Male Gender Construction and Representation in Paul:

Reading 1 Thessalonians Through a Gender Critical,

Postcolonial Optic

by

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DECLARATION

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ABSTRACT

Interpretational approaches to 1 Thessalonians tend either to (excessively) problematise and question the 'authoritative voice of Paul,' or to (naively) lionise that same voice, thereby creating a deep tension between what amounts to an academic and a faith based or ecclesial approach. The tension is made all the more palpable when the discursive-rhetorical role of the biblical text is considered in relation to the construction and representation of masculinity. Broadly speaking, then, critical approaches are the province of the academy, while approaches that affirm the normativising role and centrality of Paul, belong to the church. The latter approach, which I characterise as pre-critical and/or ideologically biased, narrowly construes the possibilities for masculine identity construction and representation by seeing masculinity as fixed and stable. Textual engagement conforms to the more traditional approaches of interpretation which, while elucidating likely historical and textual frameworks for meaning-making, tend to either be agnostic about the gendered nature and discursive quality of the text, or downplay the presence of gendered bodies altogether. Critical approaches, by contrast, bring the gendered nature of the text into sharper relief, but often in inaccessible ways. By critical, I mean, approaches specifically aimed at paying meticulous attention to aspects of 1 Thessalonians that are assumed, on ideological/theological grounds, to be precluded from an investigation of the meaning of the text. In other words, while some critical approaches to 1 Thessalonians problematise the text (and its interpretations), not all critical approaches are interested in the question of gender generally, and of masculinity, specifically. At the centre of this dissertation, then, is the question of how 1 Thessalonians reveals a discursively constructed and represented masculinity and draws on the critical optic of gender criticism and postcolonial biblical criticism to "offer more language and recognition to those who found [find] themselves ostracised because they did [do] not confirm (sic.) to restrictive ideas of what it means to be a man or a woman" (quotation from Judith Butler, in Jaschik, 2017). The objective, moreover, for developing and applying this optic to 1 Thessalonians, is to model ethically responsible hermeneutics and in the context of masculinity, break open the narrow ways in which the biblical text is often interpreted and used to shape the "biblical" notion of masculinity (and femininity). In this study, I maintain that the polysemy of the biblical text, especially when read through the lens of gender criticism and postcolonial biblical criticism, together with an understanding of the discursive-rhetorical dimensions of the text, invites wider possibilities for identity construction and representation. This is crystallised in the transgendering which Paul, Silvanus and Timothy seem to adopt in the letter to the Thessalonian assembly.

OPSOMMING

Interpretatiewe benaderings tot 1 Tessalonisense is geneig om die "gesaghebbende stem van Paulus" (op oordrewe wyse) te problematiseer of te bevraagteken, of om (op naïewe wyse) dieselfde stem te verheerlik, en sodoende diep spanning te skep tussen wat as 'n akademiese en geloofsgebaseerde of kerklike benadering beskryf kan word. Die spanning word des te meer waarneembaar wanneer die diskursiewe-retoriese rol van die Bybelse teks met betrekking tot die konstruksie en voorstelling van manlikheid in aanmerking geneem word. Oor die algemeen is kritiese benaderings die forte van die akademie, terwyl benaderings wat die normativiserende rol en sentraliteit van Paulus bevestig, aan die kerk behoort. Laasgenoemde benadering, wat ek as voorkritiese en/of ideologiese vooroordeel kenmerk, beperk die interpretasie van die moontlikhede vir manlike identiteitskonstruksie en uitbeelding, deur manlikheid as vas omskrewe en stabiel te beskou. Interaksie met die teks is in ooreenstemming met die meer tradisionele benaderings tot interpretasie, wat alhoewel hulle die waarskynlike historiese en tekstuele raamwerke vir betekenisvorming belig, geneig is om óf agnosties te wees oor die gender aard en diskursiewe kwaliteit van die teks óf die teenwoordigheid van gendered liggame buite spel plaas. Kritiese benaderings, daarenteen, bring die geslagtelike aard van die teks skerper in beeld, maar dikwels op ontoeganklike maniere. Met krities bedoel ek, benaderings wat spesifiek daarop gemik is om noukeurig aandag te skenk aan aspekte van 1 Tessalonisense wat dikwels en op ideologiese / teologiese gronde uitgesluit word van die soeke na die betekenis van die teks. Met ander woorde, terwyl sommige kritiese benaderings tot 1 Tessalonisense die teks (en interpretasies daarvan) problematiseer, is nie alle kritiese benaderings ingestel op die tema van gender in die algemeen nie, en ook nie van manlikheid in die besonder nie. Sentraal tot hierdie proefskrif is dan die vraag hoe 1 Tessalonisense 'n diskursief gekonstrueerde en uitgebeelde manlikheid aan die lig bring, en steun hiervoor op die kritiese optika van genderkritiek en postkoloniale Bybel kritiek "[to] offer more language and recognition to those who found [find] themselves ostracised because they did [do] not confirm (sic.) to restrictive ideas of what it means to be a man or a woman" (quotation from Judith Butler, in Jaschik, 2017). Die oogmerk om hierdie optika vir 1 Tessalonisense te ontwikkel en toe te pas, is om eties-verantwoordelike hermeneutiek te modelleer en die beperkende maniere waarop die Bybelse teks in die konteks van manlikheid dikwels geïnterpreteer word en gebruik word om die "Bybelse" idee van manlikheid (en vroulikheid) te vorm, te bevraagteken en uit te brei. In hierdie studie huldig ek die opinie dat die polisemie van die Bybelse teks, veral wanneer dit deur die lens van genderkritiek en postkoloniale Bybelse kritiek gelees word, tesame met insig in die diskursiewe-retoriese dimensies van die teks, breër moontlikhede bied vir identiteitskonstruksie en verteenwoordiging. Hierdie werkswyse vind uiting in die

transgendering wat Paulus, Silvanus en Timoteus in die brief aan die Tessalonisense-samestelling blyk om te aanvaar.

PREFACE

It has taken seven years to settle on a topic and five more years of research and writing to complete this project. In some ways, settling on masculinity and Paul was less of a choice and more of a calling. I think the topic chose me. At a subconscious level my own wrestling with what it means to be a *male* biblical scholar and Christ-follower plays out in this dissertation. That wrestling has served as the fuel, the passion, to drive towards an articulation of masculine construction that critically assesses the biblical text, its interpretation, and role in shaping a singular masculinity with which I have constantly found myself to be at odds.

While an academic pursuit, this dissertation goes to the very heart of my own personal journey. My story is the intimated, between the lines, hidden transcript that has shaped this dissertation. And it is a story about resistance.

As a story of resistance, it involves deep reflection on the gender discourses that were formational during my earliest years as a child. I can still remember making a conscious decision to live by a different story to the one playing out in front of me as I witnessed the particular relational dynamic between my father and mother and how that impacted my vulnerability as a young adolescent.

The masculinity on show in our home left me feeling alienated, not just emotionally, but bodily. I just was not wired in the same way as my father (or my brother). I often felt like I did not measure up; that I was not good enough for my father. My interests and his simply did not align. I also grew up with a father who, while working hard to provide for his family, was absent from and disinterested in our lives. That absence would result in my pursuit of relationships with other male role models with whom I felt comfortable to be myself, a substitute for a younger me needing something more from my father.

With some sadness, my story with masculinity and with my father, is a story that remains unfinished. It was inevitable that at some point this missing piece from my life would manifest itself. It is no surprise that it has emerged in my PhD which has become a point of reflection as a wrestle with the fact that the unfinished part of the story as it relates to my father can never find resolution.

Alzheimer's is slowly erasing my father from my life. While his memory begins to atrophy, I am left with the memories, haunted by them even in my adulthood, still crippled by the inadequacy I feel when relating to male friends. I don't get to speak of my loss, of the pain of feeling like I

was never good enough, or of the anxiety I feel when interacting in social spaces with other men.

This is my story. And, it is the story that shapes this dissertation.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Psychologist, Angela Duckworth, in her study of why some people succeed and others fail, shows in her research that grit—which she defines as the combination of passion and perseverance for a singularly important goal—is the hallmark of high achievers (2016). Completing a PhD qualifies as a goal of singular importance in the life and career of an emerging academic, and its achievement requires nothing less than raw grit and determination.

While a project of this size and scale calls for the kind of singular focus captured by Duckworth's notion of *grit*, it is by no stretch of the imagination a singular affair or individual effort. It has very much been the case that the long journey towards the completion of this dissertation has been made all the more bearable by the company of family, friends, mentors, and colleagues who saw in me more than I often saw in myself; the potential and strength I did not know I possessed. It has been this company who have carried me during the 'dark nights of the soul;' those intrusive moments during the writing phase where the enormity of the task just seemed cripplingly impossible.

As a fan of J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*, I have often daydreamed myself into the role of Frodo Baggins, the ring bearer, on his quest to destroy the one ring, a quest more achievable because of the company of strange characters who guide and accompany him. My company have been no less strange. But, I could not have wished for a more faithful and loyal and encouraging company to have journeyed with me in this quest. I am deeply grateful.

First and foremost, to my dear wife, Nicki. There are few in my life who truly see me for who I am and, perhaps more importantly, for who I am becoming. You are the love of my life and your strength and support and longsuffering speak to the amazing woman that you are. You have held our family together over the longest time and permitted me the space to pursue my PhD. I am grateful to God for the joy of being able to share with you in the shaping of our children's lives, Chloe and Tyler, together committed to giving them a space to become their own persons. Together with my immediate family, my in-laws, Ras and Denise de Beer, have been an incredible support and source of encouragement. Thank you for your interest in my studies and for helping out with creating the necessary space for me to complete. Dad, I am particularly grateful for your very active engagement in this project. You have read substantial parts of this dissertation and have offered an 'ordinary' but exceptional insight into its evolution. I think, especially, of the countless mind maps and impromptu conversations squeezed in whenever there was a moment. You are both an incredible gift to me.

Second, to Doug and Pam Howie. You have journeyed with us now for going on thirteen years. Your faithful friendship and wise mentorship have shaped my life as a husband, father, Christ-follower and scholar. You have been there on the side lines, cheering me along. And, you have been there in the arena when things were difficult. During my tenure at Cornerstone Institute when things were particularly trying, financially, you rallied a group of incredible people who, together, provided enough support, financially and emotionally, to carry me almost to the end of this long and exciting journey of researching and writing. That group includes: Sue and Barry Halliday, Tony and Pam Toms, Mike and Melinda Winfield, Trevor Hudson, Lynn Pedersen, Patrick and Linda-Jane Tippoo, Dave and Liz Barnes, Bishop Eric and Joyce Pike, Graeme and Jane Codrington, Peter and Dorothy Raine, Mark and Carolyn Neville, Mike and Lynette Botha. Each of your lives have overlapped with my life and I am forever changed.

Third, I extend my gratitude to an important group of conversation partners. The lonely, often frustrating, but always, in the end, satisfying work of writing a PhD dissertation is made less frustrating and more satisfying by the engagement and interest of conversation partners along the way. In the earliest stages of this project I was fortunate enough to establish a connection with Davina C. Lopez with whom I corresponded and shared some of my earliest work and thinking. Davina was very gracious and her own scholarly work has been so impactful in shaping some of my thinking about the NT and gender (especially, masculinity). Davina also made the very brave call, from my perspective, to invite me to contribute a piece to the *Oxford Encylcopedia of the Bible and Gender Studies* (O'Brien, 2014). This was a major catalyst in my academic journey and I am very grateful to you and Todd Penner for your confidence in my scholarly ability. At the tail end of this dissertation, I made contact with Robert Morrell whose scholarly work is very much in evidence in this dissertation. Robert's engagement with me was generous and has gone a long way to shaping a growing passion for the important conversation concerning the knowledge inequality between the global North and global South. Gratitude also goes to my supervisor, Prof. Jeremy Punt. You have been very patient with me over the duration of this project. Your scholarly passion for things gender and postcolonial is everywhere in evidence in this dissertation. And, as I have noted on several occasions in our discussions, whether in person as we conducted site visits for the Council on Higher Education, or via email and WhatsApp, the overlap in our approach and thinking about this field of study in the NT is uncanny. Thank you for your guidance along the way.

Fourth, to a large group of students and students who became friends, and colleagues during my tenure at Cornerstone Institute (2008-2016). Thank you for the opportunity to share in

mutual wrestling with the biblical text, always in the pursuit of seeking to live authentic and faithful lives that make an impact on the world. Special mention goes to my dear friend and former student, Marlyn Faure. The many hours of conversation around my dissertation and our sharing in the research efforts that led to the publication of an article and conference presentation are also evident in this work.

And, finally, to Dr Hendrik Botha and the Boston City Campus & Business College team. Thank you, Hendrik, for creating space for me to bring this project to completion. Your generosity and understanding have made an indelible impact on me.

Dedicated to Nicki, the love of my life

And to Chloe and Tyler, a new generation

with many challenges and

many more possibilities.

"Wanderer, your footsteps are the road, and nothing more; wanderer, there is no road, the

road is made by walking"

— Antonio Machado

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

General

BCE	Before Common Era.
CBS	Contextual Bible Study
CE	Common Era.
cf.	confer (Latin). Compare with; used to refer a reader to another written work for the purposes of comparison.
fn.	footnote.
lit.	literally.
loc.	location. Used to indicate the location of a cited passage or idea from an electronic book in Kindle format that does not contain real page numbers
NA28	Aland, B., Aland, K., Karavidopoulos, I.D., Martini, C.M., Metzger, B.M. and Strutwolf, H. eds., 2014. *The Greek New Testament*. 28th edition. Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, American Bible Society, United Bible Societies.
NT	New Testament.
v.	verse.
vv.	verses.

Bible Translations

ESV	English Standard Version
KJV	King James Version
NAB	New American Bible
NAS	New American Standard Bible
NIV	New International Bible
NJB	New Jerusalem Bible
NKJV	New King James Version
NLT	New Living Translation
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
TNIV	Today's New International Version

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background[1]

The decision to engage Paul from a gender critical perspective with the intention of developing an understanding of how masculinity is both constructed and represented in his letters is not without risk. By fixing our gaze on Paul's masculinity and/or how Paul constructs and represents masculinity—two quite different, though interrelated ideas—results in a repositioning of Paul as a dominant theological and cultural figure; that is, a repositioning of a male whose power, both theologically and culturally, often goes unchallenged.

Despite the associated risk, there is a moral and ethical imperative to engage in this way. That imperative is anchored in the contemporary reality that continues to give expression to various forms of hegemonic and toxic masculinities, impacting the lives of women and men. Because the focus of this study is on masculinity, it is important to foreground a deep personal commitment, on my part, to push for liberative readings of Scripture that first and foremost challenge the oppressive system of patriarchy that has all too often been baptised in the evangelical church tradition as a 'biblical' norm. This is nothing less than a battle for human dignity and equality.

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[1] A note on academic register and the use of the first-person pronoun is in order. The author of this dissertation is both socially located and present in the text and as a consequence, I have chosen to retain the academic register without losing sight of the fact that I am discursively present. While I recognise that it is untypical to make use of the personal pronoun in formal academic writing, I find referring to myself in the third person unnecessarily cumbersome. It also reflects a fundamental shift in academic work that now positions the author not as an objective bystander but as very much present in the persuasive effort that characterises academic work. Moreover, many of the academic texts with which I have engaged appear to have followed a similar pattern. Grammarly (an English writing enhancement platform) has also reminded me that while the purpose of formal writing is to put forth an opinion, I should avoid stating a *personal* opinion since it erodes the objectivity expected of formal writing. At points in this dissertation, I have been venturesome and have offered (personal) opinions based on, hopefully, sound and rigorous academic engagement. These (personal) opinions reflect my commitment to integrated thinking.

While the fight for human dignity and equality is real, we are reminded that the notion of human dignity, in particular, is "surprisingly fragile" (Soulen and Woodhead, 2006: 14). Its fragility is reflected not only in the multidimensionality of the concept (Soulen *et al.*, 2006: 23), but also in the fact that despite its prominence as a foundational aspect of democratic society, informing the human rights enterprise, its meaning is often context-specific, and therefore variable (McCrudden, 2008: 655).

This elusive quality of something so central to contemporary social, political, and increasingly, religious imagination invites deeper engagement and reflection especially within the context of a country like South Africa where we continue to wrestle with what it means to be human, where the struggle for dignity rages on.

The quest, therefore, for human dignity, is also a quest for reclaiming the value of multiple subjectives; for being seen, heard, appreciated and valued as fully valorised persons without discrimination. It is a quest best undertaken within a multiaxial, as opposed to a single-axis, framework that recognises the many and intersecting aspects that play into identity formation (race, gender, ethnicity, religion, etc.).

This dissertation fixes its gaze on male gender construction and representation within the biblical tradition of the New Testament, restricting its focus on Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians, and wrestles with the question of what it means, hermeneutically, to be a man. The question is further nuanced when asked vis-à-vis the role of a religious/sacred text, or body of texts such as the Bible. The necessity to ask this question is informed by the fact that the Bible continues to "fund the religious imagination of the community of faith," (Stegmann and Faure, 2015: 219), exercising an authoritative (authorising) influence on notions of masculinity or femininity. Consequently, this study problematizes the hermeneutical practices of the faith community by introducing a gender-critical, postcolonial optic through which to read the (Pauline) text.

It aims, thereby, to destabilise or disrupt reading practices that are often uncritical/pre-critical, or in cases where critical, are ideologically biased, by arguing that readings of this sort infringe on human dignity by narrowing the possibility for multiple, and competing,

masculinities.[2] By addressing the question of male gender identity as it is represented and constructed in the (Pauline) text of 1 Thessalonians, it is hoped that this study will offer a vision of alternative options for believing men who do not measure up to the so-called biblical notion of manhood, the fruit of uncritical readings of the text, and restore dignity to those marginalised masculine subjectivities.

The driving force for this study is how we—as individuals and communities—can read the (Pauline) text to re-imagine masculine identities as open to the *other*.[3] Given that the biblical text, in general, and the (Pauline) text, in particular, will continue to exercise an authoritative voice within communities of faith, both the academy and the church must begin to listen and learn from one another if we are to make significant inroads into issues of injustice. Nadar (2009: 559), argues that if gender violence is to be eradicated, the task of deconstructing and re-constructing masculinity belongs both to the academy and "popular" society. She further asserts that, "If serious academic reflection on masculinity is not 'translated' for men who are searching for positive masculinities, then Angus Buchan's mighty men will continue to flourish at the expense of wo/men" (Nadar, 2009: 559), and I would hasten to add, at the expense of men as well.

Our contemporary context desperately needs a confessional space for men; for men of all kinds to confess the benefit accrued because of the privilege of masculinity, to give testimony to male life in the contact zone of negotiating masculinity, to be heard in different ways, acknowledged, accepted, and perhaps even forgiven. To confess in this way, is not to attempt to reclaim or reassert a position of power, but rather, to step away from a system of patriarchy and toxic masculinity that is affecting everyone. It is to create a space of

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[2] Uncritical, pre-critical, and critical readings that are ideologically biased should all come into focus as the object of disruptive and destabilising reading processes.

[3] Through textual engagement with the letters of Paul, an emerging paradigm of kenotic masculinity can be traced. By *kenotic* masculinity, I mean a form of masculinity that, while recognising the privilege accrued to men, a consequence/benefit of the system of patriarchy and hegemonic masculinity, choose, nevertheless, to not exploit such privilege for their own advantage, but instead subvert the system. This conceptualisation of masculinity bears some resemblance to the important work of Zimbabwean theologian, Ezra Chitando's work on men as agents of gender and on redemptive masculinities (2010; Chitando and Chirongoma, 2012).

vulnerability; a space in which to engage in truth-telling; to expose the hegemony.

The driving force behind this dissertation can only be achieved when we recognise that the space in which we conduct such a study is a deeply contestational space where sobered judgments need to be made about whether and how to employ biblical texts in the service of human dignity. And in this space, we are reminded that the landscape has changed, that the days of biblical interpretation being seen "as the ground work, the foundation, the spade-work which in relay-baton style is passed on in some ostensible raw form to be processed into theology by systematic theologians," (Punt, 2013a: 13) are gone. Our work as biblical scholars is to endeavour "responsibly, accountably and ethically to describe the parameters of involving biblical texts in today's deliberation on human dignity, and to continue to stimulate further critical reflection" (2013a: 13).

1.2 Problems and Delimitations

In this section I lay out some crucial challenges, which I then distil into a carefully crafted problem statement, to which this dissertation attempts a response.

