus refuses to participate in a legal debate. He answers a question with a question: his purpose is to show that, through their legal quibbling, the Pharisees are more concerned to legitimate divorce than to uphold God’s intention for marriage. Jesus sets scripture against scripture and suggests that the Genesis texts are normative because they represent the situation prior to the Fall, while the text in Deuteronomy is concessionary and makes provision for human weakness (Moloney 2002:194): Jesus feels free to provide fresh interpretations of the scriptures that challenge his society and reveal the will of God to which the Torah witnesses (Hooker 1991:234): even his interpretation of the text in Deuteronomy is

not the obvious way in which to understand the text which is very patriarchal in nature and does not really consider the wife's interests at all. "Hardness of heart" is not an issue in the text of Deuteronomy. Jesus' way of interpreting scripture was novel. The rabbis would have upheld both texts and smoothed over the contradictions.⁹

- In Mark 10:11-12 the way Jesus' words are reported is quite radical: husband and wife are equally responsible for upholding the marriage union and can commit adultery against each other. It is important to realise that it was not widely accepted that a woman could be a victim of adultery. Matthew's omission of the words "against her" reflects the situation in Jewish culture where only a man could be victim of adultery. A man could "commit adultery against another married man but not against his own wife" (Taylor, cited in Myers 1988:266).
- In the Jewish context of Matthew's community a woman could not divorce her husband, but in the broader Greco-Roman context it was possible for a woman to initiate divorce and this explains the presence of v.12 in Mark's gospel (Hooker 1991:237). Mark raises the issue only to dismiss it: neither husband nor wife should divorce and remarry. In Mark's gospel, Jesus does not give women the right to divorce men but removes the right from men. The practical effect of this in the first-century context is likely to have been the protection of women who were usually vulnerable after divorce. Jesus, in Mark's account, affirms this in the instruction to the disciples in the house where no exception is allowed. How is one to interpret vv. 11-12? Is Jesus in private admitting that divorce does happen but that there must be no remarriage or is Jesus actually reinforcing what he said earlier? Because people who divorced usually remarried, is Jesus spelling out the consequences of this as a means of reinforcing his teaching? There was no law against divorce but there was a law against adultery and Jesus who has reinterpreted Torah shows how rejection of his interpretation leads to adultery (Moloney 2002:195). As I said earlier, this would have enhanced the security to the women in this culture.
- The strong reaction of the disciples in Matthew's gospel shows the counter-cultural nature of Jesus' teaching and the extent to

⁹ Matthew is more logical than Mark in his use of language: in his account the Pharisees refer to Moses' command while Jesus refers to Moses' merely allowing divorce.

which it restricted the freedom of the men. In his reply, Jesus compares his disciples who do not marry or do not remarry after divorce to eunuchs. Strict Jews believed that wholeness was essential to holiness and for them being a eunuch would be a most undesirable, unnatural and marginalised state.

What both texts have in common is a very high view of marriage and strong opposition to divorce, particularly in Mark's account where no exception is permitted.¹⁰ At the same time, we have observed aspects of Jesus' teaching that call into question some of the common cultural and religious assumptions of the time and which indicate a concern for the situation of the woman in marriage and divorce.

On the Text

A narrative or literary approach can also provide interesting insights into the text. In adopting a literary approach, questions of character are important—the character of Jesus, the Pharisees, the disciples and God. Also relevant are questions of setting and time: it is significant that Jesus has crossed the Jordan and is going to the region of Judea on his way to Jerusalem to complete his ministry of establishing the kingdom.

It is no accident that the pericope occurs in the context of the approaching kingdom. From our knowledge of form criticism we can conclude that the stories of Jesus (with the exception of the Passion story) probably circulated as independent oral units. If this is the case, Mark has been responsible for the way in which the gospel has been put together and presumably he had valid reasons for putting the pericope where he did. The teaching on divorce occurs after the second passion prediction where Jesus is teaching his disciples about the nature of discipleship: discipleship is meant to affect every aspect of how they live their lives. While much of this teaching is done in private, some is done publicly (the three pericopes involving divorce, children and the rich young ruler). In this section of Mark's gospel (Mark 8:22-10:52, the so-called "hinge section" *cf.* Nickle 2001:86) Jesus shows the disciples the values of the kingdom as they

¹⁰ The intent of the texts is clear. The fact that there is a Q version of the saying against divorce (Matt. 5:32 = Luke 16:18) supports the idea that this teaching goes back to Jesus himself (Hooker 1991:237) and Paul also testifies to this (1 Cor. 7:10). However Paul, recognising that marriages do break down, also asserts that in the event of divorce there should be no remarriage.

pertain to practical everyday matters: divorce, children, wealth and status. Those who follow Jesus must adhere to the values of the kingdom and not look for concessions (Hooker 1991:234). What is plain is that the kingdom radically overturns basic cultural values.

The household in the ancient world involved three relationships: husband: wife; father: children and master: slave. The household was also the basic unit in the economy. In Matthew's gospel, chapters 19 and 20 deal with divorce, the importance of children, the right use of wealth, and the parable of the labourers who are rewarded equally for their work. Just before the second passion prediction, Jesus speaks the words, "So the last will be first, and the first will be last." What we see reflected is a household that "embodies the way of the cross" and undermines patriarchal and hierarchical structures (Carter 2001:377).

There was no time for a more detailed narrative analysis of the text but the relevance of what we considered to Kerina's case was obvious: the values of the kingdom challenge and critique the values that are upheld in Kerina's church and cultural context. The advice given to Kerina results in a practical situation that is in conflict with the intention of Jesus' teaching.

Just as divorce disrupts the family, so the exclusion of women from participation in the larger human family—both in society at large and in the church—has had similar effects to divorce...

In Front of the Text

The students were also given a very interesting appropriation of the texts on divorce in an article written by Teresa Okure (1995:52-66). Okure, a Roman Catholic in a religious order, used historical-critical and socio-historical tools to work with the text and reached the conservative conclusion that Jesus was strongly opposed to divorce. As a feminist scholar reading from her own social location, she did an in front of the text reading and worked with a theological trajectory. She chose to focus on the basis for Jesus' opposition to divorce in these texts—namely the creation story in which male and female were created in the image of God and became one flesh (1995:61). She pointed out that they were created as equal partners not only in marriage, but also in the task of ruling and tending creation (1995:63). Partnership between male and female was meant to apply in the whole of life and not only in marriage. The proper ordering of society requires the full and equal participation of men and women. However, patriarchal society has in effect divorced women from their partnership in this role. Just as divorce disrupts the family, so the

exclusion of women from participation in the larger human family—both in society at large and in the church—has had similar effects to divorce: it has had a profoundly negative impact on the state of society and the church. In fact, Okure argued that, because women have been marginalised in the church and society, our social systems have become “warped” and this has in turn aggravated the breakdown of the family (1995:64). For Okure, the text has a surplus of meaning and has relevance to everyone, married or single. In reaching this interpretation she went beyond exegesis and worked with a theological trajectory—namely, that our interpretations must reflect the will and intention of God which is to give and promote life in all its fullness.

“How might these varying approaches be relevant to Kerina?” was the question posed to students. The role of Biblical Studies is to give the text a voice, and, although in the end our advice may not be based on specific texts in the Bible but on theological trajectories, it is important to be aware of the hermeneutical moves that we are making. On the one hand, it is clear that the texts teach that the will of God is the permanence of marriage: this is a teaching that must be taken very seriously in any situation. It is also clear that, regardless of the tools one is using, Jesus critiques the way that men in his culture have interpreted the scriptures in a manner that ignores the will of God and disadvantages women: the church has not always heard this critique of patriarchy or considered its implications for the present.

The role of Biblical Studies is to give the text a voice although in the end our advice may not be based on specific texts in the Bible but on theological trajectories

The texts show us what life should be like. Although there is mention of human failure, the texts are not very sympathetic to it. They do not really make much allowance for the fact that God’s kingdom is not fully established in the present. If one were to adhere very strictly to these texts, men and women could find themselves trapped in very imperfect relationships and, if divorced, denied the opportunity of future meaningful relationships (Carter 2000:381). As a result, if a pastor reluctantly acknowledges that a marriage is beyond repair and remarries those who have divorced, it will have to be on the basis of other theological trajectories in the biblical texts: “mercy, love, forgiveness and the giving of new life. These dimensions of God’s empire surely create a third option in which God’s empire might be manifested in new relationships, where the past is mercifully forgiven, and a loving and life-giving future is possible” (Carter 2000:382).

Analysis of the texts has shown that there are more life-giving ways of working with the texts. Of course, whether Kerina's church would be open to such options is another story.

Conclusion

This was the first time that I had ever used a case study as a basis for constructing a module and I was struck by how this method engaged the interest of the students. The feedback from the students was positive and some of them indicated that they had found the tri-polar approach very useful and that they were planning to use it in their research projects. I think that they also benefited from the realisation of how much information can be gleaned from a close and careful reading of a text and how even the traditional historical-critical tools have resources for bringing the text into dialogue with the context of the case study. However, the answers to the take-home examination (based on another case study) were somewhat inadequate and suggested that many students (particularly those who had come from contexts where they had not been exposed to a critical reading of the Bible) still needed much more time to process and apply the material covered.

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* Indicates prescribed reading for students in the course.

AFRICAN THEOLOGICAL PEDAGOGY IN THE LIGHT OF A CASE STUDY ON GENDERED VIOLENCE

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Introduction

The purpose of this essay is to argue that within the strands/streams of African Theology there are resources which can be used to critique gender-based violence as reflected in the case study of Kerina,¹ which is used in the teaching/learning of the 'Theory and Method in Religion and Theology RELG702' core module offered to postgraduate students in the School of Religion and Theology at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. It will also be argued in this essay that there are some strands/streams of African Theology which can be used to bring transformation that is life-affirming to the family of Kerina.

As shown in the introduction to this volume, Kerina is a South African Indian woman who is married to Peter. They live in a small townhouse in a historically impoverished South African Indian neighbourhood with Kerina, her mother and their two children. The house belongs to Kerina's mother. Kerina has a job in a shoe factory but her husband Peter is mostly out of work. Peter is abusive to his wife, often leaving her with physical injuries. Kerina's sister encourages her to leave her abusive husband. Their pastor and church elder visits the home and uses the Bible to convince Kerina to remain with her husband. Kerina's mother uses culture to make Kerina accept the abuse and work hard to be a 'good' wife. More physical abuse follows after the pastor's discussion with the family.

From the outset, this essay acknowledges that within Christian theology, African Theology has been treated as operating from the margins of the academic theological discourse. As has been observed by Tinyiko Maluleke (1998:17), until recently, there have been very few South African

¹ The full story which we used as a case study appears in the Editorial to this volume.

theological departments/schools that offer African Theology despite the fact that the majority of students come from a Christian and African context. In addition, with the demographic decline of Christianity in North America and Europe and the increase of Christians in the Global South there has been a concomitant rise in theological voices coming from the South. African Theology is one such voice.² Nevertheless, John Parratt is of the opinion that “despite the shift of Christianity from the North to the South, the North does not take seriously the theologies of the South. Theological voices from the South are treated as exotic: irrelevant to the real task of theology” (2004:2). This attitude may account for the lack of the inclusion of African Theology in the theological curriculum of most of the former white South African universities and seminaries. Notwithstanding this, Parratt is correct in arguing that:

All theology is ultimately ‘contextual,’ that is, it arises from a specific historical context and it addresses that context. The questions which it asks, and the answers it seeks to give, are determined by its specific historical situation” (2004:2-3).

It is based on this understanding that the African Theology programme has participated in the module on Theory and Method offered to the honours (masters) students in the School of Religion and Theology at the University of KwaZulu-Natal. Before analysing the strands/streams of African Theology that speak to the case study of Kerina, it is important to put the programme of African Theology in the School within its historical context.

The Historical Context of the African Theology Programme

The history of the African Theology programme at postgraduate level goes back to 1998 when the School of Theology was established on the Pietermaritzburg site. The school needs to be commended for its intentional focus on church and theology in Africa, and not just South Africa, which was influenced by the type of students that the school enrolled.³ This led to the school’s intentional mainstreaming of Africanisation in all its disciplines through the course content and bibliography. Africanisation was

² Initially African Theology arose as a desire by African theologians to retrieve the positive aspects of the African religion and culture as they dialogue with the Christian faith. It was about issues of identity within the Christian context and original religions.

³ According to Thomas Groome (1998), what we teach and how we teach should be influenced by our mission call to teach, what is taking place in society, and how people learn.

also reflected in: staff research and publications; giving preference to the employment of African academic staff; and promoting exchange programmes of staff and students with other African theological institutions.⁴

With particular reference to Africanisation, in the area of the curriculum, besides the mainstreaming of Africanisation in all disciplines of theology, a need was felt to offer a more focussed course in African Theology. At undergraduate level, 'African Theology ST 330' was introduced in the second semester as an elective. This module is currently being offered to Systematic Theology and Practical Theology students. While this is commendable, there is still a very high possibility of students graduating from the school who have not chosen to study African Theology as a focused area. Notwithstanding the school's own emphasis on intentionally mainstreaming Africanisation, one could argue strongly for the study of African Theology as a core module at an undergraduate level.

Initially at postgraduate level there were two related programmes, namely: the African Theology programme and the African Christianity programme. The major difference between the two programmes was that the latter was offered by the School of Theology in association with The Africa Theological Fellowship based in Ghana, headed by Professor Kwame Bediako; while the former was offered to those students who registered directly with the school. A critical analysis of the two programmes revealed their similarity in content, thereby leading in 2007 to them being merged together into one programme called 'The African Theology Programme.'

The small number of students that enrolled in the programme led to a partnership of the following programmes: Gender and Religion, African Theology and Systematic Theology core modules. This partnership is reflected in the team teaching/learning of a core module on 'Theology in the African Context,' which brings together African Theology, African Women's Theology and Systematic Theology. This requires examining the Western categories of Christian theology with African and gendered lenses. It is this combination that is brought to the fore in the teaching/learning through the Kerina case study in the 'Theory and Method in Religion and Theology RELG702' module.

⁴ See the School of Religion and Theology Review Report (2007:5).

African Theology as Transformative Pedagogy

Since African Theology belongs to the family of Two-Thirds World⁵ theologies of liberation, it promotes education for transformation. Within the African context, liberation is understood differently from that of Latin America. In Africa, it is redefined to take in culture and religious pluralism alongside social, political analysis and gender relations (Parratt 2004:9). This explains why African Theology takes a multi-disciplinary perspective aimed at making a contribution to wholeness in dealing with the different aspects of human development as will be shown later when examining the strands/streams of African Theology. It therefore requires many tools with different approaches to make transformation happen in the teaching/learning process. As part of a transformative pedagogy, “it should promote the ability to develop a critical competence to analyse the social and political context and enable life affirming praxis” (Schreiner et al. 2005:20).⁶

African Theology takes a multi-disciplinary perspective aimed at making a contribution to wholeness in dealing with the different aspects of human development

Accordingly, one of the outcomes of the section of African Theology in the ‘Theory and Method in Religion and Theology RELG702’ module is to foreground context as the central task of theology. Two power-point slides were used to identify the people in Kerina’s story and the context in which they were operating. What followed was a question whether African Theology qualifies to speak to Kerina’s context. To discuss this, students were placed into buzz groups. By way of preparation beforehand, each student was assigned readings by John Mbiti (1998:141-157) and Tinyiko Maluleke (1997:4-23), where African Theology is defined and the different strands of African Theology are defined, identified and critically analysed. In both readings, the difference between African Theology as a study of the

⁵ In this paper I prefer to use ‘Two-Thirds World’ than ‘Third World’ in order to highlight that ‘Third World’ is a contested term, particularly by the majority of theological scholars who originate from the Global South. It aims to reject the assumption that the First World is the normal standard by which the rest of the world is judged.

