

For Ever Trapped? An African Voice on Insider/Outsider Dynamics within South African Old Testament Gender-Sensitive Frameworks

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ABSTRACT

The desire to "fit in" within one's sphere of operation does not seem to be a challenge for teenagers only. It appears to be inherently human. Those whose operational sphere is academia also have such a desire. Since the inception of feminist theologies in South Africa in the early eighties, gender-identified biblical frameworks have started trickling in slowly but surely. Just like many a scholar within mainstream biblical studies, gender-identified biblical scholars have been hard pressed between mimicking what has been and continues to be done by mainstream biblical scholars elsewhere in the Global North and what would be more specific to their local context. Within such a setting, insiders to academia, who choose to have their gender frameworks first and foremost informed by the concerns of their own local (read: African) contexts, rather than outside, albeit hegemonic contexts, are familiar with the challenge of a split identity. Within a scholarly context whose mimicking of Eurocentric frameworks remains a norm if not natural, an insider/outsider who chooses to remain first and foremost relevant to the context of many a person on the ground becomes trapped, almost like a royal cow; damned if one accompanies it and damned if one leaves it unattended. The present article is an attempt at elaborating on such insider-outsider dynamics as they are played out within selected South African OT gender-sensitive biblical scholars' works.

A WHAT NOW OF ARTIFICIAL HORNS?

Those who have been trained in the discipline of Psychology of Education are familiar with the fact that a secondary school adolescent succumbs to peer-pressure without effort. An adult-in-the-making has a deep desire to fit in! Even those who are not well-versed with the preceding discipline, but had played a role of primary educators (read: parents), are surely conversant with some of the teenagers' "strange" behaviour, one which was definitely not learnt from the home front. As a young girl, I grew up in a "foreign" home context. Already then, I had begun the painful struggle of having to deal with a split identity. In *apartheid* South Africa, white female beauty was the norm. In order to fit into such a model of beauty, young and adult black females alike, used skin lightening creams such as highlight, ambi and bright and lovely among others, to change the shade of their skin colours. Within such contexts, a slogan

such as "Black is beautiful" (cf. Steve Biko), would not have made any sense at all. Being frustrated by the coarse texture of our hair, we would use a hot iron / stone to "stretch" our hair in a bid to make it resemble the hair of white children. A real predicament!

Such a struggle did not end with one's maturity into adulthood. Neither was it restricted to the realm of female beauty. It permeated our lives as a whole. Although a context in which one was nurtured taught that *naka tša go rwešwa ga di gomarele hlogo* (counterfeit horns cannot stick permanently on a different head),¹ due to repression and political powerlessness, I found myself hard pressed to be validated by the dictates of the white status quo. I struggled hard to fit in, to be what I was not! One therefore had to learn the dynamics of fitting into the outsider dominant white (read: Afrikaner) culture, while also remaining faithful to African culture. The insider/outsider dynamics became even more visible as I enrolled for Biblical Studies at a historically black university. None of my lecturers shared my racial and gender identities. The (theological) offerings which were consumed had basically nothing to do with the African context that South Africa was or is supposed to be.

Does it then occasion any surprise that within the preceding setting, there would have been a deliberate disjoint between academia and the political lives of the power-less? Does it create any wonder that in one's later academic endeavours, one's split identity would be further revealed within one's position as an insider/outsider in a "foreign" home front, once more? As can be expected, one's efforts to foreground the African context in one's OT studies would not be that easy. It indeed continues to be a struggle, even many years into a democracy. An example can be cited in this regard. In an article where an attempt was made to re-read the text of Jer 21:1–10 through the lens of an African woman in South Africa, a woman who was portrayed as being in exile at home, one peer-reviewer remarked that although the article had a story to tell, such a story was not fit for an accredited journal, but for a magazine!