1.2.1 Crystallising the Main Challenges

This dissertation circles around a cluster of interrelated problems. At root, the problems are hermeneutical in nature and may be outlined as follows:

(1) Establishing the meaning of the (Pauline) texts is a task undertaken by both the academy and the church.[4] Both exercise control over textual meaning and both are suspicious of the other (to varying degrees). This is of particular concern

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[4] "Church" is a problematic designation since as a representative term it paints everyone associated with it with the same brush. I mean to use the term, throughout this dissertation, to refer to a generic expression of the evangelical church in South Africa. Having been brought up in the evangelical tradition and completed my undergraduate studies at an institution with a mission statement that clearly positions it within this tradition (Baptist Theological College of Southern Africa is proudly Evangelical in its theological orientation where the Bible is the cornerstone of all our studies and where we proudly offer studies in the original languages of Greek and Hebrew), my use of the term church as a particular expression of evangelical Christianity, originates from my personal experience. It is, furthermore, an expression of Christianity with which I am at odds, academically-professionally and spiritually.

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because I locate myself both within the academy and within the church. I believe that there is an important role for each to play, but that role cannot and indeed should not be played in isolation of the other.

(2) Engagement with textually constructed conceptualisations of gender, in general, and of masculinity, in particular, is often handled very poorly within the context of the church with its tendency to approach both Scripture and gender in a pre-critical fashion, or from a deeply entrenched theological/ideological bias. Approaches of this kind have generally neglected the multiple and complex social, political, and cultural layers present in the text. This often results in a flattened notion of gender, reducing it to mere biological essentialism, with a fixed, definitive, normative, and therefore universal, understanding of what it means to be female or male. The polysemy of the (Pauline) texts, I argue, challenges readings of this kind. But such polysemy only surfaces when (a) the text is engaged in a critical mode, where the fundamental disposition of the inquirer is to question what is in and behind the text and its interpretations; and, (b) ordinary readers are engaged in the task of establishing the meaning of texts.[5]

(3) Likewise, within the academy with its critical approach to both the bible and gender, there is a reticence to push for meaning-making beyond the confines of the hallowed halls of scholarly community. Such reticence represents a failure in scholarship to address the crucial intersection between gender (as part of a multiaxial system that includes race, class, sex, etc.) and the biblical text in the context of real-world challenges. This is a failure, I submit, that scholarship in the South African context can ill afford. The stakes are too high.[6]

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[5] Having conducted what is known as contextual bible studies for the last seven years with marginalised communities with my students from Cornerstone Institute, it is clear that textual meaning is never as stable as we want it to be. This does not mean, of course, that the meaning is open-ended, but the constraints on the meaning of the text are largely contingent on the nature of the imposed hermeneutical framework. The driver behind contextual bible studies is that the context of ordinary readers, especially those who are marginalised in one way or another, contributes to the meaning-making enterprise.

[6] Judging from news reports and social media feeds, the stakes are not only high for South Africa. Globally, the experience of toxic masculinity (e.g., the recent #MeToo on social media platforms) is begging for response and action.

(4) The construction and representation of masculinity in (Pauline) texts needs to be problematised on a number of different levels. First, we should question why Paul occupies such a central role in the discourse on gender, generally, and why when it comes to masculinity very little seems to have been produced.[7] Second, questions about the derivative authority that transfers from an authoritative figure, such as Paul, to the (authoritative) interpreters (of Paul), must be foregrounded. How is this authority used? To what and whose end? And, third, constructions of masculinity that are without nuance and that do not take the complex setting that frames Paul's engagement within an imperial system must be seriously challenged.

(5) Academic and ecclesial engagement with the first letter to the Thessalonians has tended to fixate on matters related to the end times, rapture,[8] moral (sexual) purity[9] and a theological quietism. That is not to say that the question of gender has not surfaced in scholarly works. Where gender has been the focus, attention has been drawn, for example, to the androcentric language in the letter (Cornelius, 2000; Fatum, 2002);[10] the approach has been in the service of a feminist agenda.[11] Or,

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[7] On balance, gender-focused studies of Paul usually draw attention to how women are/are not represented in his letters and to the hierarchical formulations of family life seen in the *Haustafeln*, for example. Here the work of Kraemer and D'Angelo (1999) is to be noted. This is not to say that masculinity does not feature at all. Indeed, we may note the important work of Moore and Anderson (2003); Penner and Vander Stichele (2007); Vander Stichele and Penner (2009); Conway (2008), but it is to foreground an area for ongoing development.

[8] See, Luckensmeyer (2009); Ascough (2004); Plevnik (1975).

[9] See, Bassler (1995); Smith (2001); Verhoef (2007); De Villiers (2006).

[10] Cornelius' analysis of 1 Thessalonians concludes by noting that (1) the preponderance of androcentric language in the letter are "probably" as a result of the patriarchal culture proscribing the discourse; (2) a new translation and interpretation of the letter is necessary so that women can be included; and, (3) the church needs to take up the challenge to reconsider the role of women in the church. Her second conclusion is obviously problematic. Using more gender inclusive language does not address the systemic problem that the text originates within a patriarchal context and has underwritten a deepening patriarchy that does not disappear when you translate ἀδελφοὶ with "brother *and sisters.*"

[11] This is not a critique so much as an acknowledgement of the intentionality of the engagement with a letter like 1 Thessalonians. I am in full support of this agenda.

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take another example, also from a feminist perspective, an approach to the letter that asks about the absence of women, women as invisible in the text but present in the material culture (Johnson-DeBaufre, 2010).

(6) There appears, then, to be a lacuna in Pauline scholarship addressing the question of gender construction and representation, especially of masculine construction and representation.

Given the challenges noted above, I offer the following distilled problem statement:

Interpretational approaches to 1 Thessalonians tend either to (excessively) problematise and question the 'authoritative voice of Paul,' or to (naively) lionise that same voice, thereby creating a deep tension between what amounts to an academic and a faith based or ecclesial approach.[12] The tension is made all the more palpable when the discursive-rhetorical role of the biblical text is considered in relation to the construction and representation of masculinity.

Broadly speaking, then, critical approaches are the province of the academy, while approaches that affirm the normativising role and centrality of Paul, belong to the church. The latter approach, which I have characterised as pre-critical and/or ideologically biased, narrowly construes the possibilities for masculine identity construction and representation by seeing masculinity as fixed and stable. Textual engagement conforms to the more traditional approaches of interpretation which, while elucidating likely historical and textual frameworks for meaning-making, tend to either be agnostic about the gendered nature and discursive quality of the text, or downplay the presence of gendered bodies.

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[12] It is important to note that while the particular framing of this matter appears to support a binary construction that positions the academy against the church and vice versa, in reality academic and ecclesial approaches share a hermeneutical spectrum. For example, there are ecclesial approaches that are heavily dependent on critical scholarship. Similarly, there are academic approaches that are deeply ecclesial since they seek to serve that community.

Critical approaches, by contrast, bring the gendered nature of the text into sharper relief, but often in inaccessible ways. By critical, I mean, approaches specifically aimed at paying meticulous attention to aspects of 1 Thessalonians that are assumed, on ideological/theological grounds, to be precluded from an investigation of the meaning of the text. In other words, while some critical approaches to 1 Thessalonians problematise the text (and its interpretations), not all critical approaches are interested in the question of gender generally, and of masculinity, specifically.

At the centre of this dissertation is the question of how 1 Thessalonians reveals a discursively constructed and represented masculinity which draws on the critical optic of gender criticism and postcolonial biblical criticism to "offer more language and recognition to those who found [find] themselves ostracised because they did [do] not confirm (sic.) to restrictive ideas of what it means to be a man or a woman" (quotation from Judith Butler, in Jaschik, 2017).

In an accretive manner, then, each chapter builds towards a rereading of 1 Thessalonians from a gender and postcolonial perspective that invites a socio-literary (and playful) exploration of the fluidity of gender constructions and representations in the context of the first century CE. Exploration from the perspective of these angles will bring the concrete setting of Roman imperial ideology and its influence in shaping the discourse on gender into sharper relief. 1 Thessalonians is, as I will show, implicated in the imperial gender discourse and perpetuates patriarchal hierarchies, but it also represents an act of resistance precisely because in it, Paul, Silvanus and Timothy assume transgender roles (infant[13] and nurse) which when understood within the apocalyptic-eschatological framework of the gospel, invites new possibilities for understanding masculinity.

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[13] Together with women and slaves, children were gendered as a category defined in relation to what it means to be a man. In other words, in the Greek and Roman context, masculinity was definitive for what constituted humanity. Women, slaves and children were considered weak, vulnerable, and in Roman imperial ideological terms, penetrated (or feminine). For an exploration of the gendered nature of children, see Punt (2017b). Thus, for Paul, Silvanus and Timothy to assume the metaphorical role of infant and nurse was to assume a transgressive masculinity.

1.2.2   Circumscribing the Study: Tough Decisions

Given that this dissertation addresses the question of masculine construction and representation in Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians and seeks to do so from the perspective of a gender critical and postcolonial perspective, it is important to demarcate the boundaries as clearly as possible.

First, this study is circumscribed by its commitment to employ gender criticism and postcolonial criticism to its reading of 1 Thessalonians. Just what is meant by gender criticism and postcolonial criticism, and the relationship between the two approaches, receives more detailed attention in chapters three and four. Suffice to say, both approaches, regardless of degree of overlap, reveal layers of complexity that cannot be accounted for in this dissertation. Such a recognition implies that decisions about what to include and what to exclude have been taken, for better or worse. No doubt, my blindspots will be laid bare.

By employing gender criticism and postcolonial criticism I have chosen to bring the two approaches together to offer a bifocular[14] view of 1 Thessalonians. That said, for purposes of demonstrating my understanding of the two approaches, I have had to handle them in two separate chapters.

Second, I have narrowed my textual engagement to tracing the rhetorical landscape of the text of 1 Thessalonians. By rhetorical, I mean something quite specific. Authors intend to do something with their words; they seek to persuade their readers/auditors. As such, I understand rhetorical analysis to be interested in the texture of the text as a mechanism for persuading the audience. Framed another way, words create worlds. Paul, Silvanus and Timothy are seeking to create, establish, and maintain a particular world ordered by

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[14] I employ bifocal as a metaphor to capture the conjoining of gender and postcolonial (biblical) criticism. As a metaphor for the approach, I mean to draw attention to the fact that the two theoretical constructs, while distinct, offer a unique vision of the biblical text when brought together. There is, of course, a measure of overlap between the two theoretical constructs. That overlap is especially visible when the two theoretical constructs bring power into sharper focus. Thus, while a bifocal lens is singular, it offers two different perspectives which bring the overlaps into sharper focus (what is near and what is far).

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the apocalyptic-eschatological gospel of Jesus Christ, his death and resurrection. This notion of rhetoric is echoed in Penner and Lopez (2012: 42), who write, "The critical issue for interpreters of rhetoric, then, is assessing what type of worlds—and personal and communal embodiments thereof—are created, nurtured, and sustained by Paul's rhetoric." Thus, both the text and the text-maker are *doing* something with the text, and we might add, so too are text-interpreters.

It is important to note that the narrowing of my engagement to 1 Thessalonians does not, of course, preclude engagement with other (Pauline) letters. Certainly, it is necessary to begin with a wider frame, enabling a deeper appreciation for the vastness of the Pauline epistolary landscape. Moreover, the path to understanding gender discourse in the (Pauline) letters is often more well-worn in some letters than in others (notably, 1 Corinthians and Galatians). As noted above, 1 Thessalonians does not appear to have received much foot-traffic in this regard and so in order to develop both a feel for what is possible in a textual engagement that focuses on gender and for my own particular approach vis-à-vis 1 Thessalonians, I have deliberately sought to tread where others have trod to be able to tread where few have trod.

This leads me to offer some explanation about choices I have made in respect of conversation partners. My interest is the hermeneutics of masculinity construction and representation in 1 Thessalonians. To pursue this interest, I have had to depend heavily on a broader, more inclusive, understanding of gender as a particular field of study—and this is something I try to develop in chapter three. At first glance, it may appear that there is some confusion about whether I am doing gender criticism or feminist criticism or critical masculinity. However, I see points of connection between each of these and therefore conceive of my approach and engagement with multiple disciplines as an interconnected web enabling meaning-making that results in a thickly textured understanding of gender-cum-masculinity. Perhaps the term *intersectionality* describes it best; understood as the deliberate attempt to bring together knowledge and methods from different disciplines, synthetically, as an approach (Stember, 1991).

In the late stages of this dissertation I was reminded afresh by the fact that my scholarship is located in the concrete setting of South Africa. An awareness of my surroundings and the deep pain, so definitional for so many in my country, forced me to ask questions about

the nature of scholarship and of the dynamics of power that characterises the academic enterprise. There is a definite knowledge inequality between developed and developing economies.[15] That inequality represents a threat to indigenous knowledge systems and imposes the questions of the developed world, the so-called West, on the developing and emerging economy of the global South.[16] The challenge, then, for my own scholarship and for those located in the South African context, my colleagues in biblical studies, is whether we are going be deliberate about locating our scholarship in the red, blood stained soil of this country. This is an important part of my work as a scholar but for obvious reasons, it will not receive the attention it deserves save for a brief, but critical encounter in chapter three.

Third, while the concrete realities of the South African context are uppermost in my mind and inform and drive this dissertation, the practical implications of my research will only be hinted at in the summary chapter. Throughout the dissertation, however, I attempt to make connections between the bifocular optic I develop and the notion of Contextual Bible Study (CBS).

The idea behind CBS is to facilitate meaningful engagement between ordinary readers and learned readers; between untrained and trained. As the method was developed, there is a deliberate attempt to bring together, in an interpretive exercise, readers that are different from each other. The method is also a reader-centred approach that takes the

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[15] The appropriateness of the terminology "developing" and "developed," which sets up an untenable binary, is a matter of ongoing debate. For example, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) speaks of "advanced economies" and "emerging market and developing economies" (Khokhar and Serajuddin, 2015). The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) uses a Human Development Index (HDI), expanding the categories to reflect a more nuanced understanding of development: "very high," "high," "medium," and "low" levels of development (Khokhar *et al.*, 2015). And, philanthropists, Bill and Malinda gates maintain that "developed" and "developing" are passé and prefer, instead, speaking in terms of "lean" and "fat" (Olopade, 2014). While I am conscious of the necessity to problematise the use of "developed" and "developing," and indeed, "global North," and "global South," I have opted to use "developed" and "developing," but have disrupted the "global North/South" notion.

[16] For a recent exposé, see the Op-Ed piece, "Intellectual Property for the 21st Century" in the *Daily Maverick* by Stiglitz, Baker and Jayadev (2017).

social location of the readers (especially, the marginalised) seriously and as the starting point for textual engagement. The strength of the method is that it brings the work of the academy to bear on the lives of ordinary readers, but in a non-threatening and conversational way. I continue to maintain that this method of bible study not only serves what I think is critical at this moment in biblical studies, namely, bridging the gap between the church and the academy, but when used to address how the text is experienced in a gendered way, by ordinary, and marginalised readers, for the new interpretive vistas of meaning that will emerge.

In the end, each of these delimitations points, ultimately, to the ongoing nature of the work that begins with this dissertation. There is a life beyond this project that means to make a difference in the world.

1.2.3 Hermeneutical Tension Between the Church and the Academy

What does it mean to be a man? The answer to this question has been approached from a variety of different angles. On the one hand, there is a religious response to the question, and on the other hand, there is an academic response. These responses represent fundamentally different starting points and methodologies for answering the question. As a consequence, the relationship between the religious, specifically, the Christian evangelical church, and the academy can be described as oppositional at best, antagonistic at worst. Expressed as a semiotic relationship:
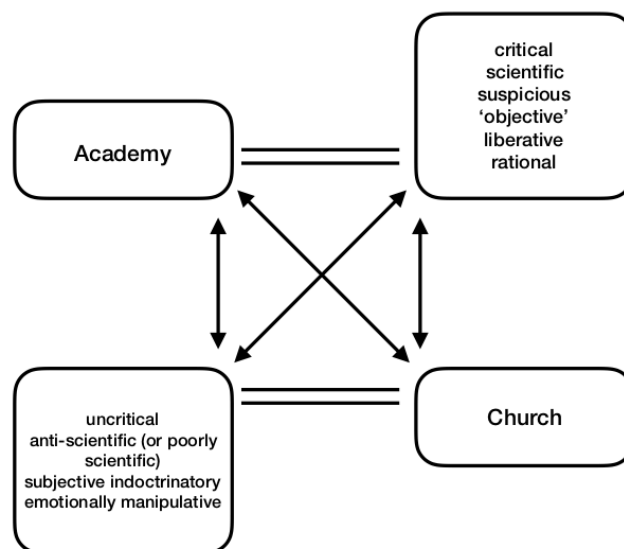
Figure 1-1 Semiotic Relationship: Church and the Academy

The question of what it means to be a man in the context of the church is complicated by the authoritative position the bible occupies in the imagination of the community of faith. Precisely as a sacred text, divinely inspired, the emerging understanding of masculinity takes on a meaning that is fully vested with authority and which contributes to a coherence and univocality on masculine identity.

It is from this vantage point that a biblically authoritative (read, universal)—at least in the mind of the church—expression of masculinity develops. And, it is against this notion of masculinity that all men, all believing men in particular, are measured. Reading the bible in this uncritical/pre-critical[17] manner establishes male identity by clearly delineating the marks of male comportment. It often assumes an ahistorical, or historically agnostic, reading of the Bible, and even when the historical realities of the Bible are acknowledged and foregrounded, the lens through which it is viewed obscures all traces of evidence of divergence, or multiplicity, or competing expressions of masculinities. To be a man from the biblical perspective is to be a certain kind of man in a fixed and definitive sense. This is illustrated in the recent Nashville Statement. Articles VII and XIII (2017) provide insight into the evangelical mindset and read as follows:

> **Article VII: We affirm** that self-conception as male or female should be defined by God's holy purposes in creation and redemption as revealed in Scripture.
> **We deny** that adopting a homosexual or transgender self-conception is consistent with God's holy purposes in creation and redemption.
>
> **Article XIII: We affirm** that the grace of God in Christ enables sinners to forsake transgender self-conceptions and by divine forbearance to accept the God-ordained link between one's biological sex and one's self-conception as male or female.
> **We deny** that the grace of God in Christ sanctions self-conceptions that are at odds with God's revealed will.

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[17] On the Ricœurian paradigm of pre-critical, critical and post-critical hermeneutical modes and its implications for reading the Bible, see Stegmann *et al.* (2015), and my discussion in chapter two, § 2.4.

Biological essentialism. God's design. Foundation of Scripture. Departure from the 'biblical' norm, a sin in need of grace. All fourteen statements tighten and restrict the gender possibilities and reaffirm a quite specific hermeneutical approach to the bible without any explanation. It is, furthermore, clear that there is a mutually reinforcing dynamic at play between the particular view of gender espoused and enshrined in the Statement and the hermeneutical approach which underwrites and supports the view. The hermeneutical approach is informed by the gender view and finds in the biblical text, support for the view.[18]

The Nashville Statement as a product of USAmerican evangelicalism represents a particular expression of the evangelical tradition. It is therefore unwise to assume that all evangelicals, everywhere, subscribe to the Statement, or hold to (all) the statements. It is however accurate to say that within South African evangelicalism, the notion of complementarianism, an essential view of evangelical Christianity, is well represented and supported as *the* "biblical" view of marriage.[19]

The fissure, then, between the church and the academy can be contextualised against the backdrop of the preceding discussion and centres on the naïveté of the church's engagement with Scripture and gender and the deep suspicion shared between them. In my own wrestling with what it means to be an academic with a commitment to the work of the church, I have had to confront both my own suspicion of the church's *dubious* interpretive work and their suspicion of me as an academic who happens also to be a pastor (or the other way around, I am not sure).

By maintaining distance and not engaging with each other, both the academy and church

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[18] The implicit biblicism of this approach maintains, very naïvely, an ignorance about the biblical text which is discursively implicated in the politics of interpretation.

[19] There is great difficulty in trying to argue for a complementarian view of the kind advanced by evangelicals based on the historical complexity informing and shaping the biblical text. This illustrates that while there is a tendency to lean on historical data in the interpretive enterprise of evangelicals, there is a stronger, more dominant interpretive (discursive) grid that shapes the outcome of textual engagement.

lose out. The insights of the academy are crucial in so many ways for the church to take hold of especially as they relate to human identity. And, the academy loses out by losing touch with the concrete realities of life outside of the lecture halls and conference auditoria. In his article, "Do Two Walk Together? Walking with the Other through Contextual Bible Study," Gerald O. West (2011: 449) captures the importance of bringing people together. From his discussion, I extrapolate a similar bringing together of the academy and church. West writes in his conclusion: "Our struggle for survival, liberation, and abundant life for all requires us to collaborate with the social movements of the marginalised; our collaboration in this struggle is what generates the call to come and do Contextual Bible Study."