⁶ Here, I have taken what is used to refer to holistic education to apply to the teaching/learning case of African Theology. For an explication of the nine principles of holistic Education see Schreiner et al. (2005:20).

indigenous African religion and African Christian theology is made.⁷ In John Mbiti's definition, he has argued that:

African Theology is the articulation of the Christian faith by African Christians: both theologians and lay people. Christians ask themselves what their faith means and try to explain or simply live it within the context of their history, culture and contemporary issues (1998:144).

In the process of discussing the African context through the categories of history, culture and contemporary issues, the students came to an agreement that although Kerina and her family are South African Indians, their lives had been shaped by the African experience and the oppression and racial discrimination under apartheid. The students also identified some similarities between South African Indian culture and African culture in the context of marriage relationships and values. Likewise, African Theology was able to bind Black and South African Indian communities together, both of whom had suffered under the atrocities of apartheid. In addition, as Mary Elizabeth Moore (1998) has rightly maintained, there is value in paying attention to the ordinary realities that are often ignored in the construction of social theories, such as the life experiences of the working classes and women in their private sphere as revealed by the story of Kerina. This is confirmed by Parratt who has pointed out that "context is both the framework and part of the source material for doing theology" (2004:3). In the case of the context of African Theology therefore, we need to examine the impact of colonialism, western missionary demonization of African culture and religion, religious pluralism, social, political and economic challenges such as political independency, military coups, civil wars, dictatorial regimes, abuse of human rights, natural disasters, epidemics, patriarchy and classism.

⁷ For the scholarly debate on the difference between African Theology as the study of African Indigenous Religion and African Christian theology, see the works of the following scholars: Zablun Nthamburi (1991), where he argues that in strict terms, African Theology is the theology of the African traditional religion. This also means the theology that comes from the traditional reflection on existence of African peoples and their beliefs. Jesse Mugambi (1989:9) agrees with Nthamburi by arguing that African Theology as a term refers to the 'discourse' which Africans conducted among themselves before their contact with and influence by Christians and Muslims.

Another value outcome of the module is to acknowledge the place of difference in doing theology and promoting dialogue. The inclusion of learning from the life-experiences of the students themselves promotes multiple ways of knowledge, all of which have to be taken seriously when theologising. Within the huge African context, one has to choose the appropriate strand/stream to use for analysing Kerina's story and appreciate the reasons behind the choice. Mbiti has identified the following strands/streams of African Theology: oral theology, symbolic theology and written theology. He has broken down written theology into further strands as follows: Cultural Theology, Black Theology, Liberation Theology, African Women's Theologies, Postcolonial Theology and Reconstruction Theology (1998:146-154).⁸ Maluleke has expanded the list to include: Theologies of the AICs, African Charismatic/Evangelical Theologies, and Translation Theologies (1997:17-23).⁹ Each of these strands/streams was well-defined by the authors and critically analysed in class by the lecturer and students.

In the words of Peter McLaren, the aim of promoting a critical discourse in the teaching and learning experience of African Theology is to bring out "different ways of articulating one's identity from the perspective of social class, gender, race and sexual preference, and in terms of developing a language of meaning as teachers and students address together the issues and struggles of critique and possibility. Issues of power and identity construction receive productive consideration in a language of the self and the other, acknowledging and accommodating differences with the hope of transforming society" (Schreiner et al. 2005:157). Finally, critical analysis was done through group discussion work, students being asked to identify a suitable strand(s) that could be used as tools for analysis in the Kerina case study.

In the sections which follow, I will focus on the two most popular strands chosen by the students—African Women's Theologies and the Theologies of Reconstruction—and their reasons for choosing these as appropriate tools for analysing the Kerina case study within the discipline of African Theology.

⁸ Whereas, Mbiti has made a difference between streams of African Theology and issues, I have here identified the issues as streams within written theology.

⁹ Maluleke has identified the streams as emerging agendas.

The Strand of African Women's Theologies

From the outset, it is important to acknowledge that African Women's Theologies¹⁰ have many strands, hence, the use of 'theologies' and not 'theology' within its title. As explained by Christina Landman (1998:137), this is not a weakness but an ability to be inclusive, which is an important value in theologies that belong to the liberation family. When African Women's Theologies are approached through the theoretical framework of African Theology, it shares the same sources for doing theology. These include: African primal religion and culture (including the use of proverbs, metaphors, riddles, myths, songs and folktales); the Bible; Christian tradition; African social, economic and political history and experience; the history of the missionary enterprise in Africa; the African Instituted churches and African pluralism.

African women theologians use the global feminist theories that identify patriarchy as a cause of women's oppression and apply them to analyse all the sources of African Theology

Additionally, African Women's Theologies share with global feminist theology the highlighting of women's experience of self, God, community and nature as its starting point. It is this experience that African women bring to the sources of African Theology. Furthermore, African women theologians use the global feminist theories that identify patriarchy as a cause of women's oppression and apply them to analyse all the sources of African Theology. By so-doing, it treats all the sources of African Theology with suspicion because of their potential to accommodate patriarchy. It emphasises the need for liberation of African women from the multiple oppressions of sexism, classism, racism, colonialism, and imperialism. While African women theologians share with African male theologians all the other forms of oppression, it is the oppression from sexism which is unique to women's experience.

African Women's Theologies also proposes the use of Feminist cultural hermeneutics as a tool of analysis to specifically critique culture, which has a huge hold on African women's lives as most of their oppression is explained away as either cultural belief or practice. By using this tool, it acknowledges those positive elements in African culture which give all Africans their identity as Africans. Identity is important because it gives people their grounding and a sense of self-worth which is important for people's wellbeing. Feminist cultural hermeneutics also acknowledges the

¹⁰ For a full discussion of the different features of African Women's Theologies, see Phiri and Nadar (2006).

existence of a 'Bible culture,' which has many things in common with African traditional culture. It goes further to acknowledge the existence of Western culture in Africa, which came with Western civilisation. What all these cultures have in common is the presence of patriarchy, which treats women as minors and therefore leads to structured systems that undermine the full humanity of women. African feminist cultural hermeneutics rejects all the cultural beliefs and practices in their hybrid nature that dehumanises women.

As described by Musimbi R. A. Kanyoro (2001:163), African feminist cultural hermeneutics asks: Why are we upholding a particular cultural belief and practice and who is benefiting from it? Using this tool of analysis has given African women scholars the power to reject all those cultural beliefs and practices that deny women and children their full humanity. At the same time, this tool affords African women scholars and students the ability to identify life-affirming cultural and religious beliefs and practices that need to be embraced. By so-doing, women read the Bible in dialogue with their own cultural understandings and become critical of the intersections between them. According to Maluleke (1997:14-15), this should not only be a tool for African women scholars, but all academic scholars of African Theology. Maluleke warns African male theologians about the dangers of accepting the Bible as if there are no ideologies of oppression within it. He promotes critical Biblical hermeneutics for all African theologians who use the Bible as their source.¹¹

In relation to the case study of Kerina, African feminist cultural hermeneutics afforded the students an opportunity to use critical pedagogy¹² to question and challenge domination, and the beliefs and practices that support domination in the life of Kerina. This allowed the students to question the dominant ideology of patriarchy as propagated by culture and the Bible which were accepted as norm by Kerina's pastor, husband and mother. The appeal to culture by Kerina's mother was seen by the students as a weapon to keep Kerina in an oppressive marriage relationship. African feminist cultural hermeneutics and a critical pedagogy allowed the students to reject such use of culture. Similarly, her pastor's

¹¹ It should be noted here that there are a growing number of voices coming from African male theologians who are critical of African culture in its relation to the way women are constructed *cf.* Maimela (1985); Nyamiti (1997).

¹² Critical pedagogy is a teaching method which attempts to help students question and challenge domination as well as the beliefs and practices that support domination. See Schreiner et al. (2005:155).

use of the Bible to keep her in an oppressive marriage relationship was rejected and labelled by the students as spiritual violence against Kerina. In this regard, the Pietermaritzburg Agency for Social Awareness (PACSA) Fact Sheet #45 has defined spiritual violence in the following way:

Spiritual violence happens when a woman's faith is used to keep her from finding help or leaving an abusive situation, by telling her that she must endure, submit, return and make sure she doesn't do anything to upset her husband, etc. She is led to believe that the abuse is her fault, and that if she seeks to leave, she is unchristian, and will be condemned by God. The Bible is quoted to her literally and out of context, particularly passages that serve to 'put her in her place,' condemn divorce, or glorify suffering.¹³

African feminist cultural hermeneutics assisted the students to take note of how African Women's Theologies view marriage as a negotiable space that should promote mutuality and respect and be life affirming

African women's theological perceptions of African marriage were brought to the fore. The centrality and different forms of African marriages was acknowledged. The use of African feminist cultural hermeneutics assisted the students to take note of how African Women's Theologies view marriage as a negotiable space that should promote mutuality and respect and be life affirming. Anything less was rejected as not being from God because God sides with those who are oppressed and weak in society. As a result, African Women's Theologies do not condone gender violence in any form because it denies the affected persons' right to the fullness of life. Accordingly, by using the theories of African feminist hermeneutics, Kerina would be encouraged to reject any advice that subjects her to any form of oppression.

The Strand of Reconstruction Theology

While feminist cultural hermeneutics equipped Kerina with tools to transform her marriage, some students argued that it did not offer a theology of reconstruction for her entire household if she chose to remain married. It was for this reason that some students opted for the Theology of Reconstruction as an addition to African Women's Theologies. The Theology of Reconstruction is associated with the work of Jesse Mugambi

¹³ See also Phiri (2000; 2002).

(1995) and Charles Villa-Vicencio (1992). Presented in the 1990s as a solution to the shift in the political arena, their argument was that since all African states are now politically independent, the political and religious reasons for having liberation and inculturation theologies in Africa lies in the past. Mugambi thus proposed a move to reconstruction as a new paradigm for doing African Christian theology. From a Biblical perspective, this also meant a change from using the metaphor of the Exodus (liberation from oppression in Egypt) to reconstruction based on post-exilic imagery. Mugambi argues that:

The twenty-first century should be a century of reconstruction in Africa, building on old foundations which, though strong, may have to be renovated (1995:5).

For Mugambi, reconstruction should take place on three levels. The first level is personal reconstruction. He sees this as social construction at an individual level, requiring Africans to get an appropriate education that develops critical thinking and the ability to engage in fruitful dialogue with Western education and religions. The second level is cultural reconstruction which involves reforms and renewal in politics, economics, ethics, aesthetics and religion. The third level is ecclesial reconstruction. In this area Mugambi sees the need for renewal and reform at every level of the church. He affirms the leadership of the clergy and laity, the youth and women with appropriate education that honours African heritage. In order for this to take place, Mugambi argues for the importance of the church in Africa to be united:

In the 1990s and beyond, African Christian Theology (including Catholic, ecumenical and evangelical strands) should have a reconstructive function, comparable to the role of Protestant Theology during the European Reformation and Renaissance; Africa deserves to celebrate its own Reformation and its own Renaissance. The churches should be the catalysts of this process, as they were in Europe after the medieval period (1995:xiv).

He goes on to add that:

The theologian, at best, should be a catalyst—a facilitator—who makes it possible for the church to adjust itself to the new social demands of the society to which its members belong (1995:205).

Finally, Mugambi states that:

New language will be needed for the new world order...The new world order will require a new understanding of the church and a corresponding theology. This theology should be reconstructive rather than destructive; inclusive rather than exclusive; proactive rather than reactive; complementary rather than competitive; integrative rather than disintegrative; programme driven rather than project driven; people-centred rather than institution-centred; deed oriented rather than word-oriented; participatory rather than autocratic; regenerative rather than degenerative, future sensitive rather than past sensitive; co-operative rather than confrontational; consultative rather than oppositional (1995:xv).

In all these areas, when priorities change for the good of the people, theology has to be readjusted to speak to the changes.

While there are many African theologians who have either expanded or critiqued the work of Mugambi¹⁴ this is not our purpose here. What remains important is that the students saw that all the members of Kerina's family needed to go through all three categories of reconstruction. Firstly, a personal reconstruction that promotes the dignity of each person so that they can value themselves and the other. Secondly, a cultural reconstruction which includes South Africa developing economically to the extent that each member of Kerina's household would have access to decent employment and therefore no longer have to struggle with the painful realities of poverty.¹⁵ Thirdly, at an ecclesial level, the pastor should receive appropriate theological education that would make him sensitive to the humanity of all people. Through the Theology of Reconstruction, the students were looking for church-led changes that had implications for transforming structures in both the church and society.¹⁶

¹⁴ Instead, see Farisani (2003); Gathogo (2008); Katongole (2005); Maluleke (1996c).

¹⁵ The violence in the home was interpreted as an offshoot of poverty, although the students also showed awareness that gender violence is not only the plight of the poor. Nevertheless, poverty was identified as having a contributory aspect to gender violence.

¹⁶ While the intentions are good, whether the church of today has such powers as proposed by Mugambi is what Mugambi's critics question.

In the case of African Theology, liberation is understood in a very broad sense, which is different from the way it is used in Latin America

Conclusion

This essay has sought to show that multiple teaching methods are an appropriate means of developing the ability of students towards critical thinking and analysis. Furthermore, African Theology, as a sub-set of Liberation Theology with its many strands/streams, has the capacity to engage with a case study of gender violence. In the case of African Theology, liberation is understood in a very broad sense, which is different from the way it is used in Latin America. Using a combination of African feminist cultural hermeneutics within African Women's Theologies and the Theology of Reconstruction, an attempt was made to show how these individual strands of African Theology contribute positively to find a solution for Kerina and her family. While the students chose to use the Theology of Reconstruction in a creative way to restructure the lives of members of Kerina's family, Mugambi's general interpretative outline revealed that it was not overt in its engagement with patriarchy. The students' ability to identify the deficiencies in the Theology of Reconstruction and therefore use it in combination with African women's theologies in the way they did ably demonstrated that critical pedagogy was achieved.

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**KERINA AS BOTH CITIZEN AND CHRISTIAN:
TEACHING PASTORS WHY THE GOSPEL NEEDS
THE LAW IN OUR PUBLIC LIFE**

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Theology Speaking to the Public Square

An important section in the post-graduate module that is being examined in this issue of the *Journal of Constructive Theology* concerns introducing the students to the insights of Public Theology. Traditionally, this has been understood as theology finding a way to express the concerns of the Christian faith within the public arena.¹ However, in this case study² we are confronted by the fact that the public arena, in the form of policy and law, is ahead of the church in terms of wanting to affirm and protect life. The pedagogical aim of this part of the module is therefore to introduce students to the fact that the dialogue between the public sphere and Christian theology is a two-way process, and it is necessarily an interdisciplinary task. To address matters in the public realm thus requires pastors to acquire a range of non-theological skills in order to be better pastors.