The repercussions of seeking to do justice to an African context in one's academic endeavours, including in one's endeavour to foreground not only Africa, but the experiences of African women, will earn one an insider/outsider status. The words of Masenya (ngwan'a Mphahlele) come to mind here:

. . . ours is a theological education characterized by one assuming the role of an insider in one context and that of an outsider in another context. One becomes an insider as one is being trained as a student, an insider to the theologies which are foreign to oneself, an

¹ The Northern Sotho proverb says: *dinaka tša go rwešwa ga di gomarele hlogo* (counterfeit horns cannot stick permanently on a different head). The proverb's meaning is: attempts at imitating others, however excellent they might be, will prove inefficient on account of their simulated nature.

insider as one trains African students in Western-oriented studies of the Bible, an insider as one does research. If the research conducted is not played according to the rules inside the game, it will not earn this "insider/outsider" accreditation to the Western academic status quo, which itself remains basically an outsider to the African status quo.²

Given the short background sketched in the preceding paragraphs, it makes sense that when two black male academics persuaded me to prepare a paper on feminist theology, my first response would be negative. The fact that I am engaging a theme such as the present one, gives the reader a small glimpse that since I presented my first paper on what I then called Black feminist theology in 1991³ (*Feminist Theology*), one never stopped reading, researching and writing on issues pertaining to African women's experiences in their interaction with the Christian Bible.

Given the preceding background on one's insider/outsider status within academia regarding the struggle to foreground Africa in one's scholarly endeavours, the patriarchal contexts which have produced our theological offerings, the Eurocentric nature of theological education on the African continent (including in South Africa),⁴ the insider/outsider dynamics would also feature in gender-conscious biblical hermeneutical frameworks. The preceding introduction was meant to show the links between the insider/outsider status of an African academic both within the broader discourse of biblical scholarship and the specific discourse of gender-sensitive approaches to the Bible and Theology. Such a continuity is possible within an academic setting which continues to set great store by Western (read: outsider) epistemologies and philosophies. Such a dependency syndrome by South African OT scholars was observed by Ferdinand Deist almost two decades ago when he lamented:

² Masenya (ngwana' Mphahlele), "Teaching Western-Oriented Old Testament Studies to African Students: An Exercise in Wisdom or in Folly?," *OTE* 17/3 (2004): 460.

³ Masenya, Madipoane J. "A Feminist Perspective on Theology with Particular Reference to Black Feminist Theology." *Scriptura* 49 (1994): 64-74.

⁴ In this regard, Thiam *et al.* remark: "If Africa is to be rehabilitated in its historical role, if African Christians are to develop their confidence as citizens of a continent where Christianity has a future, there is a thorough-going work to be done. African theologians must stop begging for European books which have been written for empty pulpits, and by authors most of whom no longer set foot in a church. If African theologians are to make a commitment today to invest themselves in the evangelisation of the continent, to make their contribution to universal theology, and to comprehend their history which still needs to be rewritten, then they need to get to work." See Jean Pierre Thiam *et al.*, "Moving Forward in Hope: What Prospects for Theological Education," *MF* 98-99 (2002): 58

However, I must confess that I am sometimes irritated by a certain colonial inferiority complex that still haunts our academic work. This complex is best illustrated by a tendency in our work to accept and follow without due critical assessment every "latest trend" from abroad as gospel for biblical interpretation. We are so busy "keeping up with the Joneses" that we do not consciously ask ourselves whether what we are importing has any relevance whatsoever for our own questions. . . . Our inferiority complex makes it important for us to be "one up" on our colleagues in the next congress. So we feverishly ride our individually imported hobby horses and memorise the latest jaw-breakers of our theory of biblical interpretation – *only to lose sight of our continent and the contribution we can make from its perspective.*⁵

As it will be hopefully revealed later in this article, it will not be an exaggeration to apply the gist of what Deist says to the works of gender-sensitive scholars within the circles of South African Old Testament (SAOT) scholarship. Despite the fact that feminist theology took root in South Africa in the early eighties, very few women (and men) seem to have been attracted to feminist/womanist/*mujerista/bosadi* approaches to the Christian (Hebrew) Scriptures. A recent survey has also confirmed that on the whole, very few women scholars contribute their research works to *Old Testament Essays* which is a prestigious scholarly journal of the Old Testament Society of Southern Africa. Masenya [ngwan'a Mphahlele] and Ramantswana observe: "South African scholarship is still white male dominated as evidenced by the current membership of the OT and the outlook of staff in South African universities. The black female and male, and white female is still the 'other' in SAOT scholarship."⁶

Given the history of how Bible and Theology were taught in the South African past and even today, such a relatively low interest in the integration of gender within scholarly works comes as no surprise.