1.2.4   Bible, Gender, and Power in South Africa

The complexities of the South African context with its history as a colony of the Dutch (1652), then British (1795), then for a brief moment, the Dutch again (1803) followed by the British who remained in control throughout the nineteenth century (1806), and of course, apartheid (1948-1991) has fundamentally shaped masculinities (and femininities). This makes approaching the question of how masculinities are constructed and represented all the more labyrinthine. Navigating the text (and its world) is complex enough, so by adding to the mix the concrete realities of the South African context, our task becomes that much more challenging. Stella Viljoen (2008: 336) echoes this in her approach to masculinity in a post-apartheid South Africa from the perspective, noting that "studying gender or masculinity in the South African context is a doubly charged endeavour because of the history of racial inequality that defines this country."

Another layer to the complexity of a colonial past is the introduction of Christianity through the missionary movements of the Moravian Brethren with the arrival of George Schmidt (1737). In 1742, Schmidt baptised five Khoi-Khoi which created a political crisis for the Colonialists of the Cape who were now faced with a conundrum. Would baptised indigenes be afforded the same civil and political rights as Colonists? The question was answered by forbidding Schmidt, not yet ordained, to baptise the indigenous people.

Without rehearsing the long history since the arrival of the first missionaries and the introduction of Christianity through the vehicle of colonisation, it is important to note that that history has been complex and has seen expressions of Christianity that have given

the oppressed hope for a new day and mobilised liberative movements and simultaneously been used as the foundational architecture for unspeakable human degradation and oppression (the apartheid system).

Thus, we have layers of power and bible and gender intersecting in many different ways and with a range of other sociological aspects (such as race and class). Unpacking the question of male gender identity in a post-apartheid context is, therefore, not as straightforward. The history of South African is embodied; it is written into the millions of bodies that continue to experience the after effect of that past; it is embedded, systemically, into the fabric of our social institutions.

The question then of masculinity, its construction and representation, in this context is fundamentally a hermeneutical issue and it is motivated by two primary concerns. First, the importance of interrogating the ways in which the biblical text has been interpreted and employed in constructing masculinity in parochial and hegemonic ways; as a means of enforcing a particular understanding of what it means to be a man and therefore exclusionary of any other possibilities outside these universalised and naturalised norms. And, second, despite, or because of, a history of oppressive interpretations of the biblical text, there is necessity to transform our reading practices in a context where the biblical text continues to exercise a formational role in the Christian community, not least as it pertains to issues of gendered identity, whether of male or female, and where this text continues to function authoritatively.

1.2.5 Text, Image and Identity Formation

The role of media culture[20] in shaping identity is not new. Though its mode and the technology of delivery may have changed radically over time, the role and influence of media, of images, in particular, as a means of signification has always been part of the fabric of society and the strategic means by which ideology is conveyed and identity constructed.[21] On this point, Davina C. Lopez (2012: 94-95) offers a critique of the implicit

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[20] Culture understood as the values, beliefs, ideologies and preferences (Robbins, 1996: Loc. 255).

[21] Morrell (2006: 14) confirms this when he observes, "Masculinity is neither biological nor automatic. It is socially constructed, can take many different forms and can change over time. There

hierarchical relationship between text and image, noting that within the field of New Testament scholarship, words (text) have been seen as the "*primary* means of communication and signification." Indeed, students "of Paul, of the Bible, and of religion" (Lopez, 2012: 94) are students of the text. Lopez proposes an approach to the study of the New Testament in general, and to Paul in particular, that seeks to recognise the interconnectedness of text and image, image now as an intertext.[22] She thus attempts to dissolve the hierarchical relationship between the two, viewing both the text and the image as interconnected "sites from which to think about power relationships and constructions of knowledge" (2012: 95).[23]

Text and image and their various configurations constitute critical elements in the construction of identity for the Christ-follower communities of the first-century CE. These communities, like their Jewish antecedents were texted or scripted—even in its oral-based context, these communities were rooted in a textual-oral-worded tradition.[24] These texted traditions were not merely reflective of community identity, but were constitutive of that identity. The texts (and the oral tradition) which form part of the cultural memory served "to stabilize and convey that society's self-image" (Punt, 2012b: 30). Thus, as Vander Stichele and Penner (2009: loc. 1396) have suggested, texts themselves have "both a 'life' and an 'effect.'"[25] And examination of the 'life' and 'effect' of texts, from a gender-critical perspective, as proposed by Vander Stichele and Penner (2009: loc. 1410, italics added),

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are many different, culturally sanctioned ways of being a man; not one universal masculinity. In turn, this reminds us that masculinity is acted or performed."

[22] Brigitte Kahl (2010: 3-4) frames the issue by articulating the aim of her study of Galatians, namely to bring into dialogue a wide range of conversation partners, including: art history, classical studies, theories of ideology and theology, feminist, postcolonial and empire-critical approaches.

[23] Jonathan L. Reed (2007: 15) notes the important role of archaeology in providing a wider angle of vision for making sense of the NT.

[24] Jeremy Punt (2008b: 268) notes Paul's discourse of power in formulating an alternative world through texts. See also Punt's "Identity, Memory and Scriptural Warrant" (2012b) in which the notion of memory is unpacked with reference to the text.

[25] "Language does more than simply make a statement or pass on information. Words are spoken or written with the aim of *doing* something to the hearer(s)—that is, evoking some sort of response" (Stanley, 2004: 22). This marks a hermeneutical shift characterised by Thiselton as "the shift of emphasis to what *effects* a text *produces*" (1992: 5).

"helps us to appreciate better how *the shaping of a body of literature has a correlating effect on the formation of early Christian identity*."

To read a body of texts is to read the body of a community and to do so is to read how bodies, individual and collective, were visually presented, re-presented, imaged, and re-imaged in the first century. Vander Stichele and Penner (2009: loc. 1381), again, capture this well when they observe that, "a gender-critical analysis seeks to expose the ways in which discourses in general and texts in particular embody (as well as reinscribe and contest) authority structures, which themselves persistently seek to discipline and regulate the body, both individual and collective."[26] In other words, "the human body constitutes one of the most important maps, for it is a microcosm of the larger social macrocosm" (Neyrey, 1991: 283). Thus, the physical body, however it is (re)presented, is a symbol of the social body, the body politic.[27] The early Church of the first century CE, thus, engaged in an exercise of identity construction,[28] and this in a context of multiple and competing social identities. Social identity, reminds Philip Esler[29] (2003: loc. 353), has to do with: "that part of a person's self-concept (admittedly from a larger whole) that derives from his

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[26] Punt (2010b: 145) notes that gender was just one more way in which the bodies of women and men became the social and political sites for regulating and disciplining social norms and conventions, and for reinscribing the deeply entrenched hierarchy of the Greco-Roman world.

[27] Commenting on the impact of Gal. 3.28, Punt (2010b: 151) notes,

"Issues of sex and gender were, however, not restricted to household or even social concerns, since in the first century CE the potential destabilisation of hierarchical structures or (at least) notions of the body expands also to the socio-political terrain, where the hierarchy of the body both informed and was inscribed by imperial power."

[28] Punt (2012b: 26-27) notes, particularly with reference to Paul's "early Jesus-follower communities" that (1) "identity is not a matter of essentialism but of construction;" (2) "in discussion of identity, there is a major tension between stability and change;" and, (3) identity continues over time, or at least claims to do so."

[29] Philip Esler has pioneered an approach to biblical interpretation called "social identity approach," which involves the study of "social differentiation based on group membership and includes consideration of salient group norms, boundaries, and rituals" (Baker, 2011: 232). In his commentary on Romans, Esler (2003) approaches the question of identity formation by arguing that Paul engaged in the process of creating a new common identity into which both Judean and non-Judean—Esler's preferred terms—Christ followers could be incorporated.

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or her membership in a group."

Cultural memory plays into social identity. Thus the fact that the early Christ-follower community created and transmitted a body of texts "provided a memory map for plotting" the identity(ies) of these communities (Punt, 2012b: 44). The resulting body of texts from which and within which communities ordered their lives reflected some range of what it meant to belong to the Christ-follower communities of the first century. Yet even with this diversity, the texts still belong together as part of a canon, a body of texts. As such, the "early Christian texts tended to cohere together and thereby provided a context for imitation" (Vander Stichele *et al.*, 2009: loc. 1396). The process of canonisation, therefore, homogenised the discourse of the early Church. Coherence, it seems, came at the expense of noting the multiple and often competing discourses evident within this thick, layered and conflicted body of texts.[30]

In a social and cultural context of multiple and competing discourses and social identities, it was imperative that the early church establish its social identity. Luke Timothy Johnson (1999: 14) captures this imperative well, "confrontation with pluralism is threatening to a group's identity, and the group can respond in different ways: it can close up, communicate, or convert." Vernon K. Robbins (1996: loc. 270) argues a similar point when he makes use of Fredrik Barth's notion of "attitudinal boundaries,"

> ... group members in the first century nurtured strong convictions ... that
> defined them over against other groups with whom they had close contact.
> .... These differences in attitude and behaviour created clear boundaries
> that separated them from other groups and gave them a special identity.

As the early church sought to define and defend itself over against other groups, it did so by drawing on a variety of existing modes of discourse and by installing that identity through norms (identity descriptors), stereotyping, time (past events/figures as critical reference points for identity and the passage of time that establishes identity through

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[30] See Bart D. Ehrman's (2003) provocative study of the process of canonization. Vander Stichele and Penner (2009: loc. 1389) frame the question of canonisation from a gender-critical perspective and note "the act of canonisation itself as a social and political operation."

tradition),[31] and collective memory[32] (Esler, 2003: loc. 360-422).[33]

The early Christ-follower communities thus found themselves in a politically, socially contestational space of defining and being defined, of ingroup and outgroup, of asserting identity over against others and of submitting to the definitions of others, and of intragroup conflict. Within this contestational space, the question of gender construction and representation is pursued, for as Lopez (2008: loc. 390-397) notes, "gender and sexuality are useful optics for seeing more adequately the hierarchical relations of power operative in the Roman Empire of Paul's time—and how his correspondence is situated in that context."

1.2.6 Masculinity and Paul

Paul has been ally to a range of agendas: simultaneously the poster-child for egalitarianism (à la Gal. 3.26-28)[34] and for oppressive discrimination. His letters have been

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[31] "As cultural memory is not biologically transmitted, it has to be kept alive through the sequence of generations. This is a matter of cultural mnemotechnics, that is, the storage, retrieval, and communication of meaning. These mnemotechnics guarantee continuity and identity, the latter clearly being a product of memory. Just as an individual forms a personal identity through memory, maintaining this despite the passage of time, so a group identity is also dependent on the reproduction of shared memories" (Assmann, 2011: loc. 1667).

[32] Punt (2012b: 29) observes that "collective memory provides a centripetal force for a group and concomitantly serves as a powerful marker of social differentiation. Such boundary drawing and self-identification is what constitutes identity."

[33] This process of identity formation is further complicated by the fact that like many groups of people in the first-century, the early Christ-follower communities, composed of Jews and Gentiles, were likely to be constituted as a group of colonised people. For this reason, a postcolonial optic enables us to engage the question of identity formation with awareness of how the Roman Empire constructed the identity of the conquered. Moreover, postcolonial criticism gives us access to a rich vocabulary (hybridity, mimicry, etc.) with which to make sense of the identity formation in the face of hegemony.

[34] Critical scholarship has done well to problematise the often-naïve acceptance that what is contained in Paul's letters is obviously liberative. Such scholarship asks whether the message of Paul's gospel in relation to his audience simply reinscribes the hegemony of the Roman Empire.

put into the service of gender battles with women as casualties. In the preface to her *Apostle to the Conquered: Reimagining Paul's Mission*, Davina C. Lopez (2008: Loc. 54) notes a range of possible responses and reactions to the apostle, "Some love Paul, some hate him, and hardly anyone is neutral about him. Misogynist, homophobic, racist, anti-Semitic, xenophobic, elitist—Paul seems to serve as a mirror for our own anxieties about religion, politics, domination, and justice."

Feminist biblical scholars have, rightly, problematised an approach to Paul and his letters that does not engage his letters critically. Joseph A. Marchal (2008: Loc. 241) articulates the problem well when he offers a feminist, postcolonial analysis of Paul's letter to the Philippians, writing that,

> priority will not be placed in reconstructing Paul's point of view or lionising his rhetorical dexterity. ... one purpose of this work is to demonstrate how Paul's letters and most (elite imperial pale malestream) scholarship on Paul are the results of imperially gendered rhetorical activities.

Marchal's goal is to "decentre the normative focus on Paul, in order to elaborate the relevant historical and rhetorical elements for a feminist, postcolonial analysis" (Marchal, 2008: Loc. 247; cf. Johnson-DeBaufre and Nasrallah, 2011).

The approach taken by feminist biblical scholarship, however, leaves a lacuna in the movement towards making sense of what it means to be a person and of the role of the biblical text if it only tackles this question from the perspective of women. Gender studies have sought to balance this equation out by drawing attention to the ways in which the biblical text has been employed hegemonically in relation to both women and men. Vander Stichele and Penner (2009: Loc. 403) put the matter this way,

> Whereas feminist scholarship and Women's Studies tended to centre on
> the analysis and recovery of women in the past and present, Gender
> Studies widened the focus to the broader sociocultural context and the

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See, for example, Joseph Marchal's use of Dube's four questions for evaluating power dynamics (2008: Loc. 401).

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political use of "sex" and "gender," emphasising a more diverse range of gendered and sexed identities in the process. ...masculinity became included as an important component of gender-critical analysis.

The inclusion of masculinity in gender studies does not signal the reinscription of patriarchy, but as Vander Stichele and Penner (2009: Loc. 403, emphasis mine) note from a Foucauldian perspective, "masculinity is understood as a sustained system of domination that is enacted by and on diverse individuals in a society, *male and female alike*."

A pre-critical hermeneutic pays no attention to the complexity of gender construction in the world of the first-century CE. The hermeneutic assumes thereby that what is reflected in the text represents a norm which establishes a universal, and normativising position that does not give account of the constructed nature of gender, whether in the first or twenty-first century, or even contemplate the very real advantages and disadvantages, depending on which side of the norm one is positioned, implicated in this approach. The result is a reading of the biblical text in which gendered identity is constructed in heteronormative and heteropatriarchal ways, creating an inflexible notion of gender. Thus, approaching the biblical text, from a critical perspective, through the optic of postcolonial biblical criticism and gender criticism offers a different (other) reading that shows gender, whether male or female, to be constructed and therefore open to renegotiation, re-imagination and reconfiguration in response to evolving and changing contexts.

1.2.6.1   *A Survey of Some Important Pauline Studies*

A discussion of Paul's understanding of gender must take into account the rhetorical agenda(s) that inform(s) and shape(s) his communication with his audiences. It must also take cognisance of a range of gender constructions and representations in his letters. These gender representations reflect a complex network of social institutions or structures that must first be understood within the first-century socio-historical context (Punt, 2010b: 149) in order to avoid anachronistic readings of contemporary social conventions and norms back into the text of Paul's letters.[35]

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[35] A number of important studies provide a rich understanding of the socio-historical context especially in relation to gender. See, for example, Boatwright (2011); Vander Stichele *et al.* (2009);

An examination of how gender was constructed and represented in Paul's letters should not be limited to word studies. While the presence, or indeed, absence, of gendered words (e.g., ἄνθρωπος, ἀδελφή, ἀνὴρ, γυνή, μήτηρ, πατήρ, ἄρσεν, θῆλυ etc.) serves as a good starting point, the exploration of gender construction and representation is far more nuanced. A survey of the literature below highlights the range of possibilities for gender construction and representation in Paul. Moreover, the literature draws attention to the intersection of politics, kinship, gender, ethnicity and more.

1.2.6.1.1 Brigitte Kahl[36] and Galatians 3.28

Gender confusion seems to be the net result of Paul's gospel according to Brigitte Kahl (2000). Working with the baptismal formula of Gal. 3.26-28, Kahl re-reads this text in an attempt to show how it is integrated into the argument of Paul's letter to the Galatians, seeing it as "the very climax of his intense wrestling with the Galatians" (2000: 38).[37] She approaches the text from a socio-literary perspective, suggesting that when read in this way, the passage presents a "considerable challenge" to the "common notion of Paul's overall 'conservatism' regarding gender issues and slavery—without converting him to a present-day feminist or liberation thinker" (Kahl, 2000: 38).

Kahl's socio-literary engagement with Galatians is focused on the issue of gender construction and proposes that discussion of this issue cannot be restricted to the occurrence of the terms male (ἄρσεν) and female (θῆλυ) (2000: 38). Kahl (2000: 39) writes, "a closer look at the word material and the textual structures of the letter shows, the reconceptualization of male and female in general, and of male in particular, is right at the core of Paul's messianic argument."

Boyarin (1993); Clark (2001); Grenholm and Patte (2005); Penner *et al.* (2007); Lopez (2007); Marchal (2008); Kartzow (2010); DeConick (2011); O'Brien (2014).

[36] Brigitte Kahl is a feminist New Testament professor at Union Theological Seminary, New York, USA.

[37] On whether Gal. 3.28 is pre-Pauline formula (baptismal) or "a conscious statement by the apostle himself" see Bernard C. Lategan's "Reconsidering the Origin and Function of Galatians 3.28" (2012).

After surveying the gendered vocabulary in Galatians, including ἀκροβυστία (uncircumcision), περιτομή (circumcision), περιτέμνω (circumcise), σπέρμα (sperm), and ἀποκόπτω (castrate), Kahl (2000: 40) draws the conclusion that "In terms of word statistics Galatians could be perceived as the most 'phallocentric' document of the New Testament." Moreover, it seems clear on the basis of the vocabulary that the likely audience of this letter are the Galatian brothers. After all, "physical maleness (ἄρσεν or ἀρσενικός) is the object of circumcision" (2000: 40). This leads Kahl (2000: 40) to ask a rather important question of the scholarly community: "How then could masculinity as its primary referent stay so completely outside scholarly debate, rather than being discussed as, maybe, one of the secret storm-centres of Paul's heated controversy with his Galatian brothers?"

Kahl's sensitivity to the rhetoric of Paul's letters enables her to show, convincingly, the connections between the baptismal formula of 3.28 and the gendered language scattered throughout the letter. For Kahl, Galatians 3 represents Paul's attempt at decentring masculinity through a re-reading of the Abraham story. In this re-reading, "The genealogy of Abraham gets horizontalised and inclusive in a radical way: It is becoming open for the 'others,' the Gentiles/Greeks next to 'us,' the Jews. And it is no longer comprised of hierarchical relations. Fatherhood is replaced by brotherhood…" (Kahl, 2000: 42).

For Kahl, chapter 4 of Galatians represents the recentring of the female and figures a transgendered self-representation of Paul. She (2000: 42) notes, "the counter-patriarchal logic of his theology immediately starts to re-shape the language Paul uses. … Gal. 4 is dominated by mother and birth terminology." And in a striking move, Paul represents himself as 'mother Paul' (4.19). Though this self-description has "usually been ignored" (Kahl, 2000: 43), it holds the key to making sense of how Paul reconstructs the new community of Abraham/Jesus. From this point (4.19) on, "every single verse of the chapter deals with the relationship of children/sons to a female parent. One could describe the whole passage 4.19-31 as a motherly exhortation of children who are about to forget who they are" (Kahl, 2000: 43).

Kahl imagines this move on the part of Paul raises some serious questions for the audience. Framed within an apocalyptic-messianic worldview that "presupposes that this bi-polar order of the 'world' (κόσμος) has been broken down through the cross" (Kahl, 2000: 44), the Galatian brothers are left confused about their gender.

Paul did not do much to confirm or comfort the frustrated masculinity of his Galatian brothers. His 'queer' appearance as a mother in labour, his 'matriarchal' reconstruction of Abraham's genealogy, his shamefully 'unmanly' boasting of weakness as something to be imitated (4.12-15), his rejection of male honour and image games (5.26; 6.12), his nasty remark concerning castration, his model of a 'household of faith' without patriarchal authority (6.10)—all this which is firmly tied to his understanding of the cross as subversion of the old order by God's new creation (6.12-15) adds even more challenge (Kahl, 2000: 49).

But does this apocalyptic-messianic worldview do away with the bi-polar order, establishing in its place equality between men and women, equality that maintains distinction between men and women? There is strong evidence to suggest that within the apocalyptic-messianic worldview, "the eschatological human being will be androgynous, since the male/female distinction will have been overcome" (Punt, 2012b: 152).[38] While Kahl's argument is focused on tracing out the transgendered Paul, it is perhaps too narrow at this point to take notice of the kind of re-inscribing that Punt's analysis from a postcolonial queer reading of Galatians is able to highlight.