In an article in the *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa*, entitled, "Some Comments on Public Theology Today" (Koopman 2003), Nico Koopman, Director of the Beyers Naude Centre for Public Theology at Stellenbosch University, has provided a helpful introduction to and

¹ Here, it is important to note that a great many South African theologians are engaged in Public Theology, even if they do not technically call it this. Thus, alongside this section of the module, students are pointed to the works of James Cochrane, Tinyiko Maluleke, Isabel Phiri, Dirk Smit, Denise Ackerman, Charles Villa-Vicencio, Ernst Conradie, Nico Koopman, etc., as illustrating what public theology seeks to do and how it goes about doing it.

² The full story which we used as a case study appears in the Editorial to this volume.

overview of the concept of Public Theology. Koopman's article is the required reading for this section in the course, and so the first section of this essay draws on his material to indicate how the discussion proceeds in dialogue with the Kerina story. The discipline of Public Theology serves to remind us that theological reflection is not confined to the private sphere, for as Duncan Forrester the doyen of Public Theology puts it, "theology in principle is concerned with the wholeness of life as a consequence of belief in the universal lordship of Jesus Christ" (1989:12). Thus, as Ronald Thiemann notes, Public Theology "is faith seeking to understand the relation between Christian convictions and the broader social and cultural context in which the Christian community lives" (1991:21).

Koopman himself enlarges the idea of Public Theology by pointing to the importance of what he calls the public church:

In these various forms the church engages in the task of Public Theology. The confessional, polemical, apologetic, ecumenical—in the sense of including dialogue and cooperation with other religious and nonreligious traditions—and critical correlational approaches can also be identified in these understandings of the public church (2003:8).

...the fundamental task of Public Theology is to express Christian vision, ideas, convictions, values, or concerns to the world, in ways that the world will be able to understand and to engage

What emerges here is the idea that the fundamental task of Public Theology is to express Christian vision, ideas, convictions, values, or concerns to the world, in ways that the world will be able to understand and to engage. This is captured by Max Stackhouse when he suggests that Public Theology is "a way of speaking about the reality of God and God's will for the world that is intellectually valid in the marketplace of ideas, and morally effective in the marketplace of goods and services" (1995:251).

It is in this vein that James Gustafson's four varieties of moral discourse also stands. Gustafson (1988) speaks of (i) *the prophetic* which provides both an indictment of society and shares a utopian vision of what may be possible; (ii) *narrative*, in which stories are told of key events and heroes so as to sustain a common memory, and to shape consciences and moral identity; (iii) *ethical/technical*, in which one uses logic and precision to make the moral positions of the faith rationally accessible to non-believers; and finally (iv) the language of *policy making*, in which Christian moral

concerns are ‘translated’ into the language of the policy and decision makers in society. To be noted is that all four of these varieties of moral discourse follow the basic presupposition that the church has something to teach the world.

Having introduced the students to this basic concern of Public Theology, the class then reflects on the fact that most Public Theology proceeds along the lines of “a sermon at the taxi rank.” It feels just like another way of Christians telling the world what is right and what is wrong—albeit in modern ‘secular’ language. Here the engagement with the Kerina story begins to open up a more dialogical understanding of Public Theology. For in this story we are confronted with the fact that Scripture, or at least the way Scripture is used by the church, is in no position to ‘offer a critique of public life,’ or to ‘test the validity of the expression and institutions’ of public life’ (Adams 2002:34). It is not in a position to speak in any of the four varieties of moral discourse suggested by Gustafson. Rather, it stands rightly judged by public life and its institutions. In this case study we are confronted by the fact that a woman who is a survivor of domestic violence finds no salvation in the gospel and its purveyors. She experiences further abuse and violence. Contrary to the Apostle Paul’s bold assertion that “You who want to be justified by the law have cut yourselves off from Christ; you have fallen away from grace” (Gal. 5:4 NRSV), students come to learn that it is in fact the law of the land that wants to ‘save’ Kerina, and it is the church and its pastors who—in the name of Christ—push her away from the experience of grace.

This significant ambiguity suggests that Public Theology has to be more than just the (righteous) church trying to speak the gospel into the (unrighteous) public square. Such theology must involve a dialectic in which the church also learns to understand the fullness of God’s good news from those outside the church, those who live and work in the public square. This aspect of Public Theology is thankfully not absent from some of the definitions which suggest a more dialogical approach. This is hinted at in Koopman’s ecumenical and critical correlational approaches in the quotation above. Linell Cady (1991) picks this up when speaking of the two-fold task of Public Theology. Whilst the second task is similar to the views noted above, namely, to “contribute to the up-building and the critical transformation of our public life,” the first task is more self-critical: to “sustain, interpret, critique and reform a particular religious worldview and its concomitant way of life” (1991:119).

In this module, and using this case study about the physical, emotional and spiritual abuse endured by Kerina at the hands of her family and her

church, it is this second aspect that is important for students to come to understand. Here they are introduced to the importance of inter-disciplinary dialogue, and to the fact that the engagement with the world outside the church can and should involve moments of critique and impulses to reform both our 'Christian' worldview and our 'Christian' way of life as Cady suggests. This is a vital aspect of theological education in our society today. For the natural tendency of both Christian students and teachers is to assume that our understanding of the gospel is a truth that must of necessity be thrust upon the public sphere whether they like it or not. One has only to watch the ways in which the Marriage Alliance of South Africa attempted to halt the Civil Unions Act to see a good example of this kind of (bad) Public Theology.³ There is an arrogance here born of an unwillingness to learn from the wisdom of those outside the church. Teaching Public Theology has to confront this arrogance.

The loss of a Christian voice in the public arena is not usually because the world is disinterested in what Christians have to say and contribute; but rather the world gets fed up with the arrogance of the assumed correctness of the Christian voice...

Given the argument above, by making use of a case study on domestic violence in which the church and her pastors are seen to be at fault, this module affirms the more open-ended definition of Public Theology offered by Robert Benne:

Public theology, I think, refers to the engagement of a living religious tradition with its public environment—the economic, political, and cultural spheres of our common life (1995:4).

This definition does not suggest the primacy of the Christian voice but rather appreciates the dialogical engagement and inter-disciplinary nature of the task of Public Theology. We should not underestimate this point in training pastors and theologians.

The loss of a Christian voice in the public arena is not usually because the world is disinterested in what Christians have to say and contribute; but rather the world gets fed up with the arrogance of the assumed correctness of the Christian voice because of its privileged reliance on a source of information that is beyond public scrutiny (the Christian Scriptures). It is what I call the 'epistemological privilege of the ordained,' namely that because pastors and theologians assume that they have access to divinely

³ For a good analysis of this, see Sistig (2009).

inspired knowledge in a holy book, they simply ‘know’ things. Yet a whole list of contemporary issues would suggest that this is not the case, and that the church has much to learn by first listening to the wisdom that comes from others: abortion, capital punishment, school discipline, same-sex relationships, domestic violence, rape, climate change, food security, safe water, condoms, crime, legalising prostitution, and the like. My own work in Theology and Development has alerted me to this, for as the church begins to engage the public realm of development it has to arrive as a student rather than as a teacher. It cannot begin to speak without first learning to listen.⁴

Let me be clear. It is not that the church does not have something significant to contribute to these issues; the point is that it must do so on the basis of a considered understanding of the issue. Here we must learn again the truth that the giants of Christian theology knew:

- Thomas Aquinas: “An error about the world redounds in error about God.”⁵
- John Calvin: “Without knowledge of self there is no knowledge of God.”⁶
- Karl Barth: “Theology must be done with the Bible in one hand and the newspaper in the other.”⁷

To take seriously the world and one’s self, to fully understand what is in the newspaper, requires a respectful dialogue with the social sciences, humanities, jurisprudence, public health, the sciences, and the like.⁸ Awareness of this respectful dialogue is the first important ‘learning outcome’ when teaching Public Theology.

⁴ See de Gruchy (2003). Here, I spend time trying first to understand some key contemporary themes in development *before* speaking theologically.

⁵ *Summa contra Gentiles* II, 3.

⁶ First sub-clause of the *Christian Institutes* (Book I, 1.1.).

⁷ An aphorism that appears in a myriad of sources.

⁸ For the use of ‘respectful dialogue’ I am here drawing on a key learning of five years of work on the African Religious Health Assets Programme which has sought to align the ‘health assets’ held by the religious communities, with public health policy. See the ARHAP Website: <<http://www.arhap.uct.ac.za/>> and in particular, the Report for the World Health Organisation (ARHAP 2006).

Appreciating Inter-disciplinarity: Kerina as Both Citizen and Christian

In searching for a framework to assist students to grasp the importance of inter-disciplinary work and to relate it to theological reflection in the Theology and Development programme, I am drawn to the methodological insights of Latin American liberation theology. I have seen that this is also helpful in this class dealing with domestic violence. What made this a ‘new way of doing theology,’ was precisely the attention given to understanding the world *prior* to speaking theologically about it. For the purposes of the module, and for this essay, there is no need here to journey down the long and winding road of the debate within liberation theology over theological methodology, but rather to engage with the consensus outcome as captured by the brothers Leonardo and Clodovis Boff in their little book, *Introducing Liberation Theology* (1983) and particularly chapter 3: ‘How liberation theology is done.’ Understanding this method is the second learning outcome for this part of the module. Here the Boff’s point to four key elements in the method of liberation theology:

1. The preliminary stage: living commitment
2. Socio-analytical mediation
3. Hermeneutical mediation
4. Practical mediation

Following the preliminary stage, which involves a faith commitment to participate in the movement of liberation in society, the next three steps follow the familiar See-Judge-Act method of Christian social engagement. The preliminary stage is important, however, because it is a reminder that Public Theology does not find its driving energy in the corridors of the academy or the nave of the cathedral, but in the practical engagement of Christians in the social struggles of the world. As we work with students around this case study at the heart of the course, we have to speak again and again of the importance of reflecting theologically out of the real life experience of Kerina, as one who is marginalised and abused. “This pre-theological stage really means conversion of life, and this involves a ‘class conversion,’ in the sense of leading to effective solidarity with the oppressed and their liberation” (Boff and Boff 1983:23). Unless students make that pre-theological faith commitment to try to read the gospel from the perspective of Kerina rather than from the perspective of her husband or the church leaders, it is very difficult to move comfortably into the next phases of analytical and theological reflection.

When we do move into the next phase, socio-analytical mediation, we meet up with the ‘epistemological break’ promoted by liberation theology, namely the need for what the Boffs’ call, ‘socio-analytical mediation.’ It was here that the Liberation theologians spoke of reading the signs of the times, with reference to Jesus’ words in the gospels: “You hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of earth and sky, but why do you not know how to interpret the present time? And why do you not judge for yourselves what is right?” (Luke 12:56, 57 NRSV). With his focus specifically on the political sphere of public life, José Miguez Bonino articulates what it means to interpret the signs of the times:

A positive response to our question seems to require the recognition of social analysis as a constitutive moment in theological reflection on politics. It is ‘constitutive’ for theology because theology has no other way of ‘knowing’ the real or the political except through such analysis; theology has no direct access to the political subject matter. It is only a ‘moment’ in theology, however, because the ‘subject matter’ to be investigated has to be focused theologically, that is, seen as a theological problem in terms that are appropriate to the theological discipline (1983:45).

Given the thrust of this paper so far, this recognition of ‘social analysis as a constitutive moment in theological reflection’ is at the heart of what the section on Public Theology seeks to teach students. Aquinas and Calvin remind us that understanding the world and ourselves is deeply related to understanding God. This means that all theology involves statements and claims about the world we are living in. Thus, if a student is going to engage in any kind of theological reflection on ‘something’ then that ‘something’ has to be identified, examined and analysed. To be able to share the gospel in the context of Kerina’s abuse requires an understanding of domestic violence that is informed by the social sciences, and that draws from disciplines such as sociology, economics, philosophy, jurisprudence and/or anthropology.

To know the real world of the oppressed is a (material) part of the overall theological process. Though not the whole process in itself, it is an indispensable stage or mediation in the development of further and deeper understanding, the knowledge of faith itself (Boff and Boff, 1983:25).

Interestingly enough, this was the primary criticism of ‘Church Theology’ in the *Kairos Document*, released in South Africa in 1985 at the height of the struggle against apartheid. Having asked, What is behind the mistakes

and misunderstandings and inadequacies of this theology?, the document goes on to offer this answer:

In the first place we can point to a lack of social analysis...Very little attempt is made to analyse what is actually happening in our society and why it is happening. It is not possible to make valid moral judgments about a society without first understanding that society...The present crisis has now made it very clear that the efforts of Church leaders to promote effective and practical ways of changing our society have failed. This failure is due in no small measure to the fact that 'Church Theology' has not developed a social analysis that would enable it to understand the mechanics of injustice and oppression (Kairos Theologians 1986:13).

Engaging in social analysis is relatively clear-cut when working in the field of development, but it is a tricky move when dealing with domestic violence. It is difficult even when drawing on the theoretical and methodological heritage of Liberation Theology because domestic violence crosses an important boundary between the private and the political, the domestic and the social. Traditionally, social and political ethics have eschewed what is going on behind closed doors, and allowed the dictates of culture and religion to shape the relationships between husband and wife, parents and children. But feminist analysis has blown this apart, and pointed to domestic relationships as a key locus for reflection on oppression and injustice.⁹ Assisting students to see the importance of dealing with the Kerina story as a story of public justice is a third crucial learning outcome for this section of the module; and at the heart of this is the recognition that Kerina is both a citizen and a Christian.

Engaging in social analysis is relatively clear-cut when working in the field of development, but it is a tricky move when dealing with domestic violence

Indeed, it is interesting to note how quickly the students want to deal with Kerina as if her primary identity has to do with her being a wife and a member of the church; in other words that her humanness is constrained by her sex, and is primarily determined by her relationship to her male husband, and her male pastor. Public theology, on the other hand, demands that Kerina be respected as a citizen of the state, a person who has rights and access to protection from the state.¹⁰ In particular, students of theology

⁹ See Nadar (2005) as well as Maluleke and Nadar (2002).

¹⁰ This is the point that is made by Muriithi (2009).

in South Africa need to familiarise themselves with the Domestic Violence Act of 1998,¹¹ so as to be aware that what is going on in Kerina's household is a criminal act, and that her family and her church leadership are colluding in a crime.

The preamble to the act allows us to understand this wider context:

RECOGNISING that domestic violence is a serious social evil; that there is a high incidence of domestic violence within South African society; that victims of domestic violence are among the most vulnerable members of society; that domestic violence takes on many forms; that acts of domestic violence may be committed in a wide range of domestic relationships; and that the remedies currently available to the victims of domestic violence have proved to be ineffective:

AND HAVING REGARD to the Constitution of South Africa, and in particular, the right to equality and to freedom and security of the person: and the international commitments and obligations of the State towards ending violence against women and children, including obligations under the United Nations Conventions on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women and the Rights of the Child;

IT IS THE PURPOSE of this Act to afford the victims of domestic violence the maximum protection from domestic abuse that the law can provide; and to introduce measures which seek to ensure that the relevant organs of state give full effect to the provisions of this Act, and thereby to convey that the State is committed to the elimination of domestic violence.