B SITUATING THE "CIRCLE" WITHIN THE DEBATE

The Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians ("Circle") was founded in Accra, Ghana by African women theologians. Most of the founding members were also members of the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWORT). Having noted with concern that within EATWORT, women's experiences were not given the space which they deserved, the Circle foremothers under the leadership of Mercy Amba Oduyoye, founded

⁵ Ferdinand E. Deist, "South African Old Testament Studies and the Future," *OTE* 5 (1992): 315–316.

⁶ Madipoane Masenya (ngwan'a Mphahlele) and Hulisana Ramantswana, "Anything New Under the Sun of Old Testament Scholarship? African Qoheleth's Review of *OTE* 1994–2010," *OTE* 25/3 (2010): 598–637.

the Circle in 1989. With the founding of the Circle, a forum was created in which African women theologians and biblical scholars of various religious traditions, could critically engage African women's varied experiences particularly in light of African religious and cultural practices.

Since its inception, the Circle members have published many books. Some of the members have published monographs and numerous scientific articles. Some of the SAOT scholars whose works will be engaged with in the following paragraphs, are Circle members. Sarojini Nadar, one of them asked the following pertinent question at one of the SBL sessions in Washington, DC (2006): "Who, within global scholarship read(s) Circle works?" The preceding question begs attention within the debate on insider/outsider dynamics as they are experienced by women scholars who operate mainly outside of mainstream gender-identified frameworks.⁷

Why? Research has revealed that Western scholars basically do not refer or quote non-Western (read: African) canons. The preceding revelation was confirmed by my review of the twentieth anniversary edition of *Women's Bible Commentary*. I cited the example of HB womanist scholar, Renita Weems, whose framework is outside of mainstream feminist biblical hermeneutics. Most of the authors, who engaged some of the prophetic books, highlighted the problematic metaphor of Yahweh as a faithful Husband and Israel as a disobedient wife. They revealed the effects which such a metaphor had and continue to have on the lives of flesh and blood women. What I found revealing is that despite the fact that Weems was one of the earlier women scholars who engaged such metaphors, only one author, who is probably of African descent referred to Weems' work.

As previously mentioned, some of the women scholars whose works will be engaged with in the present text are Circle members. The Circle, almost like South Africa's rainbow nation, comprises women of all races, Black/African, White, Coloured and Asiatic/Indian. In the context of the debate on insider/outsider dynamics, the following questions are worth asking: which female context qualifies as a legitimate context for interrogation by Circle theologians? May it be each woman's individual context? Such a context will not only do justice to the diversity of female experiences in South Africa, it will also enrich various gender-conscious frameworks both on the African continent and globally. Is the legitimate context of the Circle women's interrogation that of the so-called "African women"? Why does there seem to be a percep-

⁷ Refer to a chapter by Isabel A. Phiri and Sarojini Nadar on the naming of various gender-conscious frameworks within Circle scholarship: See Isabel A. Phiri and Sarojini Nadar, "Introduction: 'Treading Softly but Firmly,'" in *African Women, Religion, and Health: Essays in Honor of Mercy Amba Ewudziwa Oduyoye* (ed. Isabel A. Phiri and Sarojini Nadar; Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 2006), 1-16

tion among Western or Western-identified⁸ scholars that the notion of readers' context should of necessity refer to an African context for example? Could it be that the Euro-American imperial context/culture is so universal that it defies naming or being used as an object for research? Is this perhaps the matter of the proverbial goat whose secrets are exposed with ease while the sheep's secrets remain hidden?⁹ Could the preceding observation be revealing that even within gender-sensitive advocacy scholarship, imperialism continues to thrive unsanctioned?

With the preceding brief Circle background in view, we now take a quick glance on the scholarship of six¹⁰ South African gender-sensitive OT scholars to see which insider/outsider dynamics might be visible within some of their writings.

C BRIEF SKETCH OF THE WORKS OF GENDER-CONSCIOUS SAOT SCHOLARS

Frances Klopper embraces feminism as a framework within which she engages the HB. Her works on the springs and wells in the conceptual world of Israel through ANE iconography,¹¹ desired and abhorred fountains,¹² women, monotheism and the gender of God¹³ among others, bring an important and

⁸ Such a perception seems to exist among the scholars irrespective of whether they are physically located in the West or not.