1.2.6.1.2 Lopez[39] and Gender Representation in the Empire

Kahl's study of Galatians provides a nuanced gender-critical perspective that draws attention to the fluidity of the gender discourse in Paul's letter. It is this perspective that informs Davina C. Lopez's book *The Apostle to the Conquered: Reimagining Paul's Mission* (2008). Lopez's book is part of the *Paul in Critical Contexts* series, a series that claims to offer "cutting-edge reexaminations of Paul through the lenses of power, gender, and ideology."

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[38] See, also DeConick (2011: 60 ff.).

[39] Davina C. Lopez is professor of Religious Studies at Eckerd College, St. Petersburg, Florida, USA, and has contributed significantly to the growing body of knowledge in the areas of New Testament, gender and feminist theory, ancient and modern rhetoric, and visual representation.

Given Paul's notoriety as misogynist (and various other choice descriptions), most critical scholars would be quick to toss Paul aside. Not so with Lopez. Instead of assigning Paul and his letters to the deconstructionist rubbish heap,[40] Lopez (2008: loc. 68) seeks to, "Re-imagine Paul as occupying a vulnerable, subversive social position of solidarity among others and as part of a useable past for historically dominated and marginalised peoples in the present." Lopez's re-imagining of Paul does not end in a rehabilitation of Paul, a simple reinscription of old hegemonic insights. The emphasis still remains on reading Paul critically, but such reading takes place within a context re-imagined with reference to the role of imperial ideology.

Lopez's re-reading of Paul, in typical postcolonial fashion, draws on a wide range of disciplines and results in a thickly textured reading of Paul, especially by drawing attention to Paul's compromised gender identity in Galatians. Moreover, Lopez (2008: loc. 115) is interested not just in a critical re-imagination of Paul, but seeks "a viable future, a future that does not stop with acceptance and tolerance for the marginalised. It is a hope for another world and the excavation of a New Testament that gives a glimpse at hope for that world."

That viable future is a future that has far reaching implications for how we understand gender construction and seeks to call into question the church with its fixed, static understanding of gender, the academy with its tendency only to problematise the question and consequently to exclude the role of the bible on this issue. Lopez's reading, then, continues to emphasise the place of the biblical text, but in her presentation of Paul, works through the often-ambiguous layers, both within the text and within the history of reception of the text, to uncover a Paul that is cast with the *others*, a Paul that is in solidarity with the poor, the impoverished, "those who are the subjects, not objects, of biblical consciousness" (2008: loc. 115). And, "by going to the defeated nations and meeting them where they are—in the dominated places all over Roman territory—Paul recognises their humanity in a context that has chronic dehumanisation as divine mandate" (2008: loc. 115-123).

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[40] See Kahl (2010) on viewing Pauline interpretation as a battleground.

Lopez establishes her case for Paul's identification and solidarity with the *other* by looking to the powerful sculptural programme employed by the Roman Empire. It is her contention, as it is Brigitte Kahl's (2010), that art, architecture, sculpture, and inscriptions are important inter-texts for making sense of the New Testament. Of significance for Lopez is the manner in which the defeated nations are depicted in Roman sculpture.

Surveying the images of the Sebasteion at Aphrodisias, the cuirassed statue of Augustus, and other sculptural and archaeological artefacts, Lopez fixes our gaze on the conquered, defeated nations' *female* bodies, which she argues lies at the heart of Roman imperial visual representation, "notably personifications of conquered nations as women's racially specific bodies, sometimes in poses of deference toward Roman emperors or soldiers" (2008: loc. 422). Thus, her trained eye guides us away from what she calls "idealist" scholarly approaches to Paul that simply cast the Gentiles as a theological category and proposes, instead, "a gender-critical re-imagination of Paul as apostle to the defeated nations as part of a non-idealist framework that draws on elements from contemporary empire-critical, postcolonial, feminist, and queer theoretical contributions" (2008: loc. 253).[41]

Lopez (2008: loc. 422) is thus able to "contend that, when examined in light of Roman imperial ideology, Paul's mission to the nations [read, feminised, gender-compromised bodies] emerges not as a direct parallel, or even as an oppositional rhetoric, but as a counter-hegemonic discourse of exemplary imagination."[42]

Through Paul's identification with the conquered, defeated nations, Lopez (2008: loc. 2284) is able to suggest that, "Becoming like Paul means giving up the dynamics of domination symbolised by impenetrable imperial masculinity, unveiling a larger umbrella

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[41] Lopez's gender-critical re-imagination of Paul as part of a non-idealist framework can best be described as an intersectional approach. Punt (2008a) does a similar thing in his essay which seeks to draw together queer theory and postcolonial criticism. Importantly, Punt notes how approaches that are intersectional in the sense that they draw on a range of theories must identify both convergences and divergences, and "inquire about possible interaction between the two theoretical paradigms" (2008a: 2).

[42] On the issue of re-inscribing empire, see Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (2007).

of patriarchal power relationships. Disidentification with such hierarchy includes (re)turning to identification with the other, feminised, nations destined to be conquered by the Romans."

Lopez (2008: loc. 2284) continues, "Paul's masculinity changes from dominant to non-dominant and undergoes further shift toward femininity in Galatians." It is this shift which signals for us the possibility of reading the biblical text with a hermeneutic that can move beyond the pre-critical, and idealist, lens that fixes gender identity, and towards a more flexible notion of gender identity, whether of male or female.

1.2.6.1.3 Gaventa's[43] Wet-nurse and Larson's[44] Questionable Pauline Masculinity

In her study of 1 Corinthians 3 and Paul's use of the wet-nurse metaphor, inferred from Paul's description of the Corinthians, Beverly Roberts Gaventa (1996) offers a reading that moves beyond the conventional readings of this metaphor (1996: 103). Strikingly, Paul does not, as the ancient literature reflects,[45] detach himself when making use of this metaphor. Instead, Paul is fully invested in the metaphor and seems to disregard the culturally normative role of the man. Paul casts himself as a woman, a wet-nurse, and in so doing engages in gender transgressing. Gaventa imagines that Paul's self-identification as a wet-nurse not only calls his own masculinity into question, but raises some serious concerns for the Corinthians (1996: 110). She writes (1996: 110), "By actively taking upon himself a role that could only be played by a woman, he effectively concedes the culturally predisposed battle for his masculinity."[46]

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[43] Beverly Roberts Gaventa is Distinguished Professor of New Testament at Baylor, specialising in theological and historical interpretation of Paul's letters. She is also an Extraordinary Professor at Stellenbosch University (since 2014).

[44] Jennifer Larson is Professor of Classics at Kent State University, Ohio. Her expertise includes Greek poetry, ancient Greek religion, gender and sexuality in Antiquity.

[45] See chapter six for a similar conclusion in my reading of 1 Thessalonians.

[46] See Vander Stichele and Penner (2009: loc. 976 ff.) who note the body as "the primary site by which to establish personal and corporate identity, either by mastering, constraining, or restraining one's own body and a larger body politic, or, conversely, by controlling, denigrating, or mutilating the body of another, one's enemy or subordinate." Thus, Paul's use of the wet-nurse metaphor is essentially a reconfiguring of his body as the site from which he establishes his personal and corporate identity.

In her article entitled "Paul's Masculinity" (2004), Jennifer Larson attends to the criticisms targeted at Paul by the Corinthian opponents. These criticisms, she argues, constituted an attack on two fronts: Paul's physical appearance and skills as a speaker, and his personal character (*ethos*) (2004: 87). Larson is concerned to locate these criticisms within the context of Greek and Roman social conventions, paying particular attention to the interplay of physiognomics and rhetorics. In this context, the criticisms of Paul's physical appearance, his rhetorical skill and his personal character reflect a questioning of Paul's masculinity.

Given that "perceptions of gender in the Graeco-Roman world have shown that masculinity was viewed as an attribute only partially related to an individual's anatomical sex," (Larson, 2004: 86) it is clear that gender, whether male or female was constructed and was also to be understood, specifically for men as a scarce commodity; something for which men would compete. Larson notes, "masculinity was a matter of perception," and "among insiders it was implicitly recognised that masculinity was a performance requiring constant practice and vigilance" (2004: 86-87). Gaventa (1996: 110) argues a similar point when she cites Maud W. Gleason's study of second-century physiognomists, noting "that the polarised gender distinctions they [physiognomists] used 'purported to characterise the gulf between men and women, but actually served to divide the male sex into legitimate and illegitimate members …'." Gaventa (1996: 110) writes, "In this view, the female is not only an inverted male but a threat to masculine identity. A male who transgresses the boundaries in dress, behaviour, deportment, even in physical features may be accused of 'going AWOL from [his] assigned place in the gender hierarchy.'"

Over the course of this dissertation I will return to keys aspects of the studies briefly referenced here. The main focus will be 1 Thessalonians, but there is much water to pass under the bridge before all the parts converge around this letter.

1.3 Hypotheses

I propose that rereading 1 Thessalonians from a gender critical and postcolonial perspective invites a socio-literary (playful) exploration of the fluidity of gender constructions and representations in the context of the first century CE. Exploration from these angles brings into sharper relief the concrete setting of Roman imperial ideology

and its influence in shaping the discourse on gender. The result is a potentially more texturised understanding of masculinity as it is rhetorically constructed and represented in the text of 1 Thessalonians. This, I believe, will pave the way for more meaningful engagement with the liberative potential of the text because it makes explicit, the dynamics of power and empire operational in both the text and the interpretive enterprise associated with the text.

1 Thessalonians gives us access to the world responsible for creating and shaping the text. That world is, of course, inscribed into the letter and, in turn, the letter, as a rhetorical (persuasive) tool, inscribes the bodies of the Thessalonians. Notions of masculinity were paraded throughout the empire (through the visual and written sources). And, there can be little doubt that Paul and his co-authors were familiar with the system. Moreover, like most subject nations, he and his co-authors likely mimicked aspects of that system in their missionary and epistolary activities. The question is to what degree does the exercise of Roman imperial ideology and power playout in Paul's dealings with τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ Θεσσαλονικέων?

From the world behind and of the text, to the world in front. Employing a gender critical and postcolonial optic, I contend, does more than highlight how gender was constructed and represented in a letter like 1 Thessalonians and in the context of the Rome Empire. Interpretations of texts are serviceable in one arena or another, in the academy or in the church. We interpret for the similar rhetorical reasons Paul writes the letter in the first place; to persuade his audience of something.

Since I have declared my interest in how the text shapes and gives expression to masculine identity, I must advance a hypothesis that explicitly points to a potential outcome of such a position. I maintain, and will attempt to show, that approaches to the biblical text that can be characterised as pre-critical run the risk of perpetuating oppressive forms of masculinity precisely because there is little appreciation for the social and cultural embeddedness of the text. Furthermore, I also maintain that the academy's critical stance vis-à-vis the text and its meaning is too often disconnected from the social realities of life. Thus, the textures introduced by approaching the text, critically, from the perspective of gender and postcolonial criticism, I argue, if made intelligible for ordinary readers, will enhance the discourse on masculinity.

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The point is, interpretations of 1 Thessalonians represents an exercise of power whether such interpretations emanate from the academy or the church. Thus, because the bible is still held in high esteem within the South African evangelical context, our engagement with the text must draw attention to how it constructs identity, generally, and gender, specifically, wittingly or not.

It is also my contention that since postcolonial (biblical) criticism "focuses on the power configurations that have resulted from the subjugation of indigenous peoples by colonising powers, and investigates both those regions where the political, economic, and cultural realms are still determined and informed by colonialism," (England, 2004: 89) applying this lens is particularly important in the South African context.

I suggest, furthermore, that focusing particular attention on the masculine gender identity in Paul will address what appears to be a lacuna in the gender and Bible debate.[47]

1.4   Methodology and Field of Study

To understand the NT, its portrayal of gendered identity (at least through the eyes of interpreters), and its ongoing influence on the shaping and constructing of masculinities, hegemonic, redemptive, or kenotic, I have chosen to apply two theories, namely, gender criticism and postcolonial biblical criticism.[48] As theories, each of these is a system of concepts, models and principles which together make the world intelligible and

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[47] On the hermeneutical tension between learned and ordinary readers see, Stegmann and Bowers Du Toit (2012); West (2000, 2007, 2011, 2014); and, Cochrane (1999).

[48] It is important to note that the use of gender criticism and postcolonial criticism, while representing different angles of vision, precisely because they are different theoretical constructs, offer a unique perspective when drawn together as part of the intersectional approach (see § 1.4.2, below) that characterises this dissertation. My use of them forms part of the bifocular optic I develop and apply to my reading of 1 Thessalonians. Furthermore, since my use of postcolonial criticism means to draw attention, specifically, to the power differential, it should be noted that gender is about power as much as it is about the construction of particular identities. The construction of gender is about who has power to define and defend a particular notion of masculinity or femininity and what the terms of reference are for such definitions.

comprehensible. They provide a framework through which the world, or a particular aspect of it, such as masculinity, makes sense.

I have chosen to bring these two theories to bear on the NT, and on Paul's letter to the Thessalonians since they both attempt to draw attention to the discursive construction of identity. And, both foreground the asymmetries of power distribution in relation to women and marginalised men. Furthermore, the theories are nuanced enough to recognise that things are never quite as straightforward. Women are not always subordinated and oppressed. There is evidence of some resistance (a counter-discourse, if you will). Bruce Winter's *Roman Wives, Roman Widows* (2003), for example, studies the emergence of "new women," who resisted the traditional roles assigned to them by actively participating in public life and pushing the boundaries around sexual propriety. Or, take the notion of what constitutes masculinity in antiquity, it is not always the case that we find agreement. To this end, Dale Martin in his discussion of masculinity in the context of Greek and Roman culture, notes "Although the cultural construction of 'the male' was on the surface sturdy and monolithic, particular men could never be sure of their bodies would live up to that construction. *The male* was secure; but *men* were not" (Martin, 2001: 88).

If gender criticism and postcolonial biblical criticism represent the bifocular lens through which to read 1 Thessalonians, the approach to the text can best be described as discursive-rhetorical.[49] By discursive I mean to draw attention to the Foucauldian notion of discourse defined by Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (2013: 62-63) as follows,

> … discourse is a strongly bounded area of social knowledge, a system of
> statements within which the world can be known. The key feature of this is that
> the world is not simply 'there' to be talked about, rather, it is through discourse

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[49] This approach receives focused attention and explanation in chapter six where it is applied to the text of 1 Thessalonians. The salient features of the approach play out with reference to three interconnected questions: (1) How does Paul rhetorically present himself and/or his co-workers (if identified)? (2) How does Paul rhetorically (re)present his audience? (3) How does Paul rhetorically present his agents of the gospel? These questions are overlaid with (or intersected by) the bifocular optic of gender and postcolonial (biblical) criticism and contributes to a texturised reading of 1 Thessalonians.

itself that the world it brought into being. It is also in such a discourse that speakers and hearers, writers and readers come to an understanding about themselves, their relationship to each other and their place in the world (the construction of subjectivity). It is the 'complex of signs and practices which organises social existence and social reproduction.

By approaching 1 Thessalonians from a discursive perspective, the aim is to bring into sharper relief the various discourses (and counter-discourses) that are constitutive of reality.

The rhetorical aspect of the approach foregrounds the fact that Paul and his co-authors intend to persuade their readers/auditors by means of their argument. The argument, however, is more than *logos*, the words by which Paul and his co-authors seek to persuade. Paul and his co-authors are present in the text, their bodies form part of the rhetorical act and that act, in turn, together with the *logoi* are intended for the purpose of shaping identity.

Thus, methodologically speaking, the hermeneutical approach to understanding male gender construction and representation in Paul's letter to the Thessalonians is best understand as a thickly textured web of intersecting strands: discourse, rhetoric, gender criticism, and postcolonial biblical criticism come together to enhance both our understanding of gender in the context of post-apartheid South Africa and in the ancient context of Paul's letter to the Thessalonians. I turn now to unpacking, in a quite generic way, the gender critical and postcolonial biblical critical optic. (I return to discursive-rhetorical, gender criticism and postcolonial biblical criticism in subsequent chapters where the argument of this dissertation is nuanced and amplified).

1.4.1 Gender Criticism

Walter Brueggemann[50] (2011: 9) proposes that the human self is "thick, layered, and

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[50] Having taught biblical studies at the undergraduate level for the last fifteen-plus years, I have carried responsibility for teaching outside of my area of expertise. This has included teaching the Old Testament to first-year students. Consequently, I have developed both an appreciation for and an understanding of much of the scholarship located in the discipline of the Old Testament. I

conflicted." These three adjectives bring the debate about sex, gender, sexuality and social roles into sharper focus by drawing attention to the complexity and multiplicity at play in the many theoretical attempts to make sense of the relationship, if one exists, between sex, gender, sexuality and social roles.[51]

Gender theorists are divided, at the macro-level, into theorists who operate with the notion of gender as fixed and determined, based on an essential quality (= ontological notion of gender) and those who operate with the notion that gender is constructed and therefore fluid. This dissertation is concerned with gender as constructed and therefore with theorists who can further be divided into those who root their understanding and investigation of gender identity in either materialist (structuralist) or discursive (post-structuralist) theories.

Under the rubric of materialist/structuralist theories, gender is constructed in either essentialist or non-essentialist ways. Structural essentialism, which is reliant on "residual biological essentialism" (Alsop, Fitzsimons and Lennon, 2002: 65), "accepts that all women, for example, share characteristics as a consequence of adopting the same social role, being placed within the same kind of social structures or being subject to the same symbolic order" (Alsop *et al.*, 2002: 65). Materialist/structuralist theories draw attention to the structural makeup of the social world (e.g., concrete social relations in the work place, the home, and sexuality [i.e., sexed bodies]) and the influence of these structures on the construction of gender identities, ensuring "that women and men are fitted into distinct pathways within the society" (Alsop *et al.*, 2002: 65). Ultimately, these discussions are contingent on power, which for material feminists results in women being exploited and

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therefore make use of some of it in my scholarship on the New Testament, aware that I am citing an Old Testament source/scholar.

   [51] For a detailed study on the relationship (if there is one) between the notion of gender and sex, see "The Future of Gender" (Browne, 2007). This book attempts, according to its editor, to answer critical questions such as, "To what degree does 'gender' in fact relate to sex? How useful is the concept of 'gender' in social analysis? How does 'gender' feature in shifts in familial structures and demography? How should we conceive of 'gender' in terms of contemporary inequality and injustice? What is 'gender's' function in the design and pursuit of political objectives" (Browne, 2007: loc. 110-124).

oppressed by men (Alsop *et al.*, 2002: 67; Monro, 2005: 19).

Under the rubric of discursive/post-structuralist theories, which are largely based on Foucault's notion of discourse as "anything which can carry meaning" (Alsop *et al.*, 2002: 89), gender is constructed by the *meanings* attributed to being male and female. Particular attention is given to the role of language or discourse in constructing gender identity and power relations (Alsop *et al.*, 2002: 65).[52] Discursive theories of gender identity, then, highlight the multiple and intersecting discourses or scripts that inform gender identity. The chosen and/or received discourses create a matrix of meaning and contributes to the thick, layered and conflicted understanding of the human self. This approach, which signals a shift from the materialist/structuralist approach, emphasises the contextuality of gender construction, which in turn signals a shift from seeing gender as a role, to seeing it as a process (Alsop *et al.*, 2002: 79) and, perhaps more pointedly, as a performance (Butler, 2007). Butler (2007: loc. 684) crystallises this when she writes, "There is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender; that identity is performatively constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its results."

As such, discourses serve as agents of normalisation, "they carry with them the norms of behaviour, standards of what counts as desirable, undesirable, proper and improper" (Alsop *et al.*, 2002: 82). They are the scripts/stories, implicit or explicit, written or oral, visual or hidden, which inform individual and communal identity(ies), based on individual and communal performances.

While neither of the approaches—materialist (structuralist) or discursive (post-structuralist)—on their own present a more focused means of understanding gender identity, it is my contention that, strengths and weaknesses notwithstanding, when insights from both are integrated, the picture of gender understanding becomes a little clearer.

What also becomes evident in localised understandings of gender constructions is that the material and discursive factors are multiplied to include race/ethnicity, class,

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[52] Cognitive psychologists and cognitive linguists have long recognised that language is the means by which human beings think, reason, create meaning, and communicate (Wanamaker, 2005: 409). Language, therefore, is both constitutive and reflective of worldview.

economics and politics (local and global) and that each of these at the intersection, play a significant role in the construction of gender. Gender construction, then, is a complex negotiation, as these intersecting aspects "come into existence in, and through, relationship to each other, if in contradictory and conflictual ways" (Monro, 2005: 18).