At the start of the Act (Section 1), the following definitions are provided, which are crucial to create the formal social 'space' in which theological reflection can possibly take place. Unless students have a clear and working knowledge of this social reality as to what constitutes a crime in terms of the law, then the discussion will drift into meaningless God-talk. Having a working knowledge of this law is thus a fourth learning outcome.

¹¹ The Domestic Violence Act, Act 116 of 1998. It is published in the Government Gazette 19537 of December 2, 1998. Available at <<http://www.info.gov.za/view/DownloadFileAction?id=70651/>> [Accessed March 26, 2009].

(viii) “domestic violence” means,-

- a. physical abuse;
- b. sexual abuse;
- c. emotional, verbal and psychological abuse;
- d. economic abuse;
- e. intimidation;
- f. harassment;
- g. stalking;
- h. damage to property;
- i. entry into the complainant’s residence without consent, where the parties do not share the same residence; or
- j. any other controlling or abusive behaviour towards a complainant, where such conduct harms, or may cause imminent harm to, the safety, health or wellbeing of the complainant;

The definitions then explain in more detail what is meant by “economic abuse,” “emotional, verbal and psychological abuse,” “harassment” and “intimidation.” The point that Public Theology has to make in this teaching environment, is that a clear understanding of this Act, its purpose and its definitions is crucial before students begin to think theologically about what is going on here. Theology has to respect Kerina as a citizen of the state, for whom these laws were and are intended as a protective mechanism.

Theology has to respect Kerina as a citizen of the state, for whom these laws were and are intended as a protective mechanism

Hermeneutical Mediation: Why the Gospel Needs the Law

The third step in the method of liberation theology is hermeneutical mediation. Here the resources of the faith are brought to bear on what has been discovered.

The liberation theologian goes to the scriptures bearing the whole weight of the problems, sorrows, and hopes of the poor, seeking light and inspiration from the divine world. This is a new way of reading the Bible: the hermeneutics of liberation (Boff and Boff 1983:32).

Armed with our analytical understanding of Kerina as a citizen of the state and domestic violence as a human rights issue, we are open to a new world of theological reflection. When we look at the theological commitments of Rev. Bobby Naidoo and Brother Rajen Moonsamy we see the following:

1. The Bible says that divorce is wrong.
2. The man is the head of the woman therefore she is supposed to submit to him.
3. By not cooking and doing other household chores which a wife is supposed to do for her husband she inevitably brought on the abuse, and
4. Through submission and prayer, her husband will change. She has to persevere.

It is clear that this hermeneutical mediation—like that of the Church Theology critiqued in the Kairos Document—stands judged because it is rooted in a false analysis of the objective social situation. This theology adds to the awful situation in which Kerina finds herself, and could well be counted as a form of abuse under section (j) of the Domestic Violence Act: “any other controlling or abusive behaviour towards a complainant, where such conduct harms, or may cause imminent harm to, the safety, health or wellbeing of the complainant.” If this is indeed the case, then these church leaders, by promoting this theology that provides a ‘blessing’ for what happens to Kerina, can be accused of being accessories to a crime. That is a serious matter, and one that should concern all of us.

This then is a crucial point that Public Theology allows us to appreciate, namely the centrality of life or wellbeing, over and against religious dogmatism and fundamentalism which so often contributes to dehumanisation and abuse. By bringing theological reflection into dialogue with the social sciences, jurisprudence, public health and the like, in an open-ended dialogical relationship of mutual respect rather than just a one-way process (as we have called for above) we begin to critique and reform the focus of theology, enabling it to be more responsive to the real world in ways that are liberating, humanising and life-giving. Theology is forced to give an account of itself in the public square, and to stand judged before the law. That it cannot hide behind claims of religious privacy is the fifth learning outcome of this part of the module.

Grasping this lesson through the Kerina story drives theologians and pastors-in-training to consider the *telos*, or purpose, of theology and the Christian life. Liberation theologians are clear that this *telos* is the breaking of the bonds of oppression, and the promotion of liberation. Drawing on this tradition, but aware of a wider set of dehumanising experiences such as gender violence, HIV and AIDS, and chronic food insecurity, some theologians have begun to focus on the theme of *life*. Here we are inspired by the words of Christ: “...I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly” (John 10:10 NRSV), and drawn to the words of Moses: “...I

have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Choose life so that you and your descendants may live” (Deut. 30:19 NRSV). Our biblical hermeneutics puts the Bible in service to life, rather than life in service to the Bible as John has it in his gospel: “...these are written so that you may come to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that through believing you may have life in his name” (John 20:31 NRSV).

**...Public Theology reminds us that the gospel is in service to life
and must stand in opposition to life-denying, death-dealing
theologies, ideologies and practices**

In dialogue with the social sciences that draw attention to the structures of oppression and dehumanisation, Public Theology reminds us that the gospel is in service to life and must stand in opposition to life-denying, death-dealing theologies, ideologies and practices. It teaches us that in protecting and upholding life, such as Kerina’s life, the gospel is in need of the law—to constrain the evil doer (even where such persons claim the sanction of the scriptures) and to protect the rights of the abused. Remembering that Kerina is a citizen as well as a Christian, and that the pastor needs to address her as both a woman of faith and a person protected by legislation, is a crucial lesson offered by Public Theology.

Conclusion

The fourth and final step suggested by the method of liberation theology is ‘practical mediation’.

Liberation theology is far from being an inconclusive theology. It starts from action and leads to action, a journey wholly impregnated by and bound up with the atmosphere of faith. From analysis of the reality of the oppressed, it passes through the word of God to arrive finally at specific action (Boff and Boff 1983:39).

By opening up for students the importance of the public sphere when doing theology in the real world, this aspect of the course starts to shape the possibilities of life-giving practice. This task, then, is given over to other sections of the course—as is evident in this volume.

By the time they come to think of such practical engagement, however, the exposure to Public Theology will have given them a solid foundation. In drawing this essay to a close, then, we collate the five key learning outcomes noted above that we hope students take with them into the rest of the course, as well as their further studies and ministry:

1. An appreciation of respectful dialogue with the social sciences, and a willingness to learn from them;
2. A familiarity with the four steps of theological work suggested by liberation theology;
3. Approaching the public square as well as the domestic sphere with a commitment to justice for all citizens regardless of their position in the family or community;
4. Having a working knowledge of the law with regards to domestic violence; and
5. Holding theological ideas and pastoral practice to account in terms of their life-giving orientation.

If we can achieve this, then we can be pleased with the contribution of Public Theology to this module.

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TEACHING AND LEARNING IN COMMUNITY WITH OTHERS: A TRANSFORMATION-CENTRED APPROACH TO THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION

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Throughout every generation, stories reveal the very lives persons live and the lives, for which they hope. Stories reveal persons' yearning for God's liberating presence and activity in their lives. And they reveal persons' yearning for meaning and purpose in life. Stories also reveal God's concrete presence and action in persons' lives and persons' responses to God (Wimberley 1994:39).

Introduction

In post-apartheid South Africa, it has become imperative for all sectors of society to participate in the transformation of the old political order, characterised as it was by oppression and domination, to one that is democratic and life-affirming of all its citizenry. As a result, since liberation in 1994, there has been a marked improvement in various aspects of life, be they political, social or economic, whereby ordinary Black South Africans can point to tangible changes that have occurred in their lives. One group however that has seen little improvement is that of women. While this is not surprising, it is not acceptable. History has indeed taught us that women's liberation is always the last to be actioned. As Chung Hyun Kyung once observed:

Women are always the last colony, so whenever there is a social reconstruction the last people who are considered are usually women and children. Whether the social system is socialism, capitalism, a white government or a black government, women will still usually be the last colony. So if you want to know about the advancement of a particular culture, the humanisation of a culture, you have to examine the place of women in that culture (1996:51).

In spite of gender-affirming legislation, social programming and gender-allied institutions in South Africa, it seems as if the ghosts of patriarchy are here to stay. We just do not seem to be making the progress that is required. Recently, there has been some discussion on the custom of *Ukuthwalwa kwentombi* (forced marriage) in the Pondoland area of the Eastern Cape of Good Hope. To imagine that this custom is still taking place after sixteen years of democracy, in a country that boasts over 72% of its population being professed Christians and under a Constitution that has been hailed to be the most liberal in the world is baffling. It is appropriate therefore, that within theological education there must not only be a commitment towards social transformation, but also towards the creation of dialogical space where students and staff alike can freely contribute from their individual experience and knowledge and thus complete the process of liberation begun in South Africa in 1994.

This is a community involved in an educational event where each is learning *from, with and for* one another, thereby gaining important knowledge that can transform society

New Ways of Doing Theological Education

Firstly, I commend my colleagues in the School of Religion and Theology for their willingness to explore new ways of doing theological education, thereby ensuring that gender justice issues are foregrounded throughout all sub-disciplines in the school. By so-doing, they have clearly indicated that issues of women's liberation in the church and society are not the reserve of women alone, or for a small minority of concerned men, but for all theological students, who in future will play an important role both in the church and in society. The 'Theory and Method in Religion and Theology RELG702' module has thus become a community involved in the teaching and learning processes of how to deal with an issue that affects us all. As Desmond Mpilo Tutu once exclaimed, "none of us are free unless all of us are free" (2006:167). This teaching and learning community includes not only educators and students, but also Kerina who is present through her story.¹ This is a community involved in an educational event where each is learning *from, with and for* one another, thereby gaining important knowledge that can transform society. That is the gist of transformation-centred education.

¹ The full story which we used as a case study appears in the Editorial to this volume.

This article is an attempt to respond to the essays of the seven *creative theological educators* contained in this edition of the *Journal of Constructive Theology*: Patricia Bruce, Steve de Gruchy, Philippe Denis, Sarojini Nadar, Isabel Phiri, Edwina Ward, and Gerald West. An attempt will be made to reflect on their individual experiences in the planning and facilitated teaching and learning events of the course, with its common theme of gender cutting across each of their specialist sub-disciplines.

In my response, I stand firmly in my own sub-discipline of Practical Theology and more specifically, of Christian Education. In part one, I will critically engage with each of the contributors, demonstrating areas of personal agreement and disagreement. In part two, I will discuss the key pedagogical themes that emerge from their essays. By way of a closing evaluation, I will proffer a possible additional element to the teaching module to further enhance its function as transformation-centred education.

Part One: The Gendering of Theological Education

What rightfully seems to be on the minds of all the contributors to this volume is the need to interrogate the relationship between gender and violence, theology and pedagogy. The question asked implicitly throughout is:

How do we teach our sub-disciplines in a manner that takes into account the experiences of injustice and violence against women and Kerina in particular, with the aim of highlighting the challenge of gender inequalities in our society?

In attempting to answer this question, all the contributors approached their task with a consciousness and sensitivity befitting the theme of gender. Hence, as Patricia Bruce points out in her outline to the Biblical Studies section of the course:

Students will be introduced to a variety of scholarly critical tools, especially socio-historical and narratological approaches to the Bible.

Bruce also takes the contextual reading of the Bible very seriously. In her engagement with the students, she wants them to realise its importance in the process of reading and interpreting the Bible; her central aim being to explain “the relationship between a critical engagement with the text and a critical engagement with a particular context.”

The approach of Bruce is to substitute the more traditional methods of reading the Bible for one which takes account of the text's context and ultimately shapes its interpretation. She allows the text to dialogue with Kerina's experiences, so instead of imposing the text on the students, she allows them to read it having in mind Kerina's story thus making the interpretation process easier because the Biblical story has been brought to a real context that is familiar to them. In the field of education this method of teaching starts from the known (experiences) to the unknown. Context, as Bongani Mazibuko has reminded us, is "our second source for understanding God's acts of salvation in the world" (2003:208). As Mazibuko goes on to state:

In the context of understanding these acts, texts, as well as context/praxis, supply the data which lead to a more balanced understanding (2003:208).

Bruce's approach also demonstrates the recognition that Kerina's story is freighted with biblical significance. It is important to note here that some of the perceived biblical teachings in the story are responsible for Kerina's oppression, forming as they do the religious foundations of patriarchy. The responsibility of the teaching and learning community (scholar and students) is to unpack the biblical meanings in the story. Indeed, it is important to realise that such stories are subject to interpretations which may give diverse and conflicting knowledge if handled incorrectly. Language and power dynamics also play an important part in influencing interpretation and identification of the biblical messages embodied in a text, a factor that Bruce does not seem to identify as problematic. While analysing the story therefore, the roles played by the scholar and students alike have to be critically appraised. For Bruce, "the human dimensions of the interpreter have to be taken into account because the Bible does not interpret itself." This is a very important observation because it reminds us of the fact that even the reader/interpreter is subject to her/his own experiences imposed by the context. Although I understand and agree with her proposals, I am left with certain qualms as to the practicality of this point. If we have to look at the human dimensions of the interpreter and the socio-historical context of the text, this means the Bible can only be read and interpreted by those who have been trained with the necessary tools. Ultimately, the Bible will no longer be viewed as a book of the people because not all people will have access to the specialist training required to handle the complex process of biblical interpretation.

In her essay, Isabel Phiri analyses Kerina's story utilising tools from an African Women's Theologies perspective. Arguing for what she calls a

“transformative pedagogy” of African theology, Phiri contests that such an approach takes the culture of both the teacher and the learner—which in this case is predominantly African—into consideration during the teaching and learning process. While culture is used first as a resource to benefit the learning process, it is also understood as a subject that needs to be changed and transformed. I agree with Phiri in most of what she suggests especially on the point that there are resources from within African culture that can be used in the development of a transformative pedagogy. Phiri however does not emphasise the point that her students came from various African countries and ethnic groupings. As a result, there was no single African culture present in her class. Likewise, African culture is not homogenous, but instead is fraught with contradictions, paradoxes and inconsistencies. Furthermore, culture is not a static entity, but is dynamic, ever adjusting and adapting to a rapidly changing modern world. African cultures are also not perfect. They each possess certain weaknesses. Hence, there is a need to overcome what Amilcar Cabral has rightly called “the negative elements in culture” (1980:136). Unfortunately, Phiri does not discuss how these dynamics of African culture were dealt with in her class.

While culture is used first as a resource to benefit the learning process, it is also understood as a subject that needs to be changed and transformed

Using the discipline of History of Christianity, the essay of Philippe Denis makes a contribution to the feminist-historical discourse by analysing Kerina’s story in the light of history. Denis raises interesting insights on how Kerina’s experience and story are products of past decisions taken by society. In fact, Kerina’s experiences result from a combination of political, social and ecclesial decisions that she had no control over, but instead was born into. Denis does well to point out that Kerina’s domination and abuse by men is as a result of patriarchy which is a social construct created by men over the centuries. Furthermore, her poverty was the result of apartheid policies that marginalised and moved many South African communities from one place to another. The teaching of the church on marriage and the relationship between women and men are all subjected to Denis’ critical judgment, until it is clear that these cannot be justified on the basis of the Christian gospel, but upon history itself. Denis helpfully locates Kerina’s story in the context of the past so as to get a clear picture of the dynamics that led to her present situation. Such location assists his students to realise that all human beings are products of social history. While his work here is commendable, Denis fails to see that the perspective of history is not only to understand the present, but also to envision a different and positive future. Instead, in his engagement with Kerina’s

story, Denis simply raises the issues of concern and their root causes, but leaves it there.