⁹ The Northern Sotho proverb, *O se bone tša bopudi magakala, tša bonku di bipilwe ka mesela*, literally, "do not be amazed when you look at those which belong to the goats when they are exposed, those which belong to the sheep, are also there, however, they are hidden beneath the(ir) tails." The tenor of the proverb reveals that it is fine to expose the secrets of those who are powerless; it is only the powerful, who must be spared embarrassment through their secrets in tact.

¹⁰ The present section is not meant to review the scholars' works as a whole, neither is it meant to ignore the works of emerging scholars within the field of South African OT gender-conscious scholarship. Within the space constraints of the present article, the survey is meant to give the readers a brief glimpse into the gender-identified frameworks within which the scholars operate in a bid to reveal how the dynamics of insider/outsider are played out in their works.

¹¹ Frances Klopper, "Springs and Wells in the Conceptual World of Israel through Ancient Near Eastern Iconography," in *Stimulation from Leiden: Collected Communications to the XVIIIth Congress of the International Organization for the Study of the Old Testament, Leiden 2004* (ed. Hermann M. Niemann and Matthias Augustin; Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2006), 225-238. See also her "Oë in die Wildernis. Putte en fontein in die Ikonografie van die Ou Nabye Ooste." *Journal for Semitics* 13/2 (2004): 286-313.

¹² Frances Klopper, "The Rhetoric of Conflicting Metaphors: A Fountain Desired in the Song of Songs but Abhorred in Leviticus," *OTE* 15 (2002): 675-686.

¹³ Frances Klopper, "Women, Monotheism and the Gender of God," *IDS* 36 (2002): 421-437.

refreshing contribution to SAOT scholarship. Klopper also engages themes such as lamentation, rape and the feminine portrayal of cities in the HB through a feminist lens in a bid to challenge patriarchy both within the biblical text and modern day readers' contexts.

Klopper's scholarship, as is typical of mainstream feminist biblical scholarship, does not appear to foreground and engage with a particular social location. The latter could be her social location as a white woman in South Africa with its divided racial history; or as a woman of Caucasian descent located within the African continent or as a white woman located within a global white hegemonic culture. An important question to be posed here is: What kind of insights could white women bring to the feminist global table if they had deliberately acknowledged their privileged socio-economic positions by challenging not only sexist ideologies but also classist and colonising ideologies within both biblical texts and readers' contexts? In my view, the scholar's deliberate engagement of her unique experiences within the Afrikaner culture could broaden and thus enrich her feminist contribution to SAOT scholarship.

In her earlier works, **Sarojini Nadar** embraces the Womanist framework within an Indian South African context.¹⁴ In other works though, Nadar claims her identity as an African woman and uses the experiences of African women as a hermeneutical lens through which to engage the HB. In her article titled, "Barak God and Die! Women, HIV and a theology of Suffering" Nadar chooses to keep an ambivalence of the meaning of the Hebrew word *barak* (bless or curse), and uses African women's experiences as a hermeneutical lens through which to engage the theme of how not to talk about God in the midst of the challenge posed by HIV and AIDS.¹⁵ In later writings, Nadar together with Phiri, employ a "missiological feminist framework."¹⁶ In an earlier article

¹⁴ Sarojini Nadar. "A South African Indian Womanist Reading of the Character of Ruth," in *Other Ways of Reading: African Women and the Bible* (ed. Musa W. Dube; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature / Geneva: WCC Publications, 2000), 159–175.

¹⁵ Sarojini Nadar, "'Barak God and Die!' Women, HIV and a Theology of Suffering," in *Grant Me justice: HIV/AIDS & Gender Readings of the Bible* (ed. Musa W. Dube and Musimbi R. Kanyoro; Orbis Books: Maryknoll, 2004), 60–79.

¹⁶ Isabel Phiri and Sarojini Nadar use indigenous resources to critique patriarchy in the context of HIV and AIDS. In their commitment to come up with a *transformative* research, they are of the opinion that the research exercise can serve as an instrument for mission. Cf. Isabel A. Phiri and Sarojini Nadar, "Talking Back to Religion and HIV & AIDS Using an African Feminist Missiological Framework: Sketching the Contours of the Conversation" (paper read at the Ph.D Seminar, University of Oslo, 2010). A question to be asked is: how convincing is the scholars' choice of the contested term "missiological" particularly within an African context? Also, in their commitment to get indigenous resources in the fight against HIV and AIDS, could using a Western designation such as "feminist" for their framework fit the purpose?