1.4.2 Intersectionality: Overlapping Social Categories[53]

Nash defines intersectionality as "the notion that subjectivity is constituted by mutually reinforcing vectors of race, gender, class, and sexuality" (2008: 2). As Nash notes, the term was coined by legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw and reflects the commitment "to problematise law's purported colour-blindness, neutrality, and objectivity" (2008: 2). Nash then goes on to enumerate three "theoretical and political purposes for both feminist and anti-racist scholarship," summarised below:

(1) Subverts a binary representation of identity, especially the race/gender binary, by destabilising the binaries thereby enabling "robust analyses of cultural sites (or spectacles) that implicate both race and gender" and other social categories affecting/informing/shaping/constructing/scripting identity.

(2) Provides the critical language with which to respond to identity politics in its failure to transcend difference. Consequently, intersectionality "seeks to demonstrate the racial variation(s) within gender and the gendered variation(s) within race through its attention to subjects whose identities contest race-or-gender categorisations" (2008: 2-3).

(3) Invites scholarship to confront the legacy of exclusion, both at the theoretical level and the practical level. Intersectionality gives voices to subjects undermined and marginalised by history on multiple levels (2008: 3).

The tendency to treat topics such as gender, race, class, etc., as mutually exclusive social categories result in a "single-axis framework" (Crenshaw, 2011: 25) that does not do justice to how these aspects actively engage in the act of gender scripting. It is necessary, therefore, to approach gender construction and representation, intersectionally. That is, to do justice to the topic, we must read gender within a multi-axial framework that wrestles with the interplay and overlapping of these, and a range of other, categories (Kartzow,

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[53] The notion of intersectionality dovetails seamlessly with postcolonial approaches, especially in relation to concepts such as ambivalence, hybridity, subaltern, etc.

2012). These overlapping and interlocking systems play a significant role in the scripting of identity in general, and of gendered identity in particular (Lutz, Vivar and Supik, 2011).

When applied to the NT, intersectionality draws attention to the reality of "overlapping arenas" (Malina, 2001: 18; Scott, 1999), and enables a more thickly textured reading of gender, or power, etc., and confirms that "gender is the primary way of signifying relations of power" (Scott, 1999: 48). Thus to engage with gendered bodies, is to necessarily wrestle with how "imperialism and sexism intersect with each other as well as with heterosexism, ethnocentrism, racism, anti-Judaism, poverty, nationalism, and militarism (among others) (Marchal, 2011: 150).

Approaching the NT, in general, and Paul's letters in particular, from this angle presupposes that gender (identity) is constructed (Lieu, 2004; Esler, 2003), and that such construction reflects the overlapping of social, economic, ethnic, political and religious scripts which inform and shape bodily performance (Butler, 2007, 2004) (that is, the continuous rehearsal of specific behaviours, traits and expectations that constitute femininity and masculinity). Thus, gender in the ancient context is not some quality a person possesses (contra the view that it is fixed and determined, and based on an essential quality [= ontological notion of gender]). It is, instead, socially, textually, and visually, regulated and scripted (Vander Stichele *et al.*, 2009).

The regulation and scripting of gendered bodies raise several fundamental questions with which we must wrestle: (1) how was the regulating and scripting achieved? (2) who constructed and controlled the means by which that regulating and scripting took place? (3) to what degree was the regulating and scripting effective; that is, is there evidence of resistance?

1.4.3   Postcolonial (Biblical) Criticism[54]

Methodologically, in addition to gender criticism, I employ postcolonial biblical criticism (PBC) as a lens through which to read 1 Thessalonians, bringing into sharper relief the politically hegemonic aspects of text, interpretation and interpreters (or interpretive

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[54] On the question of empire-criticism, see Judy Diehl's three part survey of anti-Roman rhetoric in the New Testament (2011, 2012).

communities), which I seek to deconstruct. PBC "is about more than ideology criticism, in that it specifically addresses the silencing of the Other through the colonial strategy of posing the colonised as the inverse of the coloniser, requiring simultaneously the notion of emptying the colonised world of meaning" (Punt, 2003: 63).[55]

PBC is not only marked by deconstructing hegemonic hermeneutical practices. It is also marked by its attempt to present constructive counter-narratives that "go beyond the narrow and restricted confines of theoretical parameters and the academic environment and to see a *connection between scholarly commitment and active involvement*" (Sugirtharajah, 2012: 20, emphasis mine).[56]

Furthermore, PBC does not simply problematise the biblical text, it seeks to offer alternative readings of the text—however thick, layered and conflicted the text may be—that generates life. Joseph Marchal's (2008: loc. 158, emphasis mine) attempt to draw feminist and postcolonial biblical criticism together because of their shared vision for liberation argues that "feminism should lead to a *substantial transformation of society*" which he links "to other struggles against systemic forms of oppression," hence postcolonialism, and that "feminists [and postcolonial biblical critics] can and should work toward significant changes in the world." Or as Marchal (2008: loc. 182) goes onto state it more explicitly, "both (feminism and postcolonialism) are seeking to critique oppressive forms and construct liberating options for the future." Punt (2003: 61, emphasis mine) articulates it this way, "*postcolonialism posits a reflective modality which allows for a critical rethinking (thinking "through" and therefore "out of") of historical imbalances and cultural inequalities which were established by colonialism*."

Because the colonial/imperial project often constructed identity in ways that cast the colonised as barbarous, uncivilised, and a host of other binary opposites,[57] PBC offers a

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[55] Cf. Sugirtharajah's (2012: 12) notion of critically representing the "other."

[56] See also Punt (2007: loc. 5302).

[57] Kahl (2010: 17-18) lists some of the binary opposites evident in the philosophical discourse of Plato and Aristotle, noting that "the items listed on the one side were complementary to each other in some way and, at the same time, opposed and superior to their counterparts in the

new angle of vision, a critical rethinking, on male gender identity, especially within the South African context where gender identity is still constructed around binaries. Sugirtharajah (2012: 15) notes that "transgressing the contrastive way of thinking" is one of the key themes/activities of postcolonialism,

> The binary categorisations include coloniser/colonised, centre/margins, modern/traditional, and static/progressive. It [postcolonialism] queries the presences of such dualistic thinking, and applies deconstructive techniques to show that though the histories and orientations of colonised and coloniser are distinct, they overlap and intersect. It encourages productive crossings between the two.

The rewriting of history[58] from a postcolonial perspective cannot result in a history that writes out the coloniser. While postcolonial biblical criticism seeks to *represent* the voice of the Other, the colonised, it must do so with reference to the coloniser who engages in the process of *othering*. Identity, as in all contexts, is negotiated. The coloniser needs the colonised for its own sense of identity, but similarly, the identity of the colonised is now inextricably bound to the relationship between coloniser and colonised. Stephen D. Moore (2011b: loc. 233), employing Bhabha, frames it this way, "the relationship between the coloniser and the colonised is characterised by simultaneous attraction and repulsion, which is to say *ambivalence*." In other words, the rewriting of the history of the other is a rewriting of the history of a now hybridised identity, identity "as hyphenated, fractured, multiple and multiplying, 'a complex web of cultural negotiation and interaction, forged by imaginatively redeploying the local and the imported elements.'" (Punt, 2003: 66). Moore (2011b: loc. 233) argues that hybridity, "is never a simple synthesis or syncretic fusion of two originally discrete cultures, since a culture can never be pure, prior, original, unified, or self-contained but is always already infected by impurity, secondariness, mimicry, self-splitting, and alterity." By rewriting history, PBC also attempts to affirm the agency of the colonised in the present (Punt, 2003: 66).

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other column: superior/inferior; finite/infinite; odd/even; one/many; right/left; male/female; rest/motion; straight/crooked; light/darkness; good/evil; square/oblong."

[58] "Those in power rewrite the meaning of some events, erase some, and invent others" (Esler, 2003: loc. 413).

This dissertation seeks to draw PBC and gender-criticism into dialogue in order to present a more thickly layered account of gender construction and representation of masculinity in Paul's first letter to the Thessalonians by attending to the discursive-rhetorical aspects of the text.

1.5 Purpose and Contribution

The purpose of this dissertation is to investigate the ways in which Paul constructs and represents masculine gender identity using 1 Thessalonians as a point of departure. It proposes to address the hermeneutical implications of this representation and construction, first within the context of the first century CE and then as an attempt to suggestively identify possible points of connection with the contemporary challenge of what it means to be a man; a notion constantly under review.

The act of interpreting texts exposes a particular kind of vulnerability, often hidden from view. Interpretations say as much about the interpreter, if not more, as they do about the meaning of the text itself. Penner and Lopez (2015: 232) capture this idea when they remind us that our attempts to "construct a road map to and of the past" is "ultimately a reproduction of ourselves, and a reification of our world and our relationships with and for each other." Consequently, our task is to "articulate relationships with that world in the present, in the service of thinking about a different future" (Penner *et al.*, 2015: 232-233, emphasis mine).

In truth, a primary driver for this dissertation has been, through my engagement with Paul's letter to the Thessalonians, and the ambiguous ways he constructs gender in the context of Roman imperial ideology, the belief that it stands to offer a different future for masculinities that have been side-lined and silenced. That driver is both professional (as an academic committed to the work of scholarship of the kind that makes a difference) and personal (as a male who continues to struggle with not "measuring" up to (biblical) norms).

With this work, then, I hope to achieve, or at least move towards the following:

(1) *Contribute to the democratisation of the interpretive enterprise.*

Biblical interpretation is, in many respects, the province of an elite group of individuals whose labour (of love) tends to be inaccessible to those outside of the guild. Postcolonial biblical criticism (PBC), while heavily academic and often quite inaccessible, theoretically and methodologically, aims "to situate empire and imperial concerns at the centre of the Bible and biblical studies" (Sugirtharajah, 2012: 46).[59] By positioning empire and imperial concerns at the centre, PBC contributes to the democratisation of the interpretive enterprise, not perhaps explicitly, but by adding an important contextual layer to the interpretation of the bible in a post-apartheid South Africa. For this reason, PBC, I suggest, can be understood to be a form of contextual bible study. Put another way, PBC contributes another texture to our reading and interpretation of the bible in the face of challenging contextual realities and represents an important example of the place of the academy in shaping the discourse at a grassroots level (West, 2008; West, 2000, 2011).[60] Academic interpretation must intersect with the concrete realities of life.

(2) *Draw attention to how gender and power are constructed in the text.*

Approaching the letters of Paul with a gender critical and postcolonial optic enhances or thickens the texture of the biblical text. In turn, more meaningful connections with ordinary readers can be established because the fruit of this, primarily academic, labour moves beyond the transcendental theologising that is

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[59] See chapter four for an account of postcolonial biblical criticism and for Sugirtharajah's identification of a number of hermeneutical agendas that postcolonial criticism introduces to biblical studies.

[60] Postcolonial biblical criticism as a lens through which to read the biblical text dovetails well with the method of contextual bible study, especially within a post-apartheid South African context. While postcolonial biblical criticism does not equate with contextual bible study, in this dissertation, the theoretical lenses of gender criticism and postcolonial biblical criticism serve as possible tools in the contextual bible study process, and stands to texturize the process of reading the bible in the concrete contexts of communities of faith in South Africa.

all too common with lay interpretations of the biblical text.[61] Instead, what is offered by such a textured interpretation is a view into not just the constructed presence of gender and power in the text, but how in the interpretation of the text both of these key aspects of social life can be seen as shaping and informing identity.

(3) *Query the singularity of constructions of biblical masculinity.*

A gender critical and postcolonial optic introduces a set of interpretive lenses that offer alternative readings of (familiar) texts. The hermeneutical polysemy invites thoughtful consideration of how biblical texts themselves and their range of interpretations challenge the very notion of a singularity of masculinity. Notions of a "biblical masculinity" need to be problematised; gender critical and postcolonial critical readings achieve this end. In this, a potential liberative reading emerges.

After citing a number of male confessions, ranging from Augustine to Oswald Pohl (a Nazi war criminal), Björn Krondorfer (2010: Loc. 53) writes,

Voices of men from different centuries and different historical situations, men struggling to give testimony to themselves: they confess. They do so in writing, and they search for an audience. They confess their sins, their shame, their shortcomings, their deceptions, their desires. They confess because they imagine a dialogical "you": God, a wife, the public, other men. They confess because they feel an urge to share with us their intimate selves, because they have sinned, because they have experienced a transformative moment, because they want to be forgiven, or because they are self-absorbed and self-interested.

This dissertation, in the final analysis, hopes to participate in a broader movement that

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[61] This is not an either/or binary, nor does it mean to give primacy to academic readings, nor even to set academic and 'spiritual/theological' readings in opposition to each other. Instead, the point is to draw both readings, and many more besides, into the conversation. The goal, perhaps idealistically, is liberative readings that move beyond the simple naïveté of pre-critical readings and the complex and nuanced critical readings of the academy to Ricœur's post-critical awareness. For an example of an attempt to apply an approach of this kind see "A Textured Reading of Well-Being: An Interdisciplinary Consideration of Luke 8:40-56" (Stegmann *et al.*, 2012)

seeks to open up such a space—a confessional space for men of all kinds to give testimony to themselves, to be heard, acknowledged, and accepted—and to provide an angle of vision that draws both an integrated faith and a rigorously academic perspective to bear on the meaning of the biblical text as it pertains to male gender construction.

1.6   Overview of Chapters

The current chapter, chapter one, provides an important orientation for the dissertation by developing a foundation for what follows. The chapter outlines the problems, delimitations that circumscribe the playing field, the major challenges associated with a study of the biblical text and gender/masculinity. Furthermore, it identifies hypotheses, methodology and field of study and finally speaks to the question of purpose and contribution.

In chapter two, *Reading Bodies, Reading Scripture in a Post-Apartheid South Africa*, I deliberately turn my attention to the contextual question, the 'so-what' of this dissertation. This is a particularly important chapter for me since it is the birthplace of the dissertation and it has essentially guided my research. In some ways, an entire chapter on the contextual realities of the author doing a PhD in NT may appear out of place. Social location, however, is critical and foregrounding the concrete realities with which South African biblical scholarship should be wrestling is something of a personal value. It represents the kind of biblical scholarship to which I want to make a meaningful contribution. Chapter two, then, is the anchor chapter for the dissertation.

In chapters three, *Male Bodiliness and Performance: Developing a Gender Critical Optic*, and four, *Inscribing Relationships of Power: Developing a Postcolonial Optic*, I develop my theoretical framework with an exploration of gender criticism (chapter three) and postcolonial (biblical) criticism (chapter four). These two chapters become the bi-focal lens through which to read 1 Thessalonians.

Turning to antiquity in chapter five, *Constructing and Regulating Masculinity in Antiquity*, I focus my attention on bodily presence and textual inscription. In this chapter, physiognomics comes into focus as a means of foregrounding the complexity of gender construction and representation in antiquity. Moreover, while physiognomics represents a field of study on its own, it is important to note that as with the work of Vander Stichele and Penner (2009), physiognomics contextualises gender in the Greek and Roman

context. Similarly, Malina and Neyrey (1996) employ an analysis of physiognomics to understand how personality was constructed. My use of physiognomics in chapter five is pointed in so far as it draws attention to the mindset of the ancients in constructing texts that represented gender in particular ways. Reading physiognomics in counterpoint to Paul's letters and foregrounding the bodiliness of Paul, chapter five approaches the question of how texts construct and represent gender/masculinity.

With the groundwork laid in chapters two through five, chapter six, *A Gender Critical, Postcolonial Reading of Paul's First Letter to the Thessalonians*, applies the bifocular optic of gender and postcolonial (biblical) criticism to 1 Thessalonians. In an accretive manner, chapters two through five build towards 1 Thessalonians tracing a trajectory more akin to the shape of a helical (laid on its side).

Chapter seven, the final chapter, draws out the conclusions and implications of this study for understanding how masculinity is constructed and represented in Paul's letter to the Thessalonians and what this means for masculinity today.

Before launching into chapter two, a comment or two on the basic progression of this dissertation is in order. Most dissertations have a linear progression and structure. That is, the progression moves from one chapter to another in a more or less straight line. The shape of the progression in this dissertation is more akin to a helix; that is, it has a helical shape. There is still a clear movement towards the goal captured in the problem statement above, but the means by which one gets there is less linear.

To illustrate the shape of this dissertation, the diagram (Figure 1-2) demonstrates the movement towards chapters six and seven but it also shows that the pathway begins with a wider frame of reference. In this context, locating the study of Paul's construction and representation within the concrete setting of post-apartheid South Africa. With each chapter, the frame closes in or narrows until reaching the goal.
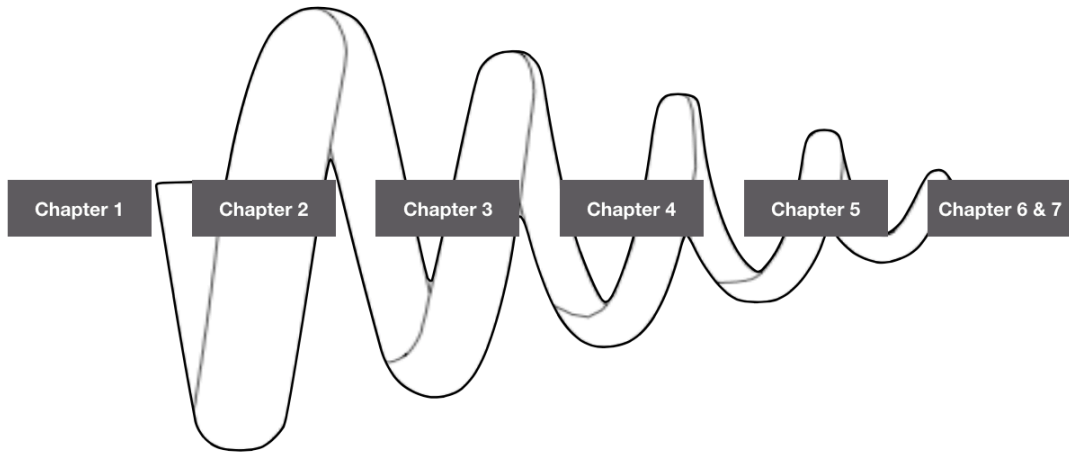
Figure 1-2 Helical Progression of the Dissertation

The helical progression of the dissertation explains why at a number of points there is a clear return to an aspect already covered in an earlier chapter. The repetition is not straightforward. Instead, it corresponds to an increasing expansion of key ideas in a clear movement towards the Paul's construction and representation of masculinity in his letter to the Thessalonians and the implications it has, hermeneutically, for contemporary masculinity, especially in the context of the evangelical church. Thus, in an accretive manner, a response to the problem statement is produced; a thickly textured response to a complex challenge for both New Testament scholarship and contemporary readers of the bible in the context of South African evangelical churches.

2 READING BODIES, READING SCRIPTURE IN A POST-APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA[1]

2.1 Proem

Before launching into the substance of this chapter, it is perhaps important to provide a contextual rationale for why the contemporary post-apartheid context of South Africa is so critical as to warrant its inclusion in a dissertation on (Pauline) masculinity. The rationale I seek to present, here, reflects on both my personal story and on how I conceptualise my scholarship—the one leads into the other.

As a white male living in post-apartheid South Africa with its ongoing struggle for human dignity and equality, I am compelled to confront the implications and consequences of apartheid's horrific legacy, not least in the construction of masculinity. This is the social location within which I choose my scholarship to make sense and by which I make sense of the New Testament.

Thus, as a point of departure, I am choosing to engage in scholarly work with increasing sensitivity to contemporary contextual issues. In some circles within New Testament scholarship, a decision like this can be perceived as scientifically misguided[2] or too

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[1] This chapter represents work already published and is used with permission from the Editor-in-Chief of the journal *Religion and Theology* and from my co-author Marlyn Faure who at the time of researching and writing the paper was a student of mine at Cornerstone Institute. While Faure's role as conversation partner and fellow researcher contributed to bringing the pieces of the project together, the final product which I presented at the *Fourth Unisa Symposium of New Testament and Early Christian Studies* (2012) and submitted to *Religion and Theology* for publication represents my own autography. For the purposes of this dissertation, the original publication has been modified, substantially, so as to bear very little resemblance to the original (Stegmann *et al.*, 2015).

[2] I understand the importance of questioning whether the biblical text as an artefact of antiquity should have any say at all in how contemporary society is structured. In fact, I agree with the necessity to question its ostensible role, but my questioning has not led me to the point where I no longer see its potential value and role in shaping alternative communities of love, grace, and

subjective. This wariness is compounded by the fact that I continue to pursue critical scholarship in the service of the church—however frustrating, uncomfortable, and disjunctive this proves to be.[3] Thus, my social location and its influence in shaping my understanding of scholarship ground my personal interest in masculinity and the biblical text, and the research of this dissertation. With the rationale behind us, I move now to provide an introduction to this chapter.[4]

2.2 Introduction

A significant challenge *before* the evangelical church is the question of how to read the bible in a context that is unstable and unpredictable and shifting all the time. To frame the challenge in this way is to accept that the potential problem lies with the church; with how it will *or* will not accommodate the exponential change with which it is confronted on so many fronts, not the least of which is the shifting boundaries of gender. However, there is another, more critically inclined, perspective to offer on this. Perhaps the challenge *to*, rather than, *before*, the church is whether the bible, as an engendered text, should continue to be used within the church.