In his contributed essay, Gerald West offers an engaging contextual approach to the teaching of the Bible using Kerina's story. For him, the Bible as the sacred text of the Christian religion shaped not only the colonial expansion into Africa, but also shaped and influenced African peoples, belief systems and worldviews (West 1993:61). As West elsewhere observes:

Not only has the Bible been a significant text in Africa, but Africa has also had a significant impact on the Bible. There is a significant African presence and influence in the Bible! (1993:61).

In part, African communities have not been the innocent victims of the Bible. West thus identifies throughout his essay the many tensions the Bible has brought upon various African communities. Here, it is imperative that the church reflect on the text theologically, trying to understand how the church, the Bible and Christian tradition view the problem. In addition, the church must allow itself to come under scholarly scrutiny as to how it both relates and deals with the text.

In spite of the fact that the Bible can be problematic, devoted and committed Christians such as Kerina continue to honour the Bible as sacred Scripture, finding within its pages spiritual strength and hope. As a pastor of poor congregations in informal settlements, I would often visit people in their homes. Among their few possessions, there would always be a copy of the Bible; its words of comfort and challenge occupying an important place in their minds and hearts. The challenge in such situations of poverty and deprivation is to look at how the Bible can be used to effect positive social change. West grapples with such questions and proposes the Contextual Bible Study method as an appropriate approach. When the Bible is read from a feminist-liberative perspective it is able to offer a message of hope to Kerina and the students who would like to participate in her struggle. For this to take place it needs to be read *with* her instead of being read *for* her. The contention I have with West's Contextual Bible Study method is that it does not allow Kerina to read her *own* texts which inform her understanding of God and help her to find a liberating meaning. Instead, the socially-engaged biblical scholar comes with *her or his* own pre-chosen texts and reads them *with* Kerina. This presents a certain level of imposition upon Kerina. Finally, the question remains whether West's teaching provides the students with the necessary skills that would enable

them to work with any text in the Bible to address the problem of gender violence?

Steve de Gruchy's essay explores the link between the Christian gospel and public life. By arguing that public theology has to dialogue with the social sciences in order to understand life in the public sphere, de Gruchy introduces us to the method of liberation theology which calls us back to socio-analytical mediation. For de Gruchy, there is a definite tension between the State's willingness to save women such as Kerina from gendered violence and the church which does the exact opposite. By so-doing, de Gruchy has put his finger on an important point: that the State is sometimes more progressive and liberating than the church. Indeed, when it comes to the experiences of women, the State is implicitly prophetic and judgmental towards the church, calling it to repentance. In such an instance, the church can no longer claim to be salt and the light of the earth (Matt. 5:15-16). The opposite is true. By invoking the Kairos Document, de Gruchy utilises Liberation Theology to challenge the church to re-examine its theology. In a nutshell, de Gruchy is proposing that theologians familiarise themselves fully with the domestic violence act so as to identify the inconsistencies between State Law and Ecclesial Law. In this, he is in agreement with Gloria Plaatjie (2001), that women must read both the Bible and the Constitution at the same time holding both as sacred texts. In addition to the proposals that de Gruchy makes, I think that the community of the public (politicians and civil society) and the community of the Bible (theologians and church leaders) need to constantly come together and constructively engage in dialogue to allow a new knowledge to emerge on how to address public issues. Neither the church nor the public sphere has a monopoly on the truth and hence solutions must be sought collectively.

In a nutshell, de Gruchy is proposing that theologians familiarise themselves fully with the domestic violence act so as to identify the inconsistencies between State Law and Ecclesial Law

In her essay, Sarojini Nadar treads openly where few progressive educators dare to walk by condemning patriarchy and advocating for gender equality. Nadar proposes the notion of a "democratic classroom" which takes into account the experiences of both the teacher and the students. Drawing from her experience as a teacher and practitioner of Feminist Theology, Nadar raises the vulnerability that educators in her situation have to deal with in classes where students are usually older, male, and fundamentalist in their understanding of scripture and socialised through African culture which is the first cousin of patriarchy. Nadar seems however to underestimate the power and privileges she possesses over that of her students, accorded to

her as a lecturer by the institution she represents. She draws up the curriculum, decides the goals, content and methods of teaching and learning. More importantly, she has power to decide who passes and fails the module. Students are aware of these power dynamics and may even be aware of her supposed vulnerability. Nadar's feelings of vulnerability belong to her alone and are part of the story she brings to the class more than those feelings supposedly shared by the students. As with all teachers—even males—she needs to undergo the conversion from a dominant teacher to one who embraces a democratic-classroom approach—although this process may be less for her male counterparts. It is in allowing the students to draw from their own personal experiences that we are able to benefit from what Wolfram Kistner (1991:127) has called “the epistemological privilege of the dominated losers.” Nadar also advocates the notion of the educator embodying or representing her/his subject. While noble, where do we draw the line? Surely, teaching is about the subject and not necessarily the teacher? Students do not come to university to gain knowledge about their teachers, but rather their chosen discipline. The danger is that as teachers we can end up drawing the focus and attention away from the subject matter and more towards our own experiences so that at the end students leave with our stories instead of the subject matter. Unfortunately, this can be the experience of students who are also important in a democratic classroom which Bell Hooks once referred to as “a location of possibilities” (1994:207). Students also learn differently. Hence, some may benefit from one approach, while others become totally lost until another approach is adopted. Both students and teachers alike have to learn and be transformed by the teaching and learning activity that they are part of in the democratic classroom. As Es'kia Mphahlele has rightly observed:

Both the new teacher and the new student, who are already in our midst...should be seen as part of the process of becoming (2002:7).

If the focus of the subject is too much on the experience and embodiment of the subject by the *teacher* are we unwittingly bringing again through the back door the domination of the students by the teacher? By so-doing, are we not inadvertently depriving the teacher from learning from the experiences of her/his students?

Nadar also argues for the role of the educator as advocate. To some degree Nadar is correct. The problem with this approach is that when we take into account that Nadar's function as teacher is extremely powerful (as was shown above), what she calls advocacy can easily become imposition and domination or even a banking approach towards education. There is a need

to understand the power dynamics between lobbyists and advocates (activists) and those who are being lobbied (the powerful). For example, is it the powerful who advocate to the powerless or do they simply impose their position over the powerless? Conversely, do the powerless advocate to the powerful simply because they do not have the power to impose? Despite the few concerns that I have raised with Nadar's engagement of the Kerina story her contribution to the debate is no doubt commendable.

...is it the powerful who advocate to the powerless or do they simply impose their position over the powerless?

Edwina Ward's essay in this collection is written in the true spirit of a practical theologian. In it, Ward emphasises the importance of a case study method, as well as the pedagogical approach which begins with action and then moves to theory. This makes sense because through role-playing and analysing Kerina's situation, students get a deeper understanding of the issues surrounding her experience, the role of culture represented by her husband, the church represented by her fundamentalist pastor as well as other players. The strength of Ward's approach towards the story is that it gives students the opportunity to not only listen to one another but to themselves. The story is thus used as a catalyst for the students to engage their own thinking as well as listen to their inner voices which is not readily 'audible' in a classroom situation. In the classroom, as teachers we are used to talking and not to listening to ourselves! The pedagogy employed by Ward thus helps us to listen and at times even forces us to change which we were erstwhile afraid to do. As Parker J. Palmer correctly notes:

Why is it that we do not like to listen, or want to listen, or know how to listen? I think the answer is simple: we fear hearing something we don't want to hear, something that might compel us to reflect on ourselves and, in consequence, change our hearts and minds and behaviours. If we can keep talking, not listening, we can define our own reality and will not have to deal with the complexities and ambiguities that lie beyond our simplistic definitions. Listening too carefully might end up confusing us, and we would rather live with clear falsehoods than with complex and challenging truth (Palmer in Intrator 2002:xx).

Ward's approach to teaching as a pastoral counsellor gives students the opportunity to listen to themselves and their inner voices so that they can see where they fit into Kerina's story and what they would recommend in such a situation. Ward's method however does not seem to identify the

theory that lies behind the sub-discipline of Practical Theology itself. Here, Practical Theology is only about counselling and there does not seem to be enough exposition of the theology that lies behind the work of the pastor as a counsellor and what makes her or him different from secular psychologists. That Practical Theology sets the tone for the other sub-disciplines of theology does not mean it should not articulate its own theological underpinnings. Practical Theology needs to state why it is theological practice. Unfortunately, this is not done in the case study model but left to the other theological sub-disciplines to explain. As Paddy Kearny once cautioned, an individual “can get into wrong action” without sufficient or adequate theological reflection (Cited in Monohan 2003:55).

When the contributions of this volume are taken into consideration in the light of the themes I have discussed above, there are a number of focal areas which emerge which I am now going to discuss. These are areas such as transformation as the goal of education, education as a hermeneutical task, theology as a dialogical undertaking and theological education as a teaching and learning community *with, from* and *for* others.

Part Two: The Personal and Social Transformation of Theological Education

Taken as a whole and in the light of the discussion and analysis I have offered above, the essays in this collection allow certain key themes to naturally emerge. The first of these is that theological education is concerned with both *personal* and *social* transformation. Indeed, these are its goals. If knowledge is to add value to students and educators alike, then it must lead to positive life changes, both as individuals and as members of society. As students are being transformed by the knowledge they gain from class they are taught in such a way that they will be engaged in activities of transformation. This is particularly evident in Ward’s essay where the emphasis is upon gaining skills for action. Theological education that is transformation-centred has as its ultimate aim the “humanisation” of society (Freire 1996:52). Steve Bantu Biko would argue that it is the meeting of the “quest for a true humanity” (1987:48). As John Wesley, the founder of Methodism could assert this to be “The human persons’ growth to Christian perfection and to social holiness” (Marquardt 1997:62). If the goal for theological education is the empowering of students to reflect and live out their faith in Christ, then transformation must be at the centre of all education programmes. Taking into account the history of South African society, characterised as it is by oppression and brutality, an educational event must not only be aimed at imparting theological knowledge, but also to initiate healing and reconciliation.

Education with the goal of transformation leads to liberation. Paulo Freire has taught us that education can result in two things, either *domestication or liberation*. Education as a liberation process involves “influences and actions which can set a human mind free to respond to liberating forces” (Mazibuko 1987:143). Individual and social transformation needs to take place concurrently because they are interrelated and interdependent upon one another. The fruits of transformation can be seen when people are able to change a situation of violent abuse and poverty to self-sufficiency and dignity, underdevelopment to development, and immorality to morality. All these are vital in the context of South Africa. If the church is to make a contribution to this, it must adopt transformation-centred theological education as its core value.

The fruits of transformation can be seen when people are able to change a situation of violent abuse and poverty to self-sufficiency and dignity, underdevelopment to development, and immorality to morality

Theological Education as a Hermeneutical Task

The second theme concerns theological education as a hermeneutical task. This means that education constantly requires engaging with and interpreting events, contexts, human actions, feelings and issues. Interpretation enables the deeper understanding of the issues, informing better actions, and thereby shaping or influencing affected individuals or communities for the better good. This means that the content of transformation-centred education is the interpretation of life issues and not simply an abstract idea or theme. All seven *creative theological educators* had the interpretation of Kerina’s story at the centre of their education practice. From their particular sub-disciplines they could extrapolate relevant themes to impart to the students.

The question of where theological education is done is a question of content. It comes from the understanding that theological education has to take into account the experiences, life, struggles and joys of the teaching and learning community. For content to become part of the curriculum, it needs to arise from the context of learning. We need to understand what is going on in that context. In short, context refers to “the settings, circumstances and situations within which a particular event or happening occur” (Tye 2000:30). Some of the authors observe that Kerina’s story offers both context and content to the teaching and learning event. Teaching and learning in community with others takes into account the stories of the people during the learning process, believing as it does that

people's stories are important as they deal with their past and dreams about their future (Wimberly 1994:38).

Taking context into consideration means that during the teaching and learning event, concentration is placed on what happens both inside and outside the learning environment. In this case, the curriculum is not drawn from books alone and imposed on the learners; its agenda is drawn from the context of the learners, taking into account their life experiences and generating knowledge to improve such experiences. By so-doing, the theological enterprise has a dimension of doing theology that is contextually relevant. Contextual theological education, as James Cochrane has observed:

Must be one that listens to the voices of those whose faith and life is the occasion of theological reflection and this requires that we honour the history, tradition, the cultural patterns, the thoughts forms and the conceptual categories and language of the local community (1999:130).

Theological Education from Below

A third theme which emerged—particularly in West's contribution—is that for a teaching curriculum to be relevant it must be generated not only from the context, but also from below—the poor. The Ujamaa Centre for Community Development and Research works with ordinary church members who are often excluded in the leadership of the church and are usually poor with little or no education. Graham Philpott refers to this group of people as “the superfluous unknown people, marginalised by dominant sectors of society” (1993:17). Such participants are identified as possessing knowledge that has to be articulated and shared with the academy. The process of drawing up any theological education curriculum has to include those from below in the teaching and learning agenda of the academy so that they can benefit from the production of knowledge and its dissemination. How this is done is a question of teaching and learning methodologies, but here I am arguing that the content of what is taught must include what the marginalised possess as their knowledge. In this case, the knowledge produced or shared will include the faith, tradition, experience and aspirations of people who want to effect positive change in their situations, making curriculum not just a set of facts and information but of lived knowledge (Tye 2000:49).

Theological Education as a Dialogical Undertaking

The fourth theme emphasised by the seven *creative theological educators* in this volume, is the imperative nature of a dialogical approach to any teaching and learning event. Drawing again from Freire's liberative approach to education, each educator saw learning as a moment where humans meet to reflect on their reality as they make and remake it (Freire and Shor 1987:98). Here, the educators are in a relationship with the learners where they share knowledge with each other and there is full participation from each participant. While each educator serves as a leader, s/he is not domineering but leads by facilitation. Learning in dialogue assumes that learning is not in isolation but is dialogically involved with others. To learn we need to relate to one another, venture towards new discoveries and find new truths as we dialogue with each other on a common journey. Community learning is built on the relationship between the educator and the learner; learners among themselves; learners and the host of educators who went before them; and finally the learning community and the local environment, which is their context. By this understanding, learning takes place as a result of relationships where a number of people dialogue with one another on issues of common concern that arise from their experiences with the aim of bringing about positive and lasting change.