though, Nadar had already interrogated and critiqued the case of the rape by Jacob Zuma within the context of the same framework.¹⁷ Having engaged pertinent issues such as dangerous fundamentalist readings of the Christian Bible and their adverse repercussions on women's lives, the conspiracy of rape both within the biblical text and in the lives of present day women,¹⁸ the challenge of HIV and AIDS among others, Nadar has in my view, made a much needed contribution to SAOT scholarship. However, what would be curious for the present engagement is Nadar's move from womanism through the "generalised" category of "African women," to a mainstream designation such as "feminist." Could it be that hers has been a struggle to fit into the designation which albeit not necessarily sufficient for her Indian South African women's context, would earn her acceptance within mainstream feminist discourses? Could it be that in one way or other, Nadar might be struggling with the insider/outsider dynamics in her scholarship?

Having lived, studied and done research in the United States for a number of years, the South African HB scholar, **Juliana Claassens** posed a question on how to situate herself in such a way as to be faithful to her specific social location (cf. her native context such as South Africa) as well as a second context such as the United States. Informed by such a dual, global location, Claassens employs a feminist lens to engage themes such as trauma, lamentation, gender-based violence¹⁹ in ways which affirm affected women. In her recently published work, Claassens uses the feminine metaphors of God in order to foreground the experiences of modern day human women in an assuring way.²⁰ Charting a terrain of trauma and pain, one hardly addressed by SAOT scholarship, a needed terrain given not only the violent context which South Africa has become particularly post-1994, but the deadly roads which our roads have become in recent years, Claassens's contributions to SAOT scholarship is a much needed breather. As an active member of the Stellenbosch chapter of the Circle, she has co-edited a volume with Stella Viljoen.²¹ The preceding volume reveals the authors' skilful intersection of gender, religion and popular culture,

¹⁷ Sarojini Nadar, "Toward a Feminist Missiological Agenda: A Case Study of the Jacob Zuma Rape Trial," *Missionalia* 37/1 (2009): 85-102.

¹⁸ Sarojini Nadar "'Texts of Terror': The Conspiracy of Rape in the Bible, Church and Society: The Case of Esther 2:1-18." Pages 77-95 in *African Women, Religion and Health: Essays in Honor of Mercy Amba Ewudziwa Oduyoye*. Edited by Isabel A. Phiri and Sarojini Nadar. Pietermaritzburg: Cluster Publications, 2006

¹⁹ L. Juliana M. Claassens, "Breaking the Silence about Gender Violence? In Conversation with The Girl with the Dragon Tattoo," in *Sacred Selves: Essays on Gender, Religion & Popular Culture* (ed. L. Juliana M. Claassens and Stella Viljoen; Cape Town: Griffel, 2012), 1-46.

²⁰ L. Juliana M. Claassens, *Mourner Mother Midwife: Reclaiming God's Delivering Presence in the Old Testament* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press), 2012.

²¹ L. Juliana M. Claassens and Stella Viljoen, eds., *Sacred Selves: Essays on Gender, Religion & Popular Culture* (Cape Town: Griffel, 2012).

all geared at affirming definitions of personhood. Claassens is one of the few white feminist biblical scholars who needs commendation for going beyond the category of gender, to include other pertinent categories such as race and class in her interaction with the HB text.

Not being comfortable with Western-originated frameworks such as feminism and womanism, **Makhosazana Nzimande** has developed the *Imbokodo*²² post-colonial, post-apartheid approach to the reading of the HB. In her doctoral thesis,²³ Nzimande has used the *imbokodo* lens to engage the subject of the *gebbirah* (queen mothers) in the HB. She investigates how helpful such a lens might be in doing biblical hermeneutics within the context in which black South African women are burdened by multiple factors such as race, class, gender, geography, sexual orientation and empire. In an academic setting in which white Eurocentric hegemonic culture remains entrenched, within a country which has become an empire on the African continent,²⁴ a scholarship such as Nzimande's, one which seeks to re-read the HB with a view to challenging multiple ideologies such as class, geography, race, gender, sexual orientation and empire among others, can only be a much needed contribution to the field.