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embrace. I think the work towards that end is just that much more difficult given the some of the obstacles in the text and in its reception history.

[3] A commitment to scholarship in the service of the church—a form of faith seeking understanding—is a point of deep tension. But it is a tension with which I have made my peace. I do not intend to resolve the tension. I choose to maintain it, allowing the academy and the church to pull on me, sometimes to breaking point, as I wrestle with how to listen to the other, whether the other happens to be a text as different and culturally distant as the New Testament, or the marginalised of society.

[4] Vincent L. Wimbush's (1993) article, *Reading Texts Through Worlds, Worlds Through Texts*, suggests an intriguing comparison. Wimbush offers the following hermeneutically insightful observation which helps to contextualise the importance of location in meaning-making and textual interpretation (1993: 129):

"Readings of texts, especially mythic, religious texts, are seldom cultivated by the lone individual; they are generally culturally determined and delimited. The cultural worlds of readers not only determine what texts are to be read—viz. what texts are deemed of value or are included within the canon—how canonical texts are read and what they mean, they also determine the meaning of the 'text' itself."

To frame the question in terms of 'how' to respond is to decide to retain a firm grip on the centrality of the bible, especially in the face of so much change, often perceived as a threat. The default option for the church, in general, has been to 'hunker under the bunker' in the face of opposition. Similarly, to frame the question in terms of 'whether' the biblical text should continue to be so central, is to make a decision to advance a view that problematises the bible itself (i.e., the problem is not only with how the bible is used, the problem is the bible) and therefore pushes for a relativisation—relegation(?)—of the text.

I have purposefully framed the question of how and whether to use the bible in this way to demonstrate two vastly different perspectives reflective of the position the church occupies and the position the academy holds. Foregrounding the chasm between church and academy is essential for the discussion of reading bodies in a post-apartheid South Africa because despite boasting one the most progressive constitutions in the world, South Africa continues to register some of the highest statistics of abuse and violence against women (these acts of violence/abuse include: "sexual harassment, rape, domestic violence, particular kinds of murder such as witch burning, rape-murders, sexual serial killings and intimate femicide" (Owino, 2010: 149)). Moreover, while multiple factors are contributing to the high incidence of violence against women, these figures raise an even greater concern for a country where "77-80% of the total South African population of 49 million claim affiliation with some form of Christianity" (Owino, 2010: 150).

South Africa not only faces the crisis of gender-based violence against women, but it also faces the concomitant crisis of a social, economic, political and theologically constructed gendered identity that perpetuates, normalises, and often theologically sanctions such gender-based violence. This is a crisis to which this dissertation attempts a response by critically engaging with the hermeneutical practices of the church and the academy, with the view to showing how textual engagement within each serve as a tacit underpinning of gender-based violence.[5]

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[5] What I mean by this is that the church engages in a particular hermeneutical exercise that can be characterised as critically ignorant and unaware of how the text may be implicated in engendering a praxis that simply re-enacts hegemonic gendered structuring. The academy's hermeneutical engagement is implicated in similar gendered structures of oppression but with a different manifestation, namely a system that is male dominated.

Thus, both the church, in its pre-critical hermeneutical mode, and the academy, in its critical hermeneutical mode, have constructed gendered identity in heteronormative and heteropatriarchal ways, resulting in an inflexible notion of gendered identity. Constructions of gender of this sort, whether masculine or feminine, fail to recognise gender as a fluid entity, open to renegotiation, re-imagination, and reconfiguration in response to evolving and changing contexts.

In this chapter, then, I consider the role of hermeneutical methodology for the re-imagination of gendered identity, specifically masculine identity, by proposing that when it comes to the interpretation of biblical texts, both the academy and the church, especially within a post-apartheid South Africa, need to engage in an exercise of hermeneutical reflexivity.

2.3   Theoretical and Contextual Frameworks

2.3.1   Vernacular Gender Identities: Men in a Post-Apartheid South Africa

The focus of this section is not to articulate a comprehensive understanding of masculinities in South Africa. It is instead, to create some anchor points that contextualise masculine identities within a post-apartheid South Africa which serve as the primary context and interlocutor for my engagement with 1 Thessalonians and its particular construction of masculinity.[6]

In his book, *Changing Men in Southern Africa*, Robert Morrell (2001: 7) argues that masculinity "refers to a specific gender identity" and "belong[s] to a specific male person." Although "gender identity is acquired in social contexts and circumstances, it is 'owned' by an 'individual'" (2001: 7). It is precisely the interplay between the socially constructed and the personally adopted notion of masculinity that leads psychologists David Blackbeard and Graham Lindegger (2007: 27) in their critique of the work of Australian sociologist, Robert Connell. For Blackbeard and Lindegger, Connell's work is overly dependent on structuralist assumptions in which gender identities are positioned within a

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[6] As noted in chapter one, a more detailed analysis of gender theory will be dealt with in chapter three.

hierarchical (read, structural) framework.[7] Consequently, Blackbeard and Lindegger (2007: 27) argue that masculine identities are always contextual and "plural," and that, "gender subjectivities occur in dialogical relation with gender ideologies and call for a multilayered understanding of masculinity as socially and subjectively embodied, enacted, and inscribed" (2007: 27).

Blackbeard and Lindegger's approach, which draws heavily on post-structuralist theories, leads them to "conceptualise masculinity as a performative social identity and subjectivity," in which "masculinities are self-narratives which are simultaneously instantiated through social discourse and subjective processes" (2007: 27). As a performative social identity and subjectivity, masculinities, as Morrell (2001: 7) argues, are not only fluid but are,

> constantly being protected and defended, are constantly breaking down and being recreated. For gender activists, this conceptualisation provides a space for optimism because it acknowledges the possibility of intervening in the politics of masculinity to promote masculinities that are more peaceful and harmonious.

Furthermore, Morrell (2001: 10) draws attention, especially with reference to masculine identities in the South African context, to "race and class as of major importance in determining how men understand their masculinity, how they deploy it…." Lindsay and Miescher (2003: 4) concisely summarise this perspective, "ideologies of masculinity—like those of femininity—are culturally and historically constructed, their meaning continually contested always in the process of being renegotiated in the context of existing power relations."

Morrell (2001), and others are able to trace the multiple and intersecting contours of masculinity, cross-racially, to include violence, war, apartheid and other structural factors, noting their effects on cultural groups in Southern Africa. He notes that in a post-apartheid South Africa, it is necessary to speak of "masculinities" (plural), precisely because in our fragile and often unstable context, "masculinity is always being done and undone in the

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[7] Being careful not to throw the proverbial "baby out with the bathwater," it is important to draw attention, equally, to the structural and systemic underpinnings for gender construction.

sense that it is not fixed, but fluid and so is constantly being rehearsed, moulded and enacted" (2001: 20).

Gender identity, in the South African context, is thick, layered, and conflicted, and it is contested (cf. Morrell, 2001: 26). In response to the asymmetry and unpredictability of the social, political, and economic landscape of post-apartheid South Africa, men respond differently to change (Morrell, 2001: 26).

Morrell (2001: 26) proposes three general trajectories that reflect the attitudes of men to the changing landscape in South Africa. He notes that there is a good deal of overlap between them. The first trajectory—reactive or defensive—refers to men who, in an attempt to hold onto power, revert to older forms of masculinity. This trajectory often refers, in a general way, to "white, middle class" men who vehemently resist change to "restore the tattered remains of the male image."

The Mighty Men Conference (MMC) founded by Angus Buchan—to whom we return in chapter three—serves as a good example in the South African context of this first trajectory. According to Buchan, masculinity is being eroded and broken down (Nadar, 2009: 551). For Buchan, male gender identity is in crisis, and the MMC is an attempt to respond to the crisis. The response, however, serves only to entrench static notions of masculine identity and corresponds to Connell's hegemonic masculinity (1995: 77), defined as "the configuration of gender practice which embodies the currently accepted answer to the problem of the legitimacy of patriarchy, which guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women."

The second trajectory—accommodating—refers to men who seek to "resuscitate non-violent masculinities" (Morrell, 2001: 29). Drawing on Joan Wardrop's essay, "Soweto Flying Squad, Professional Masculinities and the Rejection of Machismo" (2001), Morrell (2001: 29) notes that this kind of masculinity relies a great deal on self-control and a good temperament. Men who respond within this trajectory to change, often rely on traditional practices (Morrell, 2001: 29), but recognise that there are other ways to resist violent subjectivities. In their study of male teens in Kwa-Zulu Natal, Blackbeard and Lindegger (2007: 43), found that teens who resisted "normative discourses" had to rely on "narratives of maturity, academic success, vocational aspirations, or peer-negotiated alternatives."

The third trajectory—responsive or progressive (Morrell, 2001: 26)—reflects men who consciously challenge violent masculinities by creating what Blackbeard and Lindegger (2007: 43) call "counter normative discourses." The masculine identity displayed here is what Morrell (2001: 31) refers to as "emancipator masculinities." A clear example of the "responsive or progressive" response to change as it relates to male identity are the many faith-based men's organisations (including, the Ecumenical HIV and AIDS Initiative in Africa (EHAIA), International Network of Religious living with or personally affected by HIV and AIDS (INERELA+), Pan African Christian AIDS Network (PACANet), and Ujamaa Centre)[8] cited by Ezra Chitando (2010: 130-131). These organisations are challenging the dominant, violent masculine stereotypes, by encouraging men to fight for the liberation of abused women.[9]

Masculinity in a post-apartheid context is fluid and negotiated in response to ever-changing conditions and a history that despite being behind us, continues to be present with us in the very structures of society. Negotiating male gendered identity is dependent on a complex interplay between structures, culture, community, and individuality. And that in the South African context, men will have to continue to renegotiate what it means to be a male in the face of conditions "which undermine their economic condition and which are likely to cause them to question their masculinity" (Morrell, 2001: 33; cf., Nortjé-Meyer, 2010: 148).

There are complex and multiple factors informing and shaping masculine gender identity construction in a post-apartheid South Africa. In the end, masculine identities within a post-

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[8] It is noteworthy that many of the organisations identified here have a clear link to issues of health, particularly HIV and AIDS. This is important, especially in the South African context, where the implications of hegemonic masculinities are often more severely felt in the area of sexual health.

[9] Chitando (2010) makes it clear that male gender activists who engage in the battle *with* women for gender justice must make sure that this space, the space of gender activism, does not become yet one more space where male gender activists underwrite the privilege of masculinity or swing to the opposite extreme and cast all men as brutal, selfish and promiscuous. He writes, "male gender activists have to proceed with a lot of caution as they may overlook women's agency" (2007: 132)

apartheid South Africa are still rooted in a heteronormative binary understanding of gender construction.

In the next section, consideration is given to Paul Ricœur's hermeneutical paradigm as a useful heuristic on three important levels. First, the paradigm of pre-critical, critical, post-critical explains the impasse between the church and the academy; the former cast as pre-critical and the latter as critical. Moreover, it suggests a possible solution in the movement to a post-critical position; a recognition that the text "voices more than can be allowed by critical consideration" (Brueggemann, 2015: 38). Second, the paradigm also has potential for understanding ourselves as interpreters and represents a kind of developmental model for hermeneutical self-identity, moving from pre-critical, to critical, to post-critical. Third, Ricœur's paradigm, as we will note throughout the dissertation, enables an understanding of the construction of masculinity that can move beyond the critical hermeneutical mode of biblical engagement precisely because the text "voices more than can be allowed by critical consideration." This, furthermore, opens the way to self-critically evaluating gender discourse to which I turn in chapter three where the metaphorical construction of the discourse is analysed.

2.4   Hermeneutics of Gender

Paul Ricœur's proposal that hermeneutics moves from first naïveté to second naïveté, or from pre-critical to critical to post-critical, provides a helpful heuristic frame for considering gender identity from a hermeneutical perspective.[10] Meaning in these Ricœurian terms is established and "animated" by the "willingness to suspect," (hermeneutic of suspicion) which signals a move from pre-critical to critical, and the "willingness to listen," (hermeneutic of retrieval) signalled by the move from critical to post-critical (Ricoeur, 1970: 27).

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[10] The Ricœurian hermeneutical paradigm can sometimes be misinterpreted as a support for oppositional binaries: the pre-critical versus the critical. Ricœur's thinking is more of a dialectic with post-critical functioning as a kind of mediatorial position between the pre-critical and critical. According to the Stanford Encyclopaedia, Ricœur's method "mediates and negotiates rather than removes the conflict of interpretations" (Pellauer and Dauenhauer, 2016).

2.4.1   Gender Identity and the Move from Pre-Critical to Critical Hermeneutics

A pre-critical mode of biblical engagement is evident within the evangelical church. This mode reflects Ricœur's first naïveté; an innocence about the biblical text[11] and its meaning and about textual interpreters and interpretations. Here the text is taken at face value because the text is taken as "the Word of God." To say that the biblical text is the "Word of God" is to say also that this text, unlike any other text, is divine revelation, is inspired, authoritative, infallible, inerrant, and therefore normative (Schneiders, 1999: 27). Within a worldview constructed, in part, by and reflected in these adjectives, there is little possibility of entertaining the notion that to say the bible is the "Word of God" is to employ a metaphor.

Sandra M Schneiders (1999: 29) argues that it is as a metaphor, by which she means to move beyond a purely rhetorical notion of metaphor (i.e., a contracted simile), that we are able to appreciate that metaphor "is perhaps our most powerful use of language, our most effective access to the meaning of reality at its deepest levels." Furthermore, Schneiders (1999: 29) observes, "metaphors are very unstable linguistic entities. They exist in and even as linguistic tension involving a simultaneous affirmation and negation of the likeness between the two terms of the metaphor."

In an attempt to resolve the linguistic tension signalled by the metaphor—the Word of God—the church has generally tended to move towards *literalisation*, at which point the metaphor dies. Such literalisation has had far reaching implications for the church's reading of gender identity. Because the biblical text is literally the "Word of God," whatever it says is usually taken, unquestionably, as normative for the church, and therefore for all humanity. Little consideration is given to the fact that the bible itself is a cultural artefact, reflecting a wide range of cultural norms and values that must be called into question. R S Sugirtharajah (2012: 31-32) articulates it this way, "… the Bible is not merely a simple spiritual text but has the capacity to foster both spiritual and territorial conquest," and "The

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[11] Such innocence tends to be agnostic about the normative and normativising engendering that is operative in the bible and replicates the very gender power relations in the biblical text. In other words, the innocence of church readers hides the complexity of the world that produces the text and in turn, produces gender hierarchies. Because the biblical text is vested with authority, the patterns of gender, whether hegemonic or otherwise, are taken at face value and therefore normative; implicit in this realisation is that such patterns are to be imitated.

Christian Bible, for all its sophisticated theological ideals like tolerance and compassion, contains equally repressive and predatory elements which provide textual ammunition for spiritual and physical conquest."

The "repressive and predatory elements" in a pre-critical mode rely heavily on binary constructions of gender identity. One may cite the following representative examples:

(1) Complementarianism, a view which maintains that men and women are equal in their "essential dignity and human personhood, but different and complimentary in function with male headship in the home and in the Church" (Theopedia). This view, which seems to have considerable traction among evangelical churches in South Africa,[12] is promoted by such influential and international figures as Mark Driscoll, John Piper, John F. MacArthur and Wayne Grudem. It is also the view of the Council for Biblical Manhood and Womenhood (CBMW). This view, represents a pre-critical mode of constructing gender identity and is really just "palatable patriarchy" (to borrow from Nadar, 2009: 555). A national exponent of this view is Angus Buchan's Mighty Men's Conference which draws 200 000 men together to "restore masculinity," by returning to biblical manhood, which is a return to a static, closed, male identity (Nadar, 2009: 552; cf. Volf, 1996: 182). Moreover, this construction of masculine identity is, according to Nadar (2009: 555), not only rooted in masculine hegemony, but requires the use of "relational and positional" power (which are essentially hierarchical ideologies), and "discourses of power" (which results in polar binaries). Buchan maintains that according to the bible, it is

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[12] For example, a growing number of churches in South Africa now align themselves to the Acts 29 global network, described on their website as a "diverse, global family of church-planting churches." Theologically, the network holds to complementarianism, expressed as follows (2017a): "We are deeply committed to the spiritual and moral equality of male and female and to men as responsible servant-leaders in both home and church." Complementarianism creates space for women to exercise their spiritual gifts in the context of ministry, but maintains that "God has given to the man primary responsibility to lead his wife and family in accordance with the servant-leadership and sacrificial love character by Jesus Christ." Similarly, Advance, a global movement "of churches partnering together to advance the Gospel through planting and strengthening churches," maintain as a value, that churches be led by (male) elders, noting simply, "the Biblical expectation is that elders are male" (2017b).

the divine role of men to be "kings, priests and prophets" (Nadar, 2009: 554) in their homes and in society.

(2) Drawing on a study of the abuse of women in the church, conducted at a large Full Gospel church in Durban, Owino (2010: 146) argues that binary gender identities are constructed around the masculinity of God, which is "considered superior, while femaleness is associated with inferiority." Citing the responses of the interviewed women who experienced abuse at the hands of their husbands, Owino (2010: 156) notes that for these women, men were authorised, because they were male, to "do what they wanted within the marriage relationship." These women also tended to cast their suffering in theological/biblical language, seeing themselves as suffering servants in the pattern of Jesus who gives them strength to face another day (Owino, 2010: 156).

A critical mode of biblical interpretation, evident in the academy, draws attention to the naïveté of the church and its interpretation, and seeks in response to problematise both the text and its interpretation. Such problematising of the biblical text precludes taking the text at face value as the "Word of God," but does not seem to offer any alternative in its place. Thus, the academy has succeeded, for the most part, only in problematising and in the process relativising, if not eradicating, the biblical canon from having any kind of role to play in human society.

The critical perspective of the academy, which is often marginalised by the church, is an important voice, especially on the issue of masculine identity because it questions what is present in the text. While the church views critical scholarship with some suspicion and tries to side-line it, the academy, on some level, appears to have returned the favour and has succeeded in silencing the voice of the church because of its ideological bias. Perhaps, then, the failure of both these institutions is the failure to recognise not only the difference in purpose for which each exists, but also the failure to recognise in a self-reflexive way that each, whether church or academy, has effectively rendered the other as *other*. The binary of male and female, it turns out, is a binary of the church and the academy as well. Cynthia Briggs Kittredge (2010: 294) puts it this way,

Discussion about teaching the Bible in a theological seminary takes place in the midst of considerable strife about the perceived conflicts between the

church and the academy. In polemical style the tensions between their values are posed as oppositions. … the extremes are articulated as "the Bible as cultural product" and "the Bible as scripture" or between "historical critical interpretation" and "theological interpretation."

Briggs Kittredge's reflection on the challenges of teaching biblical studies for denominational ministry in the context of the seminary notes that the purpose for which these church affiliated institutions exist is to train leaders of communities of faith, communities "in which the Bible transforms people and institutions" (2010: 293). A seminary, she says, "prepares preachers and teachers of the Bible for communities of faith for whom the Bible is scripture, a source of tradition and teaching, and a force to shape its imagination and language" (2010: 294).

Stephen Fowl (1998: 2) echoes this notion when he notes that the church reads the bible, interprets these sacred texts, in order to provide "a normative standard for the faith, practice, and worship of Christian communities." This purpose is further nuanced (Fowl, 1998: 2-3):

> The primary aim in all these different settings and contexts is to interpret scripture as part of their ongoing struggles to live and worship faithfully before the triune God in ways that bring them into deeper communion with God and with others. This means that Christians are called not merely to generate various scriptural interpretations but to embody those interpretations as well.

A clear articulation of the purpose for which preachers and teachers are trained and for which the church exists does not, however, excuse the often hegemonic and oppressive ways in which the bible has been read in the context of the church. Indeed, the history of Christianity is replete with examples of how the church has co-opted the bible in a pre-critical mode as a means to

> justify such acts as genocide, slavery, war, crusades, colonialism, economic plunder, and *gender oppression*. Bible verses were quoted, sermons preached from pulpits, and theses written in theological academic centres to justify barbaric acts that were labelled "Christian missionary zeal" or "righteous

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indignation." Millions have unjustly died and perished in the name of Jesus and by the hands of those who call themselves his followers (De La Torre, 2002: 38, emphasis mine).