To learn we need to relate to one another, venture towards new discoveries and find new truths as we dialogue with each other on a common journey

The primary focus of the transformation-centred approach is not on the facilitator, nor the learners, but the subject which arises from experienced life in context. Both facilitator and learners have to explore issues that emanate from their experiences so that they can change their situation using insights from their personal theological perspectives and actions. As much as learners grow from the learning situation, so also educators benefit by learning something, because social transformation benefits all people especially when it comes as a result of dialogue. This requires that the learners are taken seriously in education because they are important dialogical partners. This is important in a university situation because the learners normally are "adults and even the issues discussed are appropriate for adults and affect them" (Brookfield 1986:102). In a dialogical approach neither the educator nor the learner becomes the centre of the pedagogical circle, but rather the goal becomes the centre of the teaching and learning community. It mobilises the entire learning and teaching community to focus on the issue being explored. At the end of the teaching and learning

process we must have regained what it truly means to be human, characterised by the attributes of belonging, love, care and the gaining of knowledge that empowers us to work towards and achieve transformation and liberation. Dialogue means no one imposes their knowledge on another, but together, all are pilgrims on a common journey to create new knowledge.

Theological Education as Teaching and Learning in Community *with and for others*

A fifth important theme which runs through almost all the essays is the importance of learning together or what Parker J. Palmer calls “learning in community” (1989:121). Education in the church includes the important aspect of community within it. It is therefore not surprising that theological education has to emphasise the importance of community and learning together and from each other. The method and process of theological education must be consistent with the purpose for which we educate, which is to build the community of faith. As Kevin Williams rightly asserts:

Learning in the context of Christian life involves the process by which people are introduced to the Christian community; its stories, people ways and vision of the world and incorporated into that community, experiencing its fellowship, participating in its mission, and moved by its passion (1992:142).

Educating for community building and enhancement means that both educators and learners need to be connected to each other. This is the relational nature of education. It means that transformation-centred education is a social as opposed to an individualistic activity, done *with* and *for* others.

Educating for community building and enhancement means that both educators and learners need to be connected to each other

In Ward’s approach, her pedagogical method is to use Kerina’s story to bring about counselling and healing to the students while they are busy with the learning exercise. This is consistent with what Palmer sees as a therapeutic motif when education is done as a relational reality or in community. In his book, *The Courage to Teach: Exploring the Inner Landscape of a Teacher’s Life*, Palmer asserts that:

The therapeutic motif has a place in education simply because any loveless enterprise is likely to be pathological: it is hard to imagine

a healthy school that lacks any trace of love for learning or for learners (1989:90).

Additionally, if education is going to build community it means that the *teaching and learning community*² must be motivated by common issues and concerns engaged with the learning process. This is an important aspect that makes and glues the learners and educators together as a community. Choosing Kerina's story is important because as a narrative it helps both teachers and students to identify with the common issues faced by ordinary people. In so-doing, each moves from the known to the unknown, which is an important principle in education.

Conclusion

I really appreciate the quest of all seven *creative theological educators* to engage their students in a dialogical and transformative teaching and learning event. This not only affirms their contribution in the *teaching and learning community*, but is also the means of justifying the end: *transformation-centred education*. This said, as a Practical Theologian, I am rather discouraged in not seeing or reading of any practical student involvement in transformative actions. Indeed, neither the curriculum, nor any of the educators initiated a practical project to address the issue of gender violence or put into practice the theory learned. Ward gets closest to this goal through her exercise in role-playing, but there is no field-work component at all in her section of the course. As a consequence, the module becomes an intellectual exercise of writing and reflection without any tangible impact being felt on real life situations. Possibly, it would have helped had there been reflection on the part of the educators following the course evaluation by the student participants so that they could hear how teaching from this perspective had impacted their lives and how Kerina's story had changed their attitudes towards gender violence and associated issues.

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² I prefer to use *teaching and learning community* when referring to the Christian education group. This is because it incorporates all the people involved e.g., educators, learners and other people who may be part of this process either as observers or supporters of the group.

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READING FROM THIS PLACE: A GERMAN STUDENT'S VIEW OF KERINA'S STORY

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Introduction: A Visitor Sees Where the House Leaks

An African proverb says that a visitor sees where the house leaks. That is probably true, but at the same time, you can also see the deficiencies of your own home while you stay in a foreign house.

...that a minister is more concerned about the issue of divorce than about the life and security of one of his parishioners seemed to me highly unlikely. I thought this was just another case where a certain theological perspective that does not go along with a faculty's common opinion was depicted as morally inferior

I am German, grew up in Germany and have lived there for most of my life. However, I have had the opportunity to study in the United States of America, in the Netherlands and now in South Africa. As a requirement for the Masters Programme I was enrolled in at the School of Religion and Theology, University of KwaZulu-Natal, I had to take the module entitled, 'Theory and Method in Religion and Theology RELG702.' I arrived one day late for the beginning of the course. As a result, the case study of Kerina was given to me and I was told to read it in preparation for the next day.¹ Upon reading it for the first time, I thought that the story was made up and portrayed a highly unrealistic scenario. It is possible that an abusive alcoholic husband beats his wife. So far I could go along with the story. Furthermore, I could imagine that church ministers and family members could be non-supportive of the victim. But that a minister is more concerned about the issue of divorce than about the life and security of one of his parishioners seemed to me highly unlikely. I thought this was just another case where a certain theological perspective that does not go along

¹ The full story of Kerina which was used as a case study appears in the Editorial to this volume.

with a faculty's common opinion was depicted as morally inferior. At first, I did not pay much attention to the mother. While I was certain that no mother would tell her daughter to stay in an abusive relationship, I did not think that her mother's reference to culture could be of any great importance. Altogether, the case study seemed to be a gross exaggeration. I was worried that the class would become rather dull and boring, since I imagined everyone would agree that abuse is wrong and Kerina should divorce her husband for her own security and for the security of her children.

Pastoral Care and Counselling: The Need for Immediate Action

However, things worked out differently. The class began with a unit from the field of pastoral counselling. The case-study was re-enacted in a role-play. When I saw it, I was still convinced that in our discussion, everyone would agree that Kerina needs to be divorced, but we did not come to fast conclusions. We looked at each person involved in the case-study and analysed her or his needs. After we had done that, things did not seem so easy anymore. Kerina was not the only person suffering from violence and abuse in the case-study. Kerina's husband, Peter, being unemployed, little educated, living in post-apartheid South-Africa and belonging to the working class, also faced severe issues of abuse. The lecturer pointed out two different foci of counselling. The first can be described as general pastoral care and the second as the method of crisis counselling. With reference to Emanuel Lartey (2003), as a class we engaged with the seven functions of pastoral care: *healing, sustaining, guiding, reconciling, nurturing, liberating* and *empowering*. Discussing the case study, we came to the conclusion that not only Kerina but also Peter, was in need of all seven! However, since Kerina's security was at stake, we also saw the need for immediate action. A four-step counselling method described by David Switzer (1986) as "The ABCD method of Crisis Counselling" seemed to be very promising. The lecturer engaged with the method in a way that demonstrates how the counselee must actively participate in the counselling process. While we focused on counselling Kerina, we also discussed the necessity of counselling Peter.

Gender and Religion: The Mechanisms of Power-abuse and Oppression

During the following two lectures, we engaged with the case-study from the point of view from gender and religion. This section was marked by discussions about feminism, gender and power. The lecturer was sensitive to more conservative mindsets among the students present. This sensitivity,

however, was marked by challenging those mindsets. We were exposed to controversial statements about femininity, masculinity, God and culture. It was apparent that the engagement with such ideas was challenging for most, if not all, of the class. The lecturer not only outlined different approaches of feminism such as radical, reformist and re-constructionist, but also made it a requirement of each student to reflect on the case study within one feministic paradigm, of their choice. In our class discussions about the case-study, the lecturer precisely pointed out the strengths and weaknesses of the arguments given. I remember that I once again tried to argue that Kerina should get a divorce and so put an end to her dysfunctional marriage. When I hoped to gain support for my claim from the lecturer, she smiled and said that such an individualistic approach does not take the situation seriously, but merely focuses on one person and that this person might not even be happier after a divorce. The lecturer also made it quite clear that her feminist approach does not merely focus on women but also on men. The mechanisms of power-abuse and oppression not only violate the human rights of the victim, but also dehumanise the perpetrator. To substantiate this important link, the lecturer cited Joann Wolksi Conn's definition of feminism that describes feminism as both "a coordinated set of ideas and a practical plan of action, rooted in women's critical awareness of how a culture controlled in meaning and action by men for their own advantage, oppresses women and *dehumanises* [emphasis added] men" (Conn in Clifford 2001:17). Further, such an approach pays attention to the possibility of females being perpetrators or oppressors. Structures of power and power-abuse are multidimensional; therefore, women and men can be on either side of the scale, as victims or oppressors. Peter serves as an example of a victim of unequal power distribution and being an oppressor at the same time.

**Structures of power and power-abuse are multidimensional;
therefore, women and men can be on either side of the scale, as
victims or oppressors**

History of Christianity: Demythologising our Depictions of Marriage

The third perspective of the seminar was taken from the field of History of Christianity. In that section, we identified themes in the case-study that needed further reflection within an historical framework. Historical reflection on Kerina's case study can deal with urbanisation and the history of labour-migration. Furthermore, colonisation is an important aspect of her story. Kerina's family originates from South India. Most striking was the engagement with the history of marriage. It helped us to demythologise our depictions of marriage as a sacred institution that has always been

beneficial for both partners. Marriage in history often served political or economic purposes. The ruling authorities of medieval times and beyond serve as an example, as they established contracts with one another through marriage relationships. During the industrial age, the securing and combining of the wealth of the upper class was commonly achieved through marriage. In class, we did not only engage with history as evaluating facts of the past. The lecturer additionally helped us to engage with the history of an individual family. The telling and listening to a family's history can be therapeutic for members of the family. A person who is able to talk about her or his experiences can engage and deal with those experiences in a better way than a person who is not allowed to share them. Furthermore, the engagement with a family history may help to create unity in a family, since it focuses on something that is common to all the family members.

Biblical Studies: The Context of the Reader and the Context of the Text

The Biblical Studies unit was divided into two parts, with one lesson taught by a scholar of the Old Testament and the other, by a New Testament scholar. Both lecturers agreed on the importance of the Bible. While I was convinced that the Bible was part of Kerina's problem, both lecturers focused on the Bible as helping to reach a conclusion. The Bible was introduced as an instrument of empowerment and upliftment. We looked at texts that deal with power, violence, divorce and gender. Employing critical tools, we engaged with the text and its relevance for Kerina's context. Both lecturers emphasised that the Bible does not consist of one teaching but that it is rather diverse. The depiction of divorce in the case study by Rev. Bobby Naidoo was challenged by our exegesis of Mark 10:1-12 and its parallel in Matthew 19:1-12 and an interpretation of these texts by Teresa Okure (1995). Okure argues that when Christians engage with biblical texts, they regard them as the Word of God (Okure 1995:55). Furthermore, it is important to regard the context of the reader as well as the context of the text. For any minister counselling Kerina, this creates the chance of looking at the context in which Jesus taught about divorce. One can find out that Jesus saw divorce as a practice in which husband and wife are both guilty of committing adultery. Jesus corrects a traditional practice of the Jewish law that only accuses the divorcing wife of committing adultery (Okure 1995:62). Kerina also suffers under a system which only accuses and holds her responsible, whereas her husband's behaviour is left unquestioned. Furthermore, Jesus puts divorce in a broader context than the individual life of a family. Jesus, according to Mark 10:6, takes the entire creation into consideration by referring to

Genesis 1:26-27 and 2:24. Okure argues that Jesus shows that divorce not only affects life in the *microcosmic society* but also in the *macrocosmic society*. Okure concludes that the divorce of women from social, political, religious and economical life throughout the centuries by the system of patriarchy can be addressed by Jesus' teaching on divorce as well. Referring to Kerina, in class we discussed further issues of divorce that she and her family experienced, including Kerina's mother wanting to divorce her from economic life by not allowing her to work. Her working-class background also divorced her from participation in higher education. Added to this, the system of apartheid actively colluded by divorcing Kerina from her basic human rights and from material necessities. The lack of proper infrastructure caused by apartheid-politics remains—even after the fall of apartheid in 1994—as a problem for Kerina and others living in under-developed areas of South Africa. Finally, her church divorces her from equal involvement in the religious life of the community. Hence, we saw how the Bible was being used to endorse existing power-relationships, as well as how the Bible was being used to bring them into question. A hermeneutic that is open to challenging existing power-relationships contains great potential for the empowerment of the marginalised.

If the Reverend and the church Elder had employed a Trinitarian theology, it could have empowered Kerina and Peter to overstep the structures of subordination in their relationship

Systematic Theology: The Liberating Implications of a Trinitarian Understanding of God

The systematic theological reflection on Kerina's case put the doctrine of God at the centre of our attention as a class. While the doctrine of God was not dealt with for the sake of doctrinal reflection, it was introduced as being relevant for problems such as those experienced by Kerina and Peter. The lecturer pointed out that it is important to reflect on one's understanding of God in order to deal with one's understanding of human interaction. Engaging with Daniel Migliore (1991), we discovered the centrality of a Trinitarian understanding of God for the Christian Faith and its implications for the understanding of human relationships. The concept of Trinity can be seen as a critique toward a hierarchical understanding of the relationship between God the creator, God the redeemer and God the preserver: all three are one and equal. There is no hierarchy among the different persons of God, and this triune God created human beings in God's image. Being created in the image of the triune God implies being created to be in a relationship (Migliore 1991:125). This relationship is neither hierarchical nor determined by subordination (Migliore 1991:127).

It is rather a relationship of mutual love and understanding (Migliore 1991:69-70). Within the case study, the relationship between Kerina and Peter can be described as a relationship of subordination. Kerina's mother and Rev. Bobby Naidoo, together with Elder Rajen Moonsamy, expect Kerina to submit to her husband. If the Reverend and the church Elder had employed a Trinitarian theology, it could have empowered Kerina and Peter to overstep the structures of subordination in their relationship. The church itself would then have exceeded its own hierarchical structures which are not life-giving and contradictory to a Trinitarian understanding of God. However, we also discussed that a change in church structures and in family relationships does not take place immediately. A change in theological reflection of theology students now will lead to results in the future. The course as a whole was designed to bring upon this change in the thinking and reflection of future theologians.

African Theology: Holistic Healing and Addressing Authority

The final section of the seminar was taught from the point of view of African Theology. The definition employed for *African* was a person on the African continent affected by the African context. This rather broad depiction of what it meant to be an African allowed us to relate African Theology to the needs of Kerina, who belongs to the Indian community in South Africa. Discussing the case study, the lecturer pointed out important issues for the African context: holistic healing and authority. Kerina's physical sickness (being asthmatic) was depicted in relation to her emotional and psychological status of being unwell. Within the African worldview and African Theology in general, healing was shown to be of central importance. Kerina was depicted as being in need of emotional, psychological and physical healing. Furthermore, the lecturer argued that in the African context, the transformation of society is connected with the need to address authority. The addressing of authority was described in line with challenging structures of inequality that promote poverty and lead to marginalisation. In this section, we also concentrated on the importance of culture. Kerina's mother refers to cultural norms that prohibit Kerina from a divorce. Furthermore, it seems as if Kerina's mother would suggest that female subordination is a part of their culture. The lecturer, who was highly in favour of the importance of culture, clearly pointed out that culture has to be understood as dynamic rather than static. In addition, culture can contain elements that are harmful, especially to women. It is a task of African Theology to engage with culture as a source of theology and reasoning, but it is also a task of African Theology to criticise elements of culture that prevent members of the culture to live their lives freely. The lecturer pointed out that not enough attention is often paid to the fact that

while women form a large part of every culture, their voices often go unheard.