Nzimande's boldness to choose a framework which, albeit non-mainstream, could in her view do justice to the experiences of black women in her social location, should be welcomed. She would probably have resonated with Okure's words that:

Our greatest, but not yet fully tapped resources, are these so-called ordinary women. They are close to life at the grassroots; they see

²² In the South African political history, the popular expression in the affirmation of black women was: *wa thinta abafazi, wa thinta' imbokodo (tshilo), o zu ku fa!* Its literal meaning is: strike a woman, you strike a rock (*imbokodo*), and you will die! According to Nzimande, "*Imbokodo* was an important commodity in traditional Zulu African homesteads and villages, so often utilized on a day-to-day basis that it could not be loaned to neighbours. . . Without *imbokodo* there is no food in a traditional African household." See Makhosazana K. Nzimande, "The Gebirah in the Hebrew Bible in the Light of Queen Jezebel and the Queen Mother of Lemuel," (Ph.D diss., Brite Divinity School, Texas Christian University, 2005), 22. In claiming a word that designates the important role of women's work for the survival of black families for her gender-sensitive framework, in my view, Nzimande is affirming the agency of black women themselves towards their well-being in the post-colonial, post-apartheid South African context.

²³ Nzimande, "The Gebirah."

²⁴ President Jacob Zuma's recent unfortunate remark about the Malawian "African" roads (which in his view, cannot compare with the "decent" South African roads) is one among many remarks birthed by an imperialist attitude of many a South African persons towards other countries on the continent in which South Africa is but a part, the African continent.

themselves in the texts of scripture and respect them as God's abiding word, sometimes too literally and in ways that oppress than liberate them. The professionally trained African women theologians, on the other hand, can be tempted to subscribe to abstract ways of theologizing in order to find acceptance in the field. Thus they can lose focus on life, or seek answers to hermeneutical questions put by others, instead of identifying and addressing their own questions. The sisterhood in reading is needed by all.²⁵

Although Nzimande's decision to seek answers for questions posed at her local context is commendable, within the context of insider/outsider dynamics, such a choice might be costly. Apart from criticisms which she might incur even from those of her own kind, is the possibility of a struggle to get upward academic mobility due to the possibility of her canons failing to make sense to many a gate keeper.

She is one if not the only feminist scholar who works mostly with a book which seems to be a no-go area for many a SAOT gender-conscious scholar, the book of Judith. **Helen Efthimiadis-Keith** approaches the book of Judith in a unique but helpful way, thus also bringing freshness to SAOT gender-conscious scholarship. In her attempt to engage patriarchy effectively, Efthimiadis-Keith employs in particular the theories of Jung, the psychologist to investigate the "why" of patriarchy. In her view, the main challenge with patriarchy lies basically in the hurt and wounded male psyche. It is no wonder that she has opted for the psychoanalytic Jungian perspective to the reading of the book of Judith. For Efthimiadis-Keith, the book of Judith functions as a whole to represent in a symbolic way, the male psyche's fear of castration, and the fear of the "other."²⁶

In her article titled, "What Makes Men and Women Identify with Judith? A Jungian Mythological Perspective on the Feminist Value of Judith Today,"²⁷ Efthimiadis-Keith engages the book of Judith in a way which may affirm both men and women. What inspired her to write the article was the amazingly positive response to the book by her African students. That Efthimiadis-Keith has made a major contribution to feminist hermeneutics with her book titled, "The Enemy is Within: A Jungian Psychoanalytic Approach to the

²⁵ Teresa Okure, "Invitation to African Women's Hermeneutical Concerns," *AJBS* 19/2 (2003): 74.

²⁶ Helen Efthimiadis-Keith, "Judith: Lorena Bobbit of Yesteryear? A Psychoanalytical Perspective on the Book of Judith According to the Castration Complex," *Scriptura* 70 (1999): 211.

²⁷ Helen Efthimiadis-Keith, "What Makes Men and Women Identify with Judith? A Jungian Mythological Perspective on the Feminist Value of Judith Today," *HTS* 68/1 (2012); Art. Art. #1267, 9 pages. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/hts.v68i1.1267>.