As De La Torre notes above, the academy does not escape the critique it offers the church. It too has been put into the service of reading and interpreting the biblical text in hegemonic ways. Both the church and the academy are implicated in reading practices that fail to transform society and restore human dignity. In parabolic fashion, then, while the church/academy has been quick to draw attention to the speck in the eye of the academy/church, the church and the academy has failed to remove the log from its own eye.

Most biblical scholarship while it has been critical of the pre-critical manner in which the church has conducted its reading practices, has also been implicated in reading gender against the binary backdrop. While the binary model for understanding gender identity raises some important questions about the relationship between sexed bodies and gender identity, what emerges as of critical hermeneutical importance is an approach that can perhaps transcend the current debate, or at least offer an alternative perspective.

2.5   Gender Identity (Post-)Critically Reimagined

2.5.1   Exclusion and Embrace: A Hermeneutic of Suspicion and Retrieval

The central purpose that has driven this chapter, within the broader scope of the dissertation, has been to locate gender and masculinity within the concrete setting of a post-apartheid South Africa. As noted above (§ 2.3.1), the contextualisation of masculine identities within a post-apartheid South Africa serves as the primary context and interlocutor for my engagement with 1 Thessalonians and its particular construction of masculinity. Within this context, I suggest, that the principle hermeneutical question before us, then, is how to handle the biblical text, generally, and 1 Thessalonians, specifically.

Reading 1 Thessalonians to reimagine gender and masculinity as open to the other requires a departure from the pre-critical hermeneutics of the church which renders gender and masculinity as static and inflexible. That departure is realised through the critical hermeneutical mode of the academy which signals a rupture to pre-critical consciousness through deconstructive readings of Paul's letter to the Thessalonians. However,

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deconstructive readings of this kind run the risk of failing to construct anything in its place. The critical must be transposed into the post-critical, a second naïveté. The second naïveté is not a return to the naïveté of the pre-critical consciousness. There is no return. However, there must be a departure from the critical and a movement towards the post-critical.

Critical reading is essential for exposing the exercise of power derived from the ideological idiosyncrasies inherent within the interpretive enterprise, regardless of hermeneutical approach. Within the South African contextual reality where the biblical text continues to exercise an authoritative voice within the church, the academy and the church must begin to listen and learn from one another, in the contact zone, if our interpretations are to contribute to the quest for human dignity. Nadar (2009: 559), argues that if gender violence is to be eradicated, the task of deconstructing and constructing masculinity (anew?) belongs both to the academy and "popular" society, and this would include the church.

Failure to have both popular society and the academy wrestle with the constructive task called for by our contextual challenges will result in the perpetuation of closed and inflexible notions of masculinity. Nadar asserts, "If serious academic reflection on masculinity is not 'translated' for men who are searching for positive masculinities, then Angus Buchan's mighty men will continue to flourish at the expense of wo/men" (Nadar, 2009: 559).

Gender negotiation is complex and ongoing. Morrell (2001: 22) argues that masculinity is not singularly constituted by discourses. Rather, he notes that the construction of masculinities also exists in a complex interplay between "emotion, labour and work relations, family and other organisational structures, in disease and health" (Morrell, 2001: 22). While these comments focus specifically on men, it is clear from our discussion that these factors are true for gender identity in general.

If gender identity constructions are not only affected by structures and discourses, but also exist as vernacular expressions, then what reading strategies can be employed to destabilise gender identities sufficient to be open to the *other*? What kind of hermeneutic is required to take seriously power relations reflected in the text and in the interpretations of the text, but then also articulate gender identities which are embracing? Part of the

difficulty, of course, is that the biblical text can easily be read in ways which construe gender identity as closed and exclusive. A deconstructionist approach, however, disrupts the need for a metanarrative, a normative and normativising discourse. From the perspective of communal identity formation, this begs the question of whether it is possible to form a community identity, or even an individual's identity in the absence of a normativising narrative of one kind or another.

Miroslav Volf's (1996) notion of "exclusion" is suggestive and perhaps generative for moving the conversation around gender identities that are embracing forward. Volf (1996: 58-62) argues that the bedrock of modern Western democracy is based on practices of superlative forms of acceptance and inclusion, a boundary-less existence (1996: 63). Considering post-structuralist theories, specifically those of Foucault (and Nietzsche), Volf (1996: 62) notes:

> The pathos of his [Foucault's] critique of the shadow narrative of exclusion is the obverse of a deep longing for inclusion—his own, radical kind of inclusion. The unmasking of 'binary divisions,' 'coercive assignments,' and of the 'power of normalisation' all seek to broaden the space of the 'inside' by storming the walls that protect it.'

This kind of inclusion, then, seeks to remove all boundary markers and all senses of normalisation. While this kind of approach has appealed to many in the academy, Volf (1996: 63) asks a pertinent question, "Does not such radical indeterminacy undermine from within the idea of inclusion?" In an affirmative move, he argues:

> Without boundaries we will be able to know only what we are fighting against but not what we are fighting for. Intelligent struggle against exclusion demands categories and normative criteria that enable us to distinguish between repressive identities and practices that should be subverted and nonrepressive ones that should be affirmed (Volf, 1996: 63).

Moreover, he continues, the nonexistence of boundaries does not prevent exclusion, rather it signifies the "end of life" (Volf, 1996: 63). Drawing on Manfred Frank, Volf (1996: 63), substantiates by noting that such a ["non-ordered"] existence will always be

indistinguishable, where "neither happiness nor pleasure, neither freedom nor justice can be identified." For Volf, then, boundaries are essential to ordering life. By insisting on boundaries, Volf is not advocating for parochial exclusionary practices. Instead, for Volf boundaries are essential for healthy inclusion, the embrace. He demonstrates this by relating it to the self:

> The human self is formed not through a simple rejection of the other—through a binary logic of opposition and negation—but through a complex process of "taking in" and "keeping out." We are who we are because we are separate and connected, both distinct and related; the boundaries that mark our identities are both barriers and bridges (Volf, 1996: 63).

Hence the self is always inextricably bound to the other but never collapses into an amorphous amalgamation. Similarly, then, our reading strategies cannot negate all boundaries. It cannot be so inclusive that it validates forms of gender identity which oppresses, infringes upon or violates other forms. Our reading of the biblical text must then insist upon inclusion, which must always result in justice and equality. In order to read for legitimate inclusion, practices of exclusion must also be maintained. Volf (1996: 64) proposes that for this kind of exclusion to result in healthy (that is, for social well-being) inclusionary practices, it must meet two stipulations. First, it must "name exclusion as evil with confidence because it enables us to imagine nonexclusionary boundaries" (Volf, 1996: 64). Second, such practices "must not dull our ability to detect the exclusionary tendencies in our own judgement and practices," hence the importance of reflexivity on the part of both the church and the academy (Volf, 1996: 64). Moreover, such reading does not, then, only seek to exclude oppressive and violent agencies, but also seeks to underscore our own social locations, which are always important, especially when considering gender identity. It is precisely for this reason that postcolonial biblical criticism offers a significant insight into the importance of social location. Of course, the construction of the other with reference to social location, whether in terms of gender or politics, or economics, etc., is never a straightforward matter. Nfah-Abbenyi (2005: 261-262) offers a sobering critique of the tendency to construct the postcolonial other in an undifferentiated way which often results in the co-optation of a universalising narrative that simply plays into the centre/periphery dichotomies.

For gender identities, then, to be re-imagined around openness and fluidity, it must expose such exclusionary practices. Since gender identity is influenced by multifarious factors and forces, I return to an idea we noted in chapter one, reading with the other. Of course, there is no one reading strategy, rather reading for openness to the other must be based on exclusion of oppressive forms of gender identity. This, however, can only be contextually negotiated.

2.5.2   Moving Towards a Gender-Critical Lens: Dialectics of Power

At root the concern is with gender equality in a post-apartheid South Africa. I have tried, very briefly, to unpack *some* of the complexities around gender construction in light of how the biblical text is read. For true equality and justice however, it is imperative that hermeneutics pay careful attention to the gendered quality of biblical texts. Gender needs to be foregrounded to uncover the politics both in the biblical text and in the interpretations of texts.[13]

Consequently, any discussion on gender must also consider the power differential and distribution across all macro and micro levels. Power relationships, however, are never situated along a strict gendered binary (this is true, also, of antiquity where gender was understood as a spectrum). That is, men do not simply exercise power over women as passive recipients.[14] Quoting Stolen and Vaa, Morrell (2001: 22) notes:

> For a long time, and especially in women's studies, power has been considered as repressive only. Women were claimed to be victims of the exercise of power by men. … However, the fact that women often agree with practices that subordinate them, that they resist the exercise of power, and that there often exists friendly relationships between women and men, cannot be understood in terms of the exclusively repressive view on power.

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[13] This will come into sharper focus in our engagement with 1 Thessalonians where Paul, Silvanus and Timothy use feminine metaphors as self-descriptions of their identity vis-à-vis the Thessalonian community.

[14] We might suggest, however, that the very exercise of power, which in antiquity was co-mingled with the notion of authority (*auctoritas*), was the province of men.

Power relations must then always be understood dialectically if we are to be truly attentive to gender inequality. Moreover, Morrell (2001: 22) observes that only such an outlook "allows us to get beyond the *oppositional* binary in analysis and politics." Just as gender identity is complex and fluid, so too are relations of power and power in relations. This can be illustrated when Alsop *et al.* (2002: 75) correctly observe that many white women were in large part benefactors of colonial structures. Drawing on Johnson, they aptly note, "White women from colonial powers have both in the past and currently benefitted from the imperialist project and the economic structures of globalisation which followed it" (Alsop *et al.*, 2002: 75). While these comments directly relate to macro socio-political structures, they further contend that such inequalities are present in "everyday" exchanges when "privileged women construct their femininity with clothes manufactured in sweatshops around the world" (Alsop *et al.*, 2002: 75).

It is clear then that power must be examined contextually and cannot be assumed to exist along a constructed gendered binary. If our hermeneutical practices are to shape and be shaped by both the church and the academy, we must begin to be sensitive to such dialectical power relationships. Morrell (2001: 23) summarises:

> Where research is sensitive to difference and to power inequalities but does not presume that these inequalities will determine gender relations and allows for the possibility that men and boys, women and girls will use accommodation, collaboration, compromise and negotiation in a process of power-sharing then the possibilities of working meaningfully for gender equity are greatly strengthened.

2.6 Summary

The church in its pre-critical hermeneutical mode has silenced out the important, though critical, voice of the academy on the issue of gender identity. Consequently, it has presented a view of masculine identity, in particular, that is oppressive precisely because it is a narrative that universalises a narrow understanding of gender identity only with reference to the bible, and a particular reading of the bible at that, informed by biological essentialism. The academy in its critical hermeneutical mode has offered a thickly textured understanding of gendered identity that results in a fragmented and differentiated notion of how gender identity is constructed. In the process, it has also excluded the voice of the

church. In fact, both the church and the academy have effectively *othered* each other, and by doing so have simply engaged in a colonising project of their own.

Moreover, the social situatedness of this dissertation is an important dimension of the research and surfaces frequently throughout the chapters to follow. Indeed, a number of recurring themes and ideas can be traced throughout the dissertation, including: the implications of the deep fissure between the academy and the church especially for gender or masculinity construction; the importance of the South African post-apartheid context (which again surfaces in chapter four where I develop a postcolonial optic); interpretations that serve the telos of human dignity and equality; and, the complex negotiation of gender at the nexus of sacred text and critical academic rigour.[15]

Having contextualised this research project within the complex setting of post-apartheid South Africa, in the contact zone of the church and academy, I turn my attention in the following chapter, to a detailed exploration of male bodiliness and performance as I develop a gender critical lens. This chapter will also push for a contextually sensitive understanding of masculinity.

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[15] The trajectory of this dissertation is less linear and more helical. In other words, the chapters and ideas do not necessarily progress in a straight line. Instead, there is an accretive build up towards the central question, namely, the construction and representation of masculinity in 1 Thessalonians. This means that there are, as a consequence of the helical shape of the trajectory, a number of points at which an idea receives attention again. For example, gender receives some attention in the opening chapter where the basic lay of the land is sketched, in chapter three (more explicitly in relation to masculinity), it is touched on in chapter four and five, and emerges in chapter six as a more focused expression of 1 Thessalonians.

3   MALE BODILINESS AND PERFORMANCE: DEVELOPING A GENDER CRITICAL OPTIC

3.1   Introduction: Words Create Worlds

Susannah Heschel remembers her father, Abraham Joshua Heschel, often talking about the importance and power of words:

> Words, he often wrote, are themselves sacred, God's tool for creating the universe, and our tools for bringing holiness—or evil—into the world. He used to remind us that the Holocaust did not begin with the building of crematoria, and Hitler did not come to power with tanks and guns; it all began with uttering evil words, with defamation, with language and propaganda. Words create worlds, he used to tell me when I was a child (Heschel, 1997: vii).

"Words create worlds."[1] Heschel's insight into the rhetorical force of the words that lay behind the diabolical atrocities of the Holocaust of the mid-twentieth century is a sobering

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[1] The notion of words creating worlds finds its fullest expression in the modern philosophical approach to language known as *speech-act theory*, initially developed by J. L. Austin in her work *How to Do Things with Words* (1975). Since then, several other important works on the theory have been produced, notably that of J. R. Searle's *Speech Acts* (1969) and Mary Louise Pratt's *Toward a Speech Act Theory of Literary Discourse* (1977). The theory essentially maintains that written or spoken words aim to do something to the hearer(s)/reader(s); that is, they aim to evoke a response of some kind. Thus, a single utterance contains three components as part of the communicative process: (1) the *locutionary act*, the utterance (or inscribing) of words that convey a definite sense of meaning within a particular linguistic context; (2) the *illocutionary act*, the drawing of words together into a particular form of communication (with the view of either informing, questioning, commanding, promising, etc.); and (3) the *perlocutionary act*, the effect of the speech on an audience. For more detail see *The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* (Baldick, 2008: loc. 10190). For application of speech-act theory to biblical studies, particularly with reference to the rhetorical effect of quotations, see Christopher D. Stanley's *Arguing with Scripture: The Rhetoric of Quotations in the Letters of Paul* (2004)*.* See also Sandra M. Schneiders *The Revelatory Text: Interpreting the New Testament as Sacred Scripture* (1999: xxxii-xxxiii).

reminder to us that language matters. Thus, long before the sinister plot to annihilate the Jews took its grotesque physical form, a world was being created by words. It was being scripted by a masterful rhetorician able to tap into the national(istic) consciousness and shape an identity that excluded the Other. Hitler's Germany would have no room for the "weak," for the *Untermenschen* (sub-humans). His words were creating a world fit only for the Nietzschean *Übermensch*.

Closer to home, and more recently, the power of language to construct a world in which human life is stripped of its intrinsic value was brought into sharp relief recently when the Speaker of the National Assembly, Baleka Mbete, was reported to have said at the ANC North West provincial conference, "If we don't work we will continue to have *cockroaches* like Malema roaming all over the place" (Mokone, Capazario, Shoba and Joubert, 2015). Mbete was airing her frustration over the disruptive behaviour of EFF (Economic Freedom Fighters) members during the State of the Nation Address in Cape Town (12 February, 2015). EFF MP's were escorted out of the National Assembly (not for the first time) for their misbehaviour. Malema's response captures just how dangerous words have been in recent history when he makes explicit the connection between Mbete's reference to him as a cockroach and the Rwandan genocide of 1994. He is reported to have said, "I think Baleka is calling for my assassination. If I'm killed tomorrow people must know I was killed by Baleka and the ANC. We know what happened to people who were called cockroaches in Rwanda. I'm not scared." The objectification, and therefore dehumanisation, of people by speech is exactly what Heschel was trying to say with the phrase, "words create world."

Words can create racialised, segregated worlds where the 'less-than-human' can be exterminated precisely because of the rhetorical force of words to strip the intrinsic value of the human person.

The post-9/11 world has witnessed the powerful rhetorical collusion between speech and image—not the first time in world history—to create a divisive, polarising world, a world structured at the deepest levels by the "us" and "them" binary. In the days following the attack on the Twin Towers, a steady flow of speech and images were put to great effect, rallying Americans, and indeed its Western allies, against the threat of terrorist groups. What emerged was a kind of racial and religious/ideological profiling that cast the enemy

as Muslim/Arab/Middle Eastern.[2] Suddenly to be Muslim or Middle Eastern was to be considered the enemy, or at least potentially a threat to the American (read, democratic, free-market) way of life.[3] This kind of racial and ideological profiling constitutes a powerful mechanism for maintaining boundaries.

Words (and images) can create religious/ideological worlds that can either establish deep fissures, maintaining binary notions of identity or bring people together.

The absence of words also creates worlds. Within the South African political context, the absence of speech has created a world anxious over the political stability of leaders and their ability to uphold the rule of law. I refer here to the reluctance of our President, Jacob Zuma, to respond to the Nkandla scandal in 2015. The lack of response is particularly noticeable in the parliamentary context where President Zuma continues to evade questions surrounding the funding of the R200 million private homestead. The absence of speech over this matter by the ruling party has created a vacuum which is happily being filled by the opposition parties, most provocatively the EFF.

The silencing of words, particularly of minority or oppressed groups (women, the poor, etc.) creates a world where the droning cacophony of the powerful establishes normativities that serve to underwrite the powerful.

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[2] See Edward Said's *Orientalism* (2014) for a detailed account of the propensity within Western ideology to construct identity within a binary framework that firmly establishes the *other* as different, even exotic, than the dominant (dominating) Western culture.

[3] The rhetoric of a post-9/11 USA provides ample evidence of the power of language to construct identity, particularly the identity of the other. And again, in this case, that construction of identity is ethnic, but it is also gendered. Penner and Lopez (2012: 33) bring this into sharper focus for us when they write, reflecting on a statement made by the then US Defense Secretary, Robert Louis Gates at the news of Osama bin Laden's second-in-command, Ayman al-Zawahiri, being elected as the new leader of al-Qaida, "... [it is] probably tough to count votes when you're in a cave": "The joke's power rests on elements describing an 'enemy' as cowardly, weak, powerless, and, by implication, effeminate. They are not 'real men'—'real men' live publicly and vote freely in a democracy."

[Absence] of words can create unstable and politically tensive worlds; and worlds where the speech of some counts for nothing.

Words, whether our own or those of our culture, mark our bodies, scripting[4] us to perform in certain ways.[5] But our bodies are not just surfaces upon which our culture writes, nor are they simply sites—political, social or biological—for the construction of identity. The human body is at once both passive and active; both engaged, as an agent, in the process of inscribing identity and receptive to the normative inscription of society.

Contemporary society gives witness to a confluence of words and images that give shape to bodily performance, regulating and giving expression to bodily identity both in conformity to institutionalised norms and in resistance to them. This is everywhere evident, from television programming to cinematic reproductions of normative and subversive performance; from the ubiquitous mass media of advertising and social networking to the dictates of fashionistas and the panoply of celebrity, text and image are seen to be creating a thickly layered, deeply conflicted and contested world of gendered identity.

Within the South African context gendered worlds are being scripted that have a deep rootedness in our colonial and apartheid pasts. Following the 1994 democratic elections,

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[4] *Scripting* allows for a multi-layered understanding of the discourses that play into the formation of gendered identity. In other words, a script, which is itself a construction, can bear traces of multiple other scripts that together establish a singular script. It is my contention that the question of gender construction and representation happens through the convergence of multiple scripts and multiply layered scripts exerting influence on individuals and communities.

[5] A faint echo of Paul's words in his letter to the Galatians, "for I carry the marks of Jesus branded on my body" (6.17) can be heard here. Though Paul does not speak of words marking our bodies, he is able to convey the full sweep of the gospel narrative in his evocation of the phrase "the marks of Jesus." And since the argument I am seeking to make is that our gendered identities are constituted by the words that mark/make our bodies, like Paul, we carry words in our bodily comportment, in how we see ourselves, conduct ourselves, and inscribe particular normative identities. The work of Davina C. Lopez is particularly important to note here. Lopez has special interest in the way colonised bodies were inscribed within the Roman Empire through the use of both text (e.g., the Res Gestae) and image (e.g., the Sebastion Aphrodisias) (2007; 2008; 2012). At a later stage in this dissertation I will attend in greater detail to the work of Lopez and others.

the Government of National Unity implemented a deliberate strategy to change the face of the political landscape, especially in terms of addressing a range of gender inequalities. Some of the significant changes included (Morrell, 2001: 19):

(1) The inclusion of women in parliamentary structures and the installation of women as ministers and deputy ministers.

(2) The promotion of a vigorous gender campaign.

(3) The establishment of "the Office of the Status of Women in the Deputy President's office, the Special Standing Committee on Women and the Women's Empowerment Unit in parliament, as well as the Commission on Gender Equality."

Yet despite the important strides towards gender equality in South Africa on an official level, we are still faced with some of the highest statistics of violence against women and children.[6] While the super-structures are changing, more needs to be done to change the fundamental subtext that seems to be informing gender-based violence. Creating structures that invite equal opportunity for women and men, does not necessarily change the story many South Africans continue to tell themselves about what it means to be women or men.[7]

In the context of the academy, we see a proliferation of words and images creating multiple and competing gendered worlds. Here the words are sharp and incisive and are intended

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[6] The factors influencing the high incidence of gender based violence are, of course, multiple. South Africa's complex history compounds and multiples this even further. It is perhaps important to note, too, that part of the challenge is at least related to the normalisation of certain practices and behaviours which are not easily turned around. Even when one considers the legal framework, one has to concede that there is still some way to go. Indeed, when the South African legal system is interrogated from a feminist perspective, the role of gender in shaping law becomes more sharply into focus. What emerges is a picture that reveals "the many ways that law, as a consequence [of the shaping influence of gender] harms women" (van Marle and Bonthuys, 2007: 49)

[7] Gender-based violence has received a fair amount of airtime over the last few years in newsprint and social media. See for example Jos Dirkx's article *"Gender-based violence: three dead bodies, zero safe space"* (2013), or Mia Malan's *"Gender Violence: Creating a new normal for South Africa's men"* (2013). See, also, Heidi Swart's *"Violence in the villages: the quiet scourge of rural rape"* (2013).

to be used to underwrite, subvert, undermine, endorse, old, current, and emerging worlds. These words are also uttered within the concrete social, political, and religious realities of institutions that exercise some form of power over the words and therefore over the worlds created by them.

Academic work is regulated by both the discipline within which one is located and by the social and political institutional *habitus* of the academy. Vorster (2014: 7) commenting on the regulation evident within a field of study states the matter this way, "No theoretical framework, no set of critical interpretive strategies inherently protect against hegemonic cultural normativities that constitute disciplines as objects of inquiry." In other words, the critique of a norm—typically the enterprise of the academy—happens within the context of the norm, and in academic circles, the critique itself often becomes the new norm. Bringing sharper focus to the reality that our words as academics are not unfettered, Butler states that there is "no subverting of a norm without inhabiting that norm" (2014: 8), and therefore the enterprise is always at risk of reinscribing the dominant script of the norm within which it operates.

An analysis of academic discourse on gender, therefore, stands to provide both an insightful hermeneutical view of the kinds of words that carry currency in the academy, and the worlds they are creating. Our choice of words, especially the organising metaphors, about which I say more below, shape our discourse. In what follows, I argue on the basis of responsible, ethical hermeneutical practice, that we are obligated to interrogate our language, to identify how our discursive choices highlight and hide aspects of our gender analysis.[8] Put as a series of questions: What kind of worlds are being created by the words (metaphors) we use when we speak of gender? What does our language reveal about the conceptual framework informing our analysis of gender? What is the trajectory of our language? What is its rhetorical and hermeneutical telos?

3.2 Metaphors: A Brief Exploration

Cognitive linguistics has enabled us to understand the role of language in mediating

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[8] See Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza's *The Ethics of Biblical Interpretation: Decentering Biblical Scholarship* (1988).

meaning.[9] As a diverse field, it is primarily interested in how language becomes an instrument "for organising, processing, and conveying information" (Geeraerts and Cuyckens, 2007: 1). Put another way, cognitive linguistics maintains that our experience of the world is fundamentally structured and mediated by language. Because "language imposes a structure on the world rather than just mirroring objective reality," it serves as the means by which we organise knowledge and "reflects the needs, interests, and experiences of individuals and cultures" (Geeraerts *et al.*, 2007: 5). Language, therefore, is "a structured collection of meaningful categories that help us deal with new experiences and store information about old ones" (Geeraerts *et al.*, 2007: 5).

Of particular interest for cognitive linguists is the use of metaphor and its role in shaping our sense of the world; a subfield of cognitive linguistics known as cognitive metaphor theory. At the most basic level, a metaphor is a figure of speech "in which a word or phrase that literally designates one thing is applied to something else" (McNeel, 2014: 8).

Metaphor, however, is more than a linguistic apparatus. Sandra M. Schneiders (1999: 29) reminds us that it is "perhaps our most powerful use of language, our most effective access to the meaning of reality at its deepest levels." Metaphor becomes "an instrument of new meaning, a way of achieving genuine semantic innovation" (Schneiders, 1999: 29). As an instrument of meaning, metaphors frame, or constitute, our "conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act" (Lakoff and Johnson, 2003: 3). By conceptual system, Lakoff and Johnson mean something like worldview.[10] They write, "Our concepts structure what we perceive, how we get around in the world, and how we relate to other people. Our conceptual system thus plays a central role in defining our everyday realities" (2003:

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[9] Cognitive metaphor theory is a fairly recent (mid-twentieth century) development in metaphor theory and seeks to draw attention to the impact of metaphor on attitudes and behaviours; that is, the cognitive function of metaphors. Gibbs's (2008) anthology provides a solid starting point for recent developments and current trends in research in this area. Of particular importance are the contributions by Cameron (2008); Semino and Steen (2008) in Gibb's anthology.

[10] Walsh and Middleton (1984: 17) amplify this sense of worldview when they write, "They [worldviews] are not systems of thought, like theologies or philosophies. Rather, world views are perceptual frameworks. They are ways of seeing." See also Goheen and Bartholomew (2008: 23).

3). Our worldview or conceptual system is, according to Lakoff and Johnson (2003: 3), "largely metaphorical." Metaphors, therefore, "structure how we perceive, how we think, and what we do" (2003: 3),[11] and they do that by applying meaning from the "source domain" (or *vehicle*) to the "target domain" (or *tenor*).[12] In other words, the cognitive function of a metaphor manifests in certain behaviours, attitudes and social patterns that are more or less circumscribed by the metaphorical entailments.

In her recent study of maternal metaphors in 1 Thessalonians, Jennifer Houston McNeel provides a very useful summary of the aspects of cognitive metaphor theory[13] that she argues are most applicable to her reading of this letter. Salient to the purposes of our discussion of gender construction and representation, are the following aspects of cognitive metaphor theory (2014: 20–21):

(1) Metaphors are an important, integral part of constructing reality both for the individual and for society.

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[11] For a helpful overview of the use of metaphor theory and biblical studies see Job Y. Jindo's excellent article in the *Oxford Encyclopaedia of Biblical Interpretation* (2013). For an application of metaphor theory informed by the work of Lakoff and Johnson, see Wanamaker (2005) or the more recent work by Jennifer Houston McNeel (2014).

[12] Tenor refers to "the subject to which a metaphorical expression is applied" (Baldick, 2008: loc. 10654). For example, John speaks of Jesus as the "Lamb of God" (John 1.29, 36; Rev. 5.6; 7.10, 17; 14.4, *et passim*). In this metaphorical expression, Jesus is the subject to which the metaphor is being applied. Jesus is the *tenor* (target domain). Lamb in this expression functions as the vehicle (source domain). By employing this metaphor, John is conceptually framing the identity/person of Jesus, drawing the richness of the source domain to bear on his audiences' understanding of Jesus.

[13] My interest in cognitive metaphor theory lies in the way words, especially metaphors work towards creating particular worlds. And to the extent that this is the focus, the work of Wimbush (1993) serves as helpful cross-reference. The scope of this dissertation excludes any meaningful engagement with the theory. The reference to it in the opening section of this chapter serves a heuristic function, drawing attention to the way words shape and inform, our view of the world, but how that view, in turn, shapes behaviours, attitudes and social patterns. McNeel's work specifically focuses in on cognitive metaphor theory and presents a compelling argument for how Paul uses maternal metaphors in his letter to the Thessalonians. I will at a later stage return to the fruit of McNeel's work in my engagement with 1 Thessalonians from a gender and postcolonial biblical critical perspective; I do not wish to duplicate her work.

(2) Metaphors act something like a grid through which information about the world if processed.[14]

(3) Consequently, metaphors both reveal and conceal even while providing the structure for our understanding.

(4) Metaphors have the power to influence our understanding of the target domain and this has an impact on attitudes and behaviours towards the target domain. [15]

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[14] This is a particularly important point to bear in mind when analysing the metaphors used in the academy to speak of gender. Our choices affect not just how one understands gender discourse, but has a fundamental shaping effect on our behaviours in relation to gender. For this reason, the strong prevalence of image in contemporary culture exercises great influence in shaping our discourse on gender. One may cite any number of television series, *Modern Family, Two and a Half Men, Big Bang Theory, Desperate Housewives,* to name but a few, that either reinforce gender stereotypes, and often ethnic stereotypes, or call these into question as a powerful mechanism for shaping popular discourse on gender.

[15] McNeel notes further, "New metaphors often extend or combine conventional metaphors in creative ways, giving them the power to provide a new understanding of the target domain." She draws this particular conclusion from the work of Lakoff and Turner which focuses on the poetic use of metaphor. Lakoff and Turner, McNeel (2014: 19-20) notes, "identify three ways in which poets work with conventional metaphors: (1) they can simply 'versify' them without adding anything new, which results in 'lame, feeble, and trite verse'; (2) they can skilfully employ them by combining, extending, or using them to create vivid imagery; or (3) they can step outside of them and employ them in unusual ways to 'destabilise' the picture of reality provided." McNeel suggests that Paul is using metaphors in the second sense. One must ask, however, whether it is possible for Paul to be employing maternal metaphors to destabilise hegemonic masculinities; maternal metaphors as means of queering masculinity? I return to this question in my engagement with Paul's letter (chapter six).

3.2.1 Mapping Gender: The Metaphor of Mapping[16]

Jerry Brotton writes that "the urge to map is a basic, enduring human instinct" (2013: 4).[17] We map to make sense of the world around us, to somehow trace out the relationships between things, to navigate our way through life.[18] But, making sense of the world, of the complex relationships between things, is more like a fine art than an exact science. This is true of mapping which "is always a creative interpretation of the space it claims to represent" (Brotton, 2013: 14). Thus, to map something is to engage in an exercise that is simultaneously *representational*, *constructive*, and *metaphorising*. To understand mapping as a metaphor is to suggest that,

> a metaphor, like a map, involves carrying something across from one place to another. Maps are always images of elsewhere, imaginatively transporting their viewers to faraway unknown places, recreating distance in the palm of your hand. Consulting a world map ensures that faraway is always close at hand (Brotton, 2013: 14).

Thus, representing the relationships between things, as Virginia Burrus notes, is not an innocent exercise. It includes a process of constructing those relationships, and therefore "is an act of translation—or, perhaps better yet, of transformation. A mapping constructs a relationship between two domains..." (2007: 1).[19] Thus, when the mapping metaphor is employed in gender discourse, we must ask ourselves *to what end* is it being used? What

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[16] It is to be noted that the metaphors used in reference to gender (mapping, performing/dancing, and scripting) are often used interchangeably in academic discourse, suggesting a consistent conceptual frame of reference, especially as it relates to hermeneutical starting points, from which academics draw in their discussions on this topic.

[17] On mapping and its philosophical underpinnings see, Puar (2006); Fieni and Mattar (2014); Egeberg Holmgren and Hearn (2009); Parker (2006); Åsberg, Rönnblom and Koobak (2010).

[18] The origin of the word "map" dates back to the early sixteenth century Latin *mappa mundi* which literally means, "sheet of the world" (Oxford Dictionary).

[19] "Belief in the objectivity of maps has found itself subject to profound revision, and it is now recognised that they are intimately connected to prevailing systems of power and authority. Their creation is not an objective science but a realist endeavour, and aspires to a particular way of depicting reality" (Brotton, 2012: 12).

is the rhetorical effect of the mapping metaphor for the kind of gender discourse produced? Or, more to the point, what is the effect of the metaphorical entailments of the source domain on our understanding of gender, and in turn its effect on our attitudes and behaviour?

3.2.1.1 From A to B, From Here to There: Understanding the Mapping Metaphor
The very act of mapping "generates whole new worlds of image, symbol or text" (Burrus, 2007: 1). Therefore, at the most fundamental level, the act of *mapping gender* has generated whole new gender worlds of image, symbol and text which has exerted an influence on social identity. McNeel (2014: 24) frames it this way,

> If metaphors are part of how human beings think and understand reality, then they are part of how human beings understand themselves and who they are in relation to others. When a person or group is the target domain of a metaphor, the metaphor, whether conventional or new, exerts influence on self-understanding.

To illustrate the point one need only turn to a common biblical metaphor used to give expression to the nature of early church, namely, "God's family/household."[20] The use of the metaphor, which is not original to the early Christ-follower communities,[21] does more than describe the social relationships among and between its members, it exerts an influence on their self-understanding and in turn underwrites familial hierarchies. To be a member of the ἐκκλησία, is to be identified as the family/household of God.

Returning to the metaphor of mapping, it is important to note that the notion of mapping gender implies a particular understanding of gender. That understanding is, then,

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[20] The metaphor (οἰκεῖοι τοῦ θεοῦ or variant) only explicitly occurs twice in the Pauline corpus, and both of those occurrences are in contested letters, namely Eph. 2.19 and 2 Tim. 3.15. The metaphor is not, however, contingent on the occurrence of an explicit phrase. The notion conveyed by the metaphor is deeply embedded in the Pauline letters.

[21] The Roman Empire employed the *pater familias* as an important metaphorical construction of the imperial reality. It exerted substantial influence on how people saw themselves, either as included, or in the case of conquered nations, excluded.

essentially an exercise in representing and constructing; of mapping a particular gendered world. Such an exercise extends beyond physical, material relationships, to include other spatial or quasi-spatial relationships (i.e., psychological, economic, filial, etc.) and renders the world knowable. Mapping gender, therefore, corresponds to an act of answering the complex questions about how things relate, how we make sense of ourselves and of the world(s) we inhabit as gendered individuals.

Mapping is also about situatedness, about social location. By situatedness I mean something like the socioeconomic and geopolitical reality from which the world is mapped.[22] The angle of vision afforded by a particular situatedness constitutes the starting point from which the act of mapping is done. By foregrounding the situatedness of the mapmaker or mapmaking community, we are also able to establish a navigational bias, something like a "magnetic North."[23] All mapping is done from a particular location which exerts an influence on how the mapping is conducted. This notion is brought into sharper focus through the work of postcolonial feminist critics such as Kwok Pui-lan (and others). Her work plays off of Mary Ann Tolbert's "the politics and poetics of location" (1995: 305), and draws attention to the "complexity of one's social background, such as gender, race, and sexual orientation, as well as one's national and institutional context and economic and educational status, which determines who speaks and who is likely to listen." (2006: 50).[24]

Because of the importance of location, mapping is never one-dimensional. Mapping takes place on multiple axes and where these intersect, the complexity increases. With each axis (economic, ethnic/racial, gender, political, etc.) the attempt is being made to define

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[22] Mary Ann Tolbert, using Adrienne Rich, explains the notion of situatedness in terms of "facts of blood," by which she means, "one's social, personal, and familial alignments" (1995: 331). "Facts of bread," refers to one's "economic, political, and national setting" (Tolbert, 1995: 331).

[23] I use *magnetic north* here metaphorically to play on the fact that there is a difference in degree between *magnetic* and *true* north. The former represents a deviation from the latter based on the earth's changing magnetic poles in relation to its axis.

[24] Miguel de le Torre sharpens this point when he writes, "When we read the Bible, we read it from our social location, a reading that usually justifies our lifestyle even if, at times, our lifestyle contradicts the very essence of the gospel message" (2002: 38).

and to demarcate. This multi-axial engagement with the question means that,

> neither gender nor sexual difference operates independently of other
> structurings of power and other formations of identity or subjectivity. Class,
> race, ethnicity, sexuality and colonialism intersect with and thus inflect gender,
> inevitably and irreducibly. So too does religion. Mappings are synchronically
> complex and never simply uni-directional, in other words (Burrus, 2007: 3).

Mapping is for the purpose of distinguishing and defining in relation to the other. In other words, to define myself and the world(s) I inhabit, I must define the other with whom I share this world.[25] This plays out especially in relation to gender and sexuality. Burrus frames it this way, "As *we* map our gender onto theirs, so too do *they* map theirs onto ours, in a double movement at once retrospective and anticipatory." She continues, "The process is inherently unstable: with each repetition, the territory shifts under our feet" (Burrus, 2007: 1). There is an *us* and a *them*, and we would do well to recognise that this definitional and representational quality of mapping is important for how we go about the task of mapping and remapping.[26] Thus, to map sex and gender, is to navigate a complex series of relationships, represented and constructed, in an ever-changing landscape where techtonic plates are still shifting, where new land masses are still forming, and where the lay of the land can be confusing, conflicting, and disorienting. Furthermore, since mapping is a basic human instinct, one must ask critical questions about who gets

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[25] Cf. § 2.5.1, above, and in more detail, Volf (1996) and the notion of inclusion/exclusion.

[26] We may note, too, that the *us* and *them* corresponds to the past and the present. In other words, our attempt to map gender in the New Testament establishes an *us/them* relationship that corresponds to the *present/past* of our engagement. The text becomes a *them*, distant and removed from an *us* (the interpreter/interpretive community). And in this relationship, we map our notions of gender onto *them* (= New Testament), and *they* in turn map their notions of gender onto *us*. This latter mapping is reflected in the ongoing appeal to the biblical text as the source for understanding gender and reflects an unnuanced hermeneutical strategy that perpetuates binary gender constructions that are often oppressive, especially since such binary constructions are not in fact evident within antiquity. Burrus (2007: 4) writes, "There is by now widespread scholarly agreement that gender in antiquity was mapped not as a binary of two fixed and 'opposite' sexes (as is typical of our own modern western culture) but rather as a dynamic spectrum or gradient of relative masculinities."

to participate in the process of mapping and what such inclusion/exclusion signals.

3.2.1.2   A Bit of Coloured Paper

C. S. Lewis (2009: 198-199) once observed,

> … if a [man] has once looked at the Atlantic from the beach, and then goes and looks at a map of the Atlantic, he also will be turning from something real to something less real: turning from the real waves to a bit of coloured paper. …. The map is admittedly only coloured paper, but there are two things you have to remember about it. In the first place, it is based on what hundreds and thousands of people have found out by sailing the real Atlantic. In that way, it has behind it masses of experience just as real as the one you could have from the beach; only, while yours would be a single glimpse, the map fits all those different experiences together. In the second place, if you want to go anywhere, the map is absolutely necessary.

The inherent dangers associated with mapping are implicit in the quote from C. S. Lewis above. While noting the importance of individual experience, Lewis also makes it quite clear that such experiences must be checked against the experiences of others. These collected experiences coalesce as a static representation marking out the boundaries that constitute a regularised experience. The codified by-product, the map, serves to both reflect and inform what qualifies as a legitimate experience and of what it would mean to navigate the topography.[27] While Lewis is here not interested in the question of gender identity, the analogy does equally well to represent the complex world of gender construction, negotiation and representation.[28]

As the map in Lewis's analogy is "less real," the dominant gender discourse, whether heteronormative or homonormative, while representing the experiences of so-called "majorities" is not in itself real (i.e., encompassing of all reality), nor is it truly

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[27] Schall notes, "no map can include every piece of information. What is deemed important enough to show—and what is excluded—can provide valuable information about a cultural group" (2010: 168).

[28] For an analysis of the question of gender in the work of C. S. Lewis, see Mary Stewart Van Leeuwen (2010).

representative. It is a construction, and it legitimises a particular kind of gender experience against which all other gender experiences are judged and confirms that "gender is the primary way of signifying relations of power" (Scott, 1999: 48).

To say that gender is constructed, that particular notions of masculinity and femininity are mapped, is to foreground agency. It is, however, not enough to simply foreground agency and then move one. It must be problematised: Who maps gender? From what vantage point is gender being mapped? How is it being mapped? What vested interests are being played out in the mapping process? For whom is the mapping done? Does the act of mapping render gender topography fixed?

But this raises a more fundamental question about the value of mapping, and of mapping gender in particular. Since maps are not just "bits of coloured paper," it is important to recognise that the process of mapmaking, which is an attempt to represent reality, is never wholly reflective of that reality. Maps conceal more than they reveal as any map-reader can attest. Thus, by attempting to map gender, one must ask whether this exercise assists us in making sense of gender, especially when the debate around gender is far more complicated for any map to contain.[29] The complexity is amplified not only because of the historical distance between ancient and contemporary gender representation and construction, but because the theoretical field is itself fractured.

Perhaps at best all we can do is engage in a critical conversation with multiple maps and multiple gender potentialities. Maps of all kinds