Conclusion: Overcoming Systems of Violence and Injustice

In six different sections, we approached Kerina's case. By so-doing, we employed different theological methods and modes of reasoning. The individual lecturers acknowledged insights from the other disciplines and took them into consideration within their own reasoning. The course therefore became a well-structured unit. Altogether, I was impressed by the broad reflection on oppression and abuse in our class. Even though I had engaged with most theories of feminism and liberation theology before attending the class, I had never applied my acquired knowledge to such a practical scenario. The case of Kerina remained foreign to me. I could not identify with the opinions expressed by her mother, friends and pastor. The lecturers helped me to empathise with Kerina and Peter. Pedagogical elements such as role-plays and methods of abstraction helped me to deal with the case of Kerina on a personal and conceptual level. The tension between the suffering of an individual or an individual's family, and the larger structural implications of such suffering was introduced and dealt with throughout the classes. The existence of gender-based violence in our personal communities and society as a whole was brought to my attention through attending this class. Furthermore, the mere fact that physical violence against women might be less acceptable within my own European culture does not mean that violence does not take place. Church ministers and all Christians need to be made aware of the unequal distribution of power and the resultant injustices that take place within society. The outcome has to be dealt with both on a personal and structural level.

Even though I had engaged with most theories of feminism and liberation theology before attending the class, I had never applied my acquired knowledge to such a practical scenario

Particularly rewarding was the reflection on different kinds of oppression. Even though the paradigm of feministic theology was used most frequently, each lecturer pointed out that there was no single contributory factor that was the cause of Kerina's difficulties. Only an approach that engages with the complexity of reality would be able to provide an analysis of the injustices done. However, such analysis is not the final goal. It needs to lead to the provision of immediate help for the victims and to intermediate actions to overcome systems of violence and injustice.

The lecturers insisted on the importance of culture and the need to engage with people seriously, each being in agreement that it is futile to produce finely-argued academic concepts if they are irrelevant to the needs of the people for whom they are meant. The strong focus on the community for which theology is done was made possible by the personal background of the students of theology. Most students in the class came from rural areas and from underprivileged backgrounds. Less than half of the class members had university-educated parents. That is very different from the social setup of the German university, where more than ninety percent of the students have at least one university-educated parent. It is thus not surprising that topics of the poor and marginalised are dealt with in a much deeper way, than from the perspective of merely talking about them. While most German students do not know anyone personally who is 'marginalised' or who lives in poverty, many students from the class have had close personal experiences of poverty. Poverty or economic oppression is thus not just a topic of the academic curriculum, but is the personal experience of many people in the class. A university system that embraces poverty and injustice in such a way helps to overcome the structures of injustice that maintain it not only in theory but also in practice. I am afraid that the German university system differs in that regard. The current social setup of the German university hinders its effectiveness in overcoming social injustices. Feminism and every other approach that seeks to empower marginalised people cannot merely be enacted for and on behalf of marginalised people; instead, they must also be enacted with and by the marginalised. An important step to overcome such marginalisation is therefore participation.

Bibliography

- Clifford, Anne. 2001. *Introducing Feminist Theology*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis.
- Lartey, Emmanuel. 2003. *In Living Colour*. New York, NY: Jessica Kingsley.
- Migilore, Daniel. L. 1991. *Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.
- Okure, Teresa. 1995. Reading from This Place: Some Problems and Prospects. Pages 52-66 in *Reading From This Place: Social Location and Biblical Interpretation in Global Perspective*. Edited by Fernando F. Segovia and Mary Ann Tolbert. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress.
- Switzer, David. 1986. *The Minister as Crisis Counsellor*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon.

APPENDIX #1

Theory and Method in Religion and Theology RELG702
Module Information and Outline
[2008]**Introduction**

Welcome to the Honours module 'Theory and Method in Religion and Theology RELG702.' 'Theory and Method' is a core module for B.Th Honours (16 credit points). The module is also a co-requisite for Masters Students who have not previously completed the module. In 2008, the module will be taught by eight lecturers: Prof. Edwina Ward (Ministerial Studies) Dr. Sarojini Nadar (Gender and Religion); Prof. Philippe Denis (History of Christianity), Prof. Gerald West and Ms. Patricia Bruce (Biblical Studies); Prof. Anthony Balcomb and Mr. Xolani Sakuba (Systematic Theology),¹ and Prof. Isabel Phiri (African Theology). Dr. Sarojini Nadar is the module coordinator and all enquiries should be directed to her at: <nadars@ukzn.ac.za>.

Module Description

This module is an introduction to the tools (theories and methods) employed by the various disciplines within the field of academic theology. The aim of the module is to help students to identify these tools and also to learn how to use these tools to ask systematic and structured questions regarding theology and its relationship to the contexts in which we live.

Module Design

The module is designed around a case study which you will receive at the outset. All the various sections of the module will be taught using this case study. You will learn how to **apply** theories and methods from each of the disciplines of theology to **analyse** and **interpret** the case study.

¹ Due to varying circumstances, the reflections of Balcomb and Sakuba are not included in this collection of essays. While the Public Theology section of the course was not offered in 2008, we have included in this issue of the journal the reflection offered by Steve de Gruchy on his section of the course on Public Theology offered in 2007.

The module will be taught using the **Block Release** system. This means that you will attend class for three intensive blocks in the semester. During the rest of the time you will be required to read and complete assignments, the details of which will be provided below. The module is divided as follows:

BLOCK #1 (FEBRUARY 4-8)	BLOCK #2 (MARCH 10-14)	BLOCK #3 (MAY 5-9)
February 4 Orientation and Registration	March 10 Gender and Religion Dr. Sarojini Nadar	May 5 Systematic Theology Prof. Anthony Balcomb
February 5 General Intro All lecturers	March 11 History of Christianity Prof. Philippe Denis	May 6 Systematic Theology Mr. Xolani Sakuba
February 6 Ministerial Studies Prof. Edwina Ward	March 12 History of Christianity Prof. Philippe Denis	May 7 African Theology Prof. Isabel Phiri
February 7 Ministerial Studies Prof. Edwina Ward	March 13 Biblical Studies Prof. Gerald West	May 8 African Theology Prof. Isabel Phiri
February 8 Gender and Religion Dr. Sarojini Nadar	March 14 Biblical Studies Ms. Pat Bruce	May 9 Final Examination

Module Outcomes

At the end of this section, students should be able to demonstrate their ability to:

- a) Explain what theology is about
- b) Explain what the sub-disciplines of theology are
- c) Demonstrate knowledge of the assumptions, objectives, history and methods of each of the disciplines within Theology
- d) Critically analyse texts using the theories and methods employed by the various disciplines in theology
- e) Show values of tolerance, gender, race and class sensitivities, professionalism and ecumenism

Module Expectations

- a) You will only be given a DP² if you have attended 80% of the module. The class takes place from 8:30-10:30 in Room #107 (New Arts Building)
- b) You are required to write six (6) reading reactions (one for each of the lecturers in the module) following the given (separate sheet) guideline with references. The reading responses should be typed and 1500 to 2000 words long (1.5 spacing). An average of all six reading reactions will make up your final class mark which counts for 50% of the final mark. Assignments to be submitted on time. 2% will be deducted per day after due date up to two weeks. Thereafter the assignment will not be marked.

Your assignments will be assessed as follows:

- Presentation (25%)
 - Spelling
 - Use of capital letters
 - Punctuation
 - Sentence logic
 - Paragraphing
 - Lay-out
 - Format of bibliographical references
- Content (75%)
 - Task comprehension
 - Argument
 - Quality of information

In addition marking bands will also be used (see attached)

² DP (Duly Performed). The DP was introduced as an accreditation requirement because too many students who were not adequately prepared were writing the examination and failing. Many of them obtained marks confirming that they knew very little about the modules that they were studying. For further details on the University of KwaZulu-Natal's DP process see: <<http://adl.ukzn.ac.za/TheDPPProcess14593.aspx/>> [Accessed July 24, 2009].

Assignment	Due Date
Reading Reaction #1 (Ministerial Studies)	February 21
Reading Reaction #2 (Gender and Religion)	February 25
Reading Reaction #3 (History of Christianity)	March 26
Reading Reaction #4 (Biblical Studies)	April 2
Reading Reaction #5 (Systematic Theology)	April 9
Reading Reaction #6 (African Theology)	April 16

- c) There will be a three hour **written examination** at the end of the Block #3 on May 9. The exam counts **50%** towards the final mark, and you will be given more information about the exam closer to the time.

Module Outline

Block # 1

- Dates: February 4-8, 2008,
- Time: 08h30-10h30
- Venue: New Arts Building, Room #107

February 4, 2008

- Orientation and Registration

February 5, 2008

- General Introduction (All lecturers will be present)
- Aims and objectives of the module
- How this module fits in the Honours and Masters programmes
- Assessment
- Marking bands
- Language requirements

Individual students can negotiate a number of hours with a University of KwaZulu-Natal Language Centre tutor who will teach and correct them at the same time. Contact: Jenny Kerchhoff <kerchhoff@ukzn.ac.za>. Alternatively, a workshop can be arranged based on 'work in progress' for a group of ten to twenty students. Arrangements must be made with the School of Religion and Theology for the payment of fees.

- Attendance

No DP certificate will be granted to anyone who attends class less than 80% even in the case of a major impediment (e.g., sickness, funeral, etc).

- Editing policy
- Plagiarism
- Acknowledgment of sources

Any text or portion of text borrowed from another author has to be accurately referenced even if the citation is indirect. Listing your sources at the end of the essay is not enough. An essay insufficiently referenced will be considered as plagiarised.

- Each lecturer to provide a brief introduction to their section of the module
- Handing out of readings and assignments
- Questions

Ministerial Studies: February 6-7, 2008

Outline

Practical Theology has many sub-sections. To mention some, in the School of Religion and Theology we concentrate on Pastoral Counselling; Christian Education; Homiletics; Liturgy and Worship; Parish leadership and administration.

During the Theory and Method module we will concentrate on aspects of Pastoral Counselling. Every minister, pastor, priest or person working with communities needs to know how to relate to people who are suffering, in distress or who are grieving. For example, we are asked to be specialists in all areas of trauma, abuse, violence and oppression. But we are not experts. Rather we seek to be helpers and care givers to our neighbours, families, communities and parishioners. The Christian understanding of pastoral care and counselling is not new. Yet, in the last fifty years the skills needed for this function have become more contextually defined. In this short time together, we will look at the Functions of pastoral counselling and the Role the minister plays as a pastoral counsellor in crisis counselling. We will study **ONE** method of Crisis counselling

Method

We are given a case study which will be used by all disciplines in 'Theory and Method.' This case study will be discussed within the Practical Theology discipline, breaking it down into counselling outcomes desired.

Content Themes

- The Family and its components
- Relationships
- Control factors
- Violence and abuse
- The role of the Church
- Power, fear and belief systems

Outcomes

At the end of this section, students should be able to demonstrate their ability to:

- Some background of theorists from Africa and from Western countries who are currently researching cross cultural counselling methods
- The seven functions of the pastoral counsellor
- The ABCD method of Crisis Counselling
- Be able to listen, respond empathetically and use some of the essential counselling skills. These are respect, genuineness, concreteness and understanding the importance of feelings. Confidentiality will be stressed.
- Appreciate the role the counsellor has as a support model, a person who guides others in times of distress and who may offer some healing whether it be psychologically or emotionally
- Know something of their own needs and their own pastoral identity

Prescribed Readings

- Lartey, Emmanuel Y. 2003. *In Living Colour: An Intercultural Approach to Pastoral Care and Counselling*. London, New York: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.
- Switzer, David. 1986. *The Minister as Crisis Counsellor*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon.

Assignment Topic

Read the prescribed notes and apply them to the case study method in class.

Additional Recommended Readings

- Clinebell, Howard. 1966. *Basic Types of Pastoral Counselling*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon.
- Estadt, Barry K. 1983. *Pastoral Counselling*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.
- Hesselgrave, David J. 1984. *Counselling Cross-Culturally: An Introduction to Theory and Practice for Christians*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker.
- Switzer, David .2000. *Pastoral Care Emergencies*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress.
- Waruta, Douglas W. and Hannah W. Kinoti. 2000. *Pastoral Care in African Christianity: Challenging Essays in Pastoral Theology*. Nairobi: Acton.

Journals

Journal of Pastoral Care and Counselling
Journal of Supervision and Training in Ministry
Human Development

Gender and Religion: February 8, 2008

Overview

This section of the course is designed as an introduction to the study of gender in theology. Gender is a field of study which analyses the power relationships that exist between women and men. When studying gender and theology, there are two important points to remember. Firstly, gender is an authentic field of study in and of itself. There are various theories and methods that have been developed in the field of gender studies and its cognate disciplines such as feminist and masculinity studies. Secondly, when these theories are applied in the study of theology it lends itself to a multi-disciplinary mode of study. In other words, one can ask analytical questions of gender in any discipline of theology. For example: in the field of History of Christianity, one may ask what roles women played in the early church. Or in the field of practical theology (cognate field of homiletics) one may ask, do women and men hear sermons differently. In

the field of systematic theology, one may ask why women and men conceptualise God differently etc.

Content Themes

Due to the limited time we have in this course, it is not possible to cover all the cognate fields within Gender Studies; hence, we will focus only on Feminist Theology as a field of study within gender studies. We will cover the following topics:

- Definitions: patriarchy, gender, androcentricism etc;
- Experience as a cornerstone of Feminist Theology—many feminisms—e.g., womanist; Mujerista, African women's theologies
- Broad categories of feminist theologies—Radical/revolutionary; Reformist and Reconstructionist
- Becoming competent in the right tools for particular disciplines e.g., feminist hermeneutics for Biblical Studies etc
- Applying the tools of Feminist Theology to an analysis of the case study

Outcomes

At the end of this section, students should be able to demonstrate their ability to:

- Demonstrate knowledge of the definitions of key terms in the study of gender e.g., patriarchy, androcentricism etc
- Critically compare different 'feminisms' e.g., womanist, Mujerista etc. African Women's theologies and feminist and womanist theologies
- Identify the broad categories in Feminist Theology
- Apply the tools of Feminist Theology for analysis
- Formulate an independent and considered position with regard to feminist theologies

Prescribed Readings

Rakoczy, Susan. 2004. *In Her Name: Women Doing Theology*. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster.

Part #1: Definition of Terms

- Definitions: Gender, patriarchy, androcentric, culture, violence etc

Part #2: History of Feminism and Feminist Theological Methods

- History of feminism: Three waves. Wave #1, focused on political rights—suffrage. Wave #2 focused on civil rights, reproductive rights etc. Wave #3 focused on experience
- Different types Feminist, Womanist, Mujerista
- Focus on African Women's Theologies—Features/Methods—African Women's Theologies uses same methods—different emphasis
- In relation to classical theological disciplines—same methods—different perspective and different emphasis e.g., Christology, ethics on abortion etc

Part #3: Understanding Patriarchy as a Controlling Ideological Framework in Christianity

- Exercise in groups—Read two stories
- Discuss findings from groups

Conclusion**Gender and Religion (Continued): March 10, 2008****Analysis of the Case Study from a Feminist Theological Perspective**

- Summary of previous seminar

Part #1: Identifying Abuse

- In groups identify the various forms of abuse you can find in the text
- Plenary discussion—which type of Feminist Theology is Simi, the sister, employing? Three types of Feminist Theology—Revolutionary/ Radical; Reformist, Re-constructionist

Part #2: Identifying the Angle/Disciplinary Perspective from which you would want to analyse the Case Study

- In groups suggest how you would apply the tools of feminist analysis to the case study, within one particular discipline or cognate discipline e.g., Counselling, Ecclesiology, Bible, History (Clue: Culture and Tradition), Theology of headship and submission; Ethics of Divorce etc
- Report back and discussion

Conclusion

Assignment Topic

Reading Reaction: Due February 25, 2008

Write a review article for the prescribed book, Susan Rakoczy, *In Her Name: Women Doing Theology*. (Pietermaritzburg: Cluster, 2004). Your review article should be no more than 2000 words. In addition to using the guidelines for reading reactions, also ensure that your review article includes the following:

- Identify the author's main objective for writing this book. In other words what is the point of this book and what is its central argument?
- How does the author go about achieving her objective? Identify at least three ways
- Identify and define some of the theories and methods used by the author to achieve her objective
- Critically appraise the book

Hint: Look at review articles in accredited journals such as the *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* and structure your article accordingly.

Additional Recommended Readings

- Clifford, Anne, M. 2005. *Introducing Feminist Theology*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis.
- Eagleton, Mary, ed. 2003. *A Concise Companion to Feminist Theory*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- Ruether, Rosemary R. 1983. *Sexism and God-Talk: Toward a Feminist Theology*. Boston, MA: Beacon; London: SCM.

Young, Pamela Dickey. 1990. *Feminist Theology/Christian Theology: In Search of Method*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress.

History of Christianity: March 11-12, 2008

Overview

This section of the module will examine what constitutes history as an academic discipline. Special reference will be made to the History of Christianity, a discipline directly related to history but also to theology. Implicitly or explicitly, all theological disciplines make some reference to the past and make use of historical documents. The students will learn to reflect on the role and function of history in theology. Concepts such as history, past, periods, objectivity, criticality, faith and orthodoxy will be referred to.

Content Themes

- Introduction
 - History and the past
 - The sources of historical knowledge
 - Periodisation
 - Is objectivity possible?
 - History of Christianity as an academic discipline
 - History and faith
- History in Kerina's Story
- Group work
- Plenary Session
- Additional input on historical themes identified in Karina's story (texts to be provided by the lecturer)

Outcomes

At the end of this section, students should be able to demonstrate their ability to:

- Define in simple terms what constitutes history as an academic discipline
- Reflect how History of Christianity as an academic discipline relates to faith and theology
- Identify historical markers in an narrative with a theological content

Assignment Topic

Choose a journal article or a chapter of a book clearly located in the field of History of Christianity, preferably, but not necessarily, in relation to southern Africa. Minimum length: 15 pages. Ensure that the text is perfectly referenced.

Answer the following questions:

- What is the paper's research question (period, area, theme...)?
- On what sources (primary or secondary/oral, written, archaeological/ published or unpublished) is the paper based?
- How would you assess the paper's contribution to the knowledge of the Christian past?

Additional Recommended Readings

Elphick, Richard and T. R. H. Davenport, eds. 1997. *Christianity in South Africa: A Political, Social and Cultural History*. Cape Town: David Philip.

Hastings, Adrian. 1996. *The Church in Africa: 1450-1950*. Oxford: Clarendon Press.

Hofmeyr, J. W. and Gerald J. Pillay, eds. 1994. *A History of Christianity in South Africa*. Vol. 1. Pretoria: HAUM Tertiary.

Biblical Studies: March 13-14, 2008

Content Themes

In responding to the case study from the field of Biblical Studies, we will carefully consider both Old Testament and New Testament texts relevant to the issues of gender, masculinity, marriage, divorce, and violence. Students will be introduced to a variety of scholarly critical tools, especially socio-historical and narratological approaches to the Bible.

The emphasis will be on detailed exegesis of particular Biblical texts, but we will also reflect on how we move from text to context. The relationship between Biblical Studies and Theology will also be explored, via this case study.

Outcomes

At the end of this section, students should be able to demonstrate their ability to:

- Critically analyse texts using the theories and methods employed by Biblical scholars.
- Explain the relationship between a critical engagement with the text and a critical engagement with a particular context

Prescribed Readings and Assignment (Old Testament)

Read the following essay provided during the first week of lectures:

Clines, David J. A. 1995. David the Man: The Construction of Masculinity in the Hebrew Bible. Pages 212-243 in *Interested Parties: The Ideology of Writers and Readers of the Hebrew Bible*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press.

Read 2 Samuel 13:1-22, and answer the following questions in writing (to be handed in on March 10, 2008 at lecture):

- Identify each of the characters and what the text tells us about each.
- What is the role of each of the male characters in the rape of Tamar?
- How would you characterise Amnon's masculinity, considering each of the following:
 - What prevents Amnon initially from acting on his desire/lust for Tamar (v. 2)?
 - What enables him to act on his desire/lust (vv. 4-6)?
 - How does he react to Tamar's arguments (v. 14)?
 - How does he behave after he has raped Tamar (vv. 15-17)?
- What does Tamar say to Amnon when he assaults her?
- What do each of things Tamar's says indicate about her understanding of masculinity?
- What are the dominant forms of masculinity in your context (especially in marriage) and what alternative redemptive forms of masculinity can we draw on from our religious and cultural traditions?

Prescribed Readings (New Testament)

- Nickle, Keith Fullerton. 2001. *The Synoptic Gospels: An Introduction, Revised and Expanded*. Louisville/London: Westminster/John Knox Press.
- Brueggemann, Walter. 2001. Biblical Authority. At <<http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=2104/>> [Accessed January 25, 2008].
- Draper, Jonathan A. 2001. Old Scores and New Notes: Where and what is Contextual Exegesis in the New South Africa? Pages 148-168 in *Towards an Agenda for Contextual Theology: Essays in Honour of Albert Nolan*. Edited by McGlory T. Speckman and Larry T. Kaufmann. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster.
- Okure, Teresa. 1995. Reading from This Place: Some Problems and Prospects. Pages 52-66 in *Reading from This Place: Social Location and Biblical Interpretation in Global Perspective*. Edited by Segovia, Fernando F. and Tolbert, Mary Ann. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress.

Note: It is important that you refer to these readings in your assignment.

Assignment (New Testament)

- How does synoptic scholarship help to account for issues of unity and diversity in the gospel tradition? Illustrate your answer by referring to the similarities and differences between Mark 10:1-12 and Matthew 19:1-12? (30 marks)
- If you were to counsel Kerina on the basis of these texts, what factors would you take into account in interpreting the texts before counselling her? (20 marks)

Due Date: April 2, 2008. Length: 1200 words. Please submit to Ms. Patricia Bruce <brucep@ukzn.ac.za>.

Systematic Theology: May 5-6, 2008

Introduction

Our conception of different theological themes particularly those that constitute our theologies seem to have a major influence on the way we relate to other people whether at home, in our neighbourhoods, at work, or even with people of other races and religious backgrounds. For example, one's understanding of the Christian notion of sin may determine the kind

of a relationship that person might have with his or her neighbours (the word 'neighbour' here should be understood in a broader sense). This is particularly so because in most cases our comprehension of such themes (e.g., God, sin, salvation church, and others) is more than likely to influence our sense of morality. This section therefore seeks to investigate how protagonists in Kerina's story probably understand some of the doctrinal concepts listed above with the view of finding the underlying cause for the kind of theology with which the characters in the story are operating. Simultaneously, this section seeks to look at the possible implication that might have on the way these characters understand ethical issues such as divorce and violence.

Content Themes

The following themes will be covered in this section:

- Conceptions of God/*Imago Dei*
- Christian notion of sin
- The church
- Priesthood
- Ethical issues in Kerina's story

Outcomes

At the end of this section, students should be able to demonstrate their ability to:

- Understand key Christian doctrinal themes, particularly the doctrine of God, Christian anthropology, soteriology, and ecclesiology
- Analyse as well as understand the conception of these themes, especially as they impact on one's sense of morality and approach ethical decision making
- The significance of some hermeneutics of suspicion as a way of keeping some checks and balance on the kind of theology they receive and later adopt

Prescribed Readings

Migliore, Daniel L. 1991. *Faith Seeking Understanding: An Introduction to Christian Theology*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans. (Chapters #4 and #7).

Slee, Nicola. 2003. *Faith and Feminism: Introduction to Christian Feminist Theology*. Longman and Todd: London.

Assignment Topic

- Discuss how protagonists in Kerina's story, understand the following theological concepts:
 - God
 - Sin and grace
 - Salvation
 - The church
- Give a detailed analysis of how this understanding affects ethical decision making in this story.
- Note that to be able to do the above:
 - You first need to identify what you think are ethical issues in this story and why
 - Thereafter, you need to offer an analytical explanation of how the understanding of the doctrinal themes listed above informs the process of ethical decision making in this story, particularly around the ethical issues you have identified.

Additional Recommended Readings

Ruether, Rosemary R. 1995. *Imago Dei: Christian Tradition and Feminist Hermeneutics*. Pages 267-291 in: *The Image of God: Gender Models in Judeo-Christian Tradition*. Edited by Kari Elisabeth Børresen. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress.

Ross, Susan A. 2002. Church and Sacrament—Community and Worship. Pages 224-242 in *The Cambridge Companion to Feminist Theology*. Edited by Susan Frank Parsons. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

LaCugna, Catherine M., ed. 1993. *Freeing Theology: The Essentials of Theology in Feminist Perspective*. New York, NY: HarperSanFrancisco.

African Theology: May 7-8, 2008

Introduction

The aim of this section is to introduce you to some of the rich variety of Christian Theology in Africa, and to bring to your attention some of the major theological questions which are being raised by it. On the first day of

this section, you will be introduced to what African Theology is, and how it developed, what the theological sources are and the different methodological open to them. On the second day you will be introduced to specific issues of African rites of passage and how some African Theologians have thought through them. The story of Katrina will be examined from the perspective of African marriages and culture in the mission and African Initiated churches.

Content

- The Theological method
 - Introduction to African Theology
 - The sources of African Theology
 - The task and Method of Theology in Africa
 - Black Theology
 - Doing Theology as African women
- Christianisation of African rites of passage with special focus on marriage
 - The story of Kerina from the perspective of African Christian marriages

Outcomes

At the end of this section, students should be able to demonstrate their ability to:

- Define African theology
- Analyse the theories and methodological issues involved in constructing an African theology
- Identify the various sources of African theology
- Assess the contribution of different African theologians on the issue of African marriages
- Differentiate the different methodological approaches to African theology
- Identify the major themes in African theology
- Construct a clear and coherent argument in dialogue with scholarly debates on African Christian marriages
- Appreciate the diversity in African theology
- Acknowledge the place of difference in the doing of theology and promote dialogue
- Recognise resources within the African context that may be useful to church and society

Prescribed Readings

- Parratt, John. 2004. Introduction. Pages 1-15 in *An Introduction to Third World Theologies*. Edited by John Parratt. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Pobee, John. 1997. The Sources of African Theology. Pages 23-28 in *A Reader in African Theology*. Edited by John Parratt. London: SPCK.
- Phiri, Isabel. 1997. Doing Theology as African Women. Pages 45-56 in *A Reader in African Theology*. Edited by John Parratt. London: SPCK.
- Sawyer, Harry. 1997. What is African Theology? Pages 9-22 in *A Reader in African Theology*. Edited by John Parratt. London: SPCK.
- Tshibangu, Tharcisse. 1997. The Task and Method of Theology in Africa. Pages 29-35 in *A Reader in African Theology*. Edited by John Parratt. London: SPCK.
- Tutu, Desmond Mpilo. 1997. Black Theology and African Theology—Soul Mates or Antagonists? Pages 36-44 in *A Reader in African Theology*. Edited by John Parratt. London: SPCK.

Assignment Topic

“We make no apologies for pleading for African theologies, because this is in fact how theology has evolved over the years” (John Pobee 1997:24)

In relation to the statement above, do a comparative analysis of the African theologies of the following authors:

- a) John Pobee
- b) Harry Sawyer
- c) Tharcisse Tshibangu
- d) Desmond Mpilo Tutu
- e) Isabel Apawo Phiri

Or:

Write an assignment, answering the following questions:

- a) To what extent is marriage central in African societies?
- b) In what way is it dangerous to the African women?
- c) Propose a theology that protects both men and women in African Christian marriages

Additional Recommended Readings

- Idowu, Bolanji. E. 1965. *Towards an Indigenous Church*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Kanyoro, Musimbi R. A. 2002. Engendered Communal Theology: Women's Contribution to Theology in the 21st Century. Pages 158-180 in *Talitha Cum! Theologies of Africa Women*. Edited by Nyambura J. Njoroge and Musa W. Dube. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster.
- Maluleke, Tinyiko Sam. 1997. Half a Century of African Christian Theologies: Elements of the Emerging Agenda for the Twenty-first century. *Journal of Theology in Southern Africa* 99 (November), 4-23.
- Oduyoye, M.A. 1995 *Daughters of Anowa: African Women and Patriarchy*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis. [Chapter #5].
- Phiri, Isabel Apawo. 1998. The Initiation of Chewa Women of Malawi: A Presbyterian Woman's Perspective. Pages 129-145 in *Rites of Passage in Contemporary Africa*. Edited by James L. Cox. Cardiff: Cardiff Academic Press.

Public Theology³

Overview

This section of the module introduces students to the discipline of public theology. Public theology is usually understood as making the Christian faith intelligible in the public arena. This case study indicates another aspect of public theology, namely, that theology has to learn from other disciplines that contribute to public life, in this case jurisprudence. This section therefore serves to introduce students to the importance of interdisciplinary work, and to make clear that addressing concerns in the public realm requires students to acquire a range of non-theological skills in order to be better pastors.

³ This section of the course was offered in 2007.

Content

- The students are introduced to the theme of public theology.
- The students are introduced to the four 'steps' of liberation theology—which becomes the framework for the rest of the discussion
- The students become familiar with the legal framework of domestic violence in South Africa
- The students reflect on what this means for their theology

Outcomes

At the end of this section, students should be able to demonstrate their ability to:

- An appreciation of respectful dialogue with the social sciences, and a willingness to learn from them
- A familiarity with the four steps of theological work suggested by liberation theology
- Approaching the public square as well as the domestic sphere with a commitment to justice for all citizens regardless of their position in the family or community
- Having a working knowledge of the law with regards to domestic violence; Holding theological ideas and pastoral practice to account in terms of their life-giving orientation

Prescribed Readings

- Koopman, Nico. 2003. Some Comments on Public Theology Today. *Journal of Theology for Southern Africa* 117, (November), 3-19.
- Boff, Leonardo and Clodovis Boff. 1987. How Liberation Theology is Done. (Chapter #3), Pages 22-42 in *Introducing Liberation Theology*. Tunbridge Wells, Kent: Burns and Oates.