Book of Judith"²⁸ is without doubt. Yolande Steenkamp has captured the latter observation succinctly in her review of the book:

The author's approach is to be welcomed. Fresh and enthralling, it reads as the opening of a beautifully wrapped gift, introducing every character of the narrative anew with the untying of every bow. Not only does the author address the main research problems of *Judith*, making marked contributions to the discussion from a distinctly different approach, but she also manages to sweep the reader along on a journey through the strangely enigmatic hills and valleys of the human psyche. Encountering *Judith* and its characters through the eyes of Jung, the reader simultaneously encounters his/her own being and state of development. Putting the book down, the reader has grown in knowledge, understanding and (write it!) consciousness: of *Judith*, of him/herself, and even of the author, who presents herself openly as part of the research process. A fascinating read.²⁹

Although the unique contribution of Efthimiadis–Keith in challenging the evil of patriarchy needs to be lauded, one wonders how effective her contribution on a book such as *Judith* might be in a conservative grassroots context in which such books are either given second class status or no status at all. Another question worth asking is: is the consciousness which the oppressor or oppressed come to gain after analysing a book such as *Judith*, only restricted to patriarchy? Within such a consciousness, is there room given to the multiple forms of domination bothering mostly, the historically marginalised, that is, those who are located on the less advantaged parts of the globe?

As we introduce her narrative, we recall the proverbial counterfeit horns which cannot stick on a different head. Initially, after becoming attracted to women's liberationist theologies through reading feminist resources, **Madi-poane Masenya (ngwan'a Mphahlele)** underwent her first surgery and came out carrying feminist horns. In her continued research on gender issues, she came to realise that African American women articulate their own experiences uniquely through their womanist framework. She noticed then that sooner rather than later, another surgical operation would be needed. Why? The African American women's situation appeared to be closer to that of African–South African women in terms of addressing issues of class and race. Her surgical procedures were prompted by her desire to name herself in line with her insider status within an African context. While at Garrett–Evangelical Theological Seminary as a visiting scholar, she became aware that despite the close points of resemblance between African American Womanism and what might be an African–South African gender-sensitive biblical hermeneutical framework,

²⁸ Helen Efthimiadis–Keith, *The Enemy is Within: A Jungian Psychoanalytic Approach to the Book of Judith* (Boston: Brill Academic Publishers, 2005).

²⁹ Yolande Steenkamp, review of Helen Efthimiadis–Keith, *The Enemy is Within: A Jungian Psychoanalytic Approach to the Book of Judith*, *OTE* 19/1 (2006): 337–366).

Womanism was still uniquely African American. On account of the latter discovery, and Masenya (ngwan'a Mphahlele)'s commitment to make "Africa" a hermeneutical focus³⁰ in her interaction with the biblical text, she decided to name her framework a *bosadi* (womanhood) approach to the reading of biblical texts. Within the latter framework, she has attempted to redefine what it means/ought to mean to be a woman within an African–South African context. Her last session of surgery enabled her to put on horns which would in her view, for the first time hopefully stick.³¹

Although her primary hermeneutical focus is the experiences of African–South African women, the *bosadi* concept was developed not only with national and continental concerns in mind, but also with global concerns. The word *mosadi* does not only occur in the Northern Sotho setting, it also occurs, though in different words, in other South African indigenous languages such as in the following examples: *wansati* (Xitsonga); *umfazi* (isiZulu); *musadzi* (Tshivenda); *mosadi* (Setswana and Sesotho).³² Masenya (ngwan'a Mphahlele) has deliberately made the African–South African women's context the main hermeneutical focus by using a familiar word, a male–construct,³³ in her desire, to first and foremost be committed to her own context, responding to questions asked first and foremost within her own context.³⁴

³⁰ In the light of this preoccupation with Africa and its concerns, it becomes a misunderstanding to regard the *bosadi* approach as a local approach, restricted only to the Northern Sotho. See Sarojini Nadar, "A South African," 159–175; Tinyiko S. Maluleke "African 'Ruths,' Ruthless Africas: Reflections of an African Mordecai," in *Other Ways of Reading: African Women and the Bible* (ed. Musa W. Dube: Atlanta: SBL / Geneva: WCC Publications, 2001), 237–251. Although the Northern Sotho African–South African context serves as point of departure within the *bosadi* framework, Masenya (ngwan'a Mphahlele)'s goal was to include other African–South African contexts. The latter, would also not be far–fetched compared to other African contexts elsewhere on the continent.

³¹ Madipoane Masenya (ngwana' Mphahlele), "An African Methodology for South African Biblical Sciences: Revisiting the Bosadi (Womanhood) Approach," *OTE* 18/3 (2005): 744–45.

³² Masenya (ngwana' Mphahlele), *How Worthy is the Woman of Worth? Proverbs 31:10–13 in an African–South African Context* (Peter Lang: New York, 2004), 122.

³³ See Maluleke, "African 'Ruths,'" 243–244. Although Maluleke is right in arguing that the *bosadi* concept is a male–construct, I find this to be an unfortunate criticism given the patriarchal history which has shaped the languages of the world. I am not aware of any words used to designate women for example, "woman," "feminine" and "female" which were originally coined by women. In the light of such a history, I have employed this male–constructed terminology, and redefined it, to affirm those who have not only been named, but those whose roles have been defined and prescribed by outsiders to their gender. See Masenya (ngwana' Mphahlele), *How Worthy?*, 122–158.

³⁴ Deist, "South African," 315–316; Okure, "Invitation," 74

It can be argued that the major hermeneutical focus of the *bosadi* biblical hermeneutic is the unique experiences of an African–South African woman with a view to her emancipation. It is first and foremost, an African gender sensitive hermeneutic. African women, facing such multiple life–denying forces such as sexism in the broader South African society which was exacerbated by the legacies of colonialism and *apartheid*, sexism in the African and broader South African culture, post–*apartheid* racism, classism, HIV and AIDS, xenophobia among others, are made the main hermeneutical foci. Using the *bosadi* approach, Masenya (ngwan’*a* Mphahlele) has re–read numerous HB texts including the book of Proverbs, Ruth, Genesis, Esther, Judges, Jeremiah and Job. She argues that she has had a constant taste of the *bosadi* framework being excluded from among other (mainstream?) gender–conscious hermeneutic frameworks as well as the taste of unwarranted criticism against the *bosadi* concept.³⁵ She has also had a taste of witnessing emerging African women scholars who embrace the *bosadi* concept as they found it to be more relevant to the women’s experiences in their own local contexts. She is able to navigate through all these, aware of her insider/outsider status within what in her view, continues to remain a “foreign” home front.

D CONCLUSION

From the preceding engagement, it has hopefully become clear that the situation of a gender–conscious academic with an insider/outsider status, is reminiscent to that of a royal cow. Damned if one accompanies such a cow and equally damned if one leaves it unattended. Choosing not to mimic mainstream gender–sensitive frameworks but to develop own home–grown, home–friendly frameworks, ones which would first give priority to the needs of local women, will naturally come with a price, a price so high that one might struggle to gain upward academic mobility. Yet for activist scholars like gender–sensitive scholars, charity of necessity has to begin at home, particularly given the historical deprivation of such home fronts. At the same time, one cannot work in isolation in a global village. Forming synergies as gender–conscious biblical scholars, with a commitment to learning from each other irrespective of how developed (or not) our native continents are deemed to be, can only prove help-

³⁵ Refer to Phiri and Nadar, “Introduction,” 16; Gloria K. Platjje, “Toward a Post–Apartheid Black Feminist Reading of the Bible: A Case of Luke 2:36–38,” in *Other Ways of Reading: African Women and the Bible* (ed. Musa W. Dube; Atlanta: SBL / Geneva: WCC Publications, 2001), 114–142. Maluleke’s remarks to such critiques are instructive: “It is my reticence that Masenya’s proposal, although not always argued well and often misunderstood, blazes a new trail and holds great potential for future African hermeneutics. Unlike many critiques of Masenya, my reticence about *bosadi* has little to do with its ethnic tenor. *Bosadi* is no more ‘ethnic’ than Alice Walker’s womanism or Oduyoye’s bold and otherwise preposterous declaration that all African women are ‘daughters of Anowa,’ an Akan woman. It is inadequate and ineffectual to engage Masenya at this level.” Maluleke “African ‘Ruths,’” 243.

ful according to the wisdom underlying the proverbial hand which washes the other. The following questions are worth asking though: in our unequal global contexts where specific philosophies, epistemologies and frameworks have historically shaped and continue to shape knowledge in all its multifacetedness, a context in which knowledge productions from other continents have been and continue to be marginalised, one where other scholars appear to be destined to be perpetual consumers of what they have not produced, could a daring scholar's urge for innovation and originality be entertained and nurtured? Could such an urge flourish? Answering the preceding questions in the affirmative should not take an effort for justice-seeking, gender-sensitive, margins-conscious biblical scholars.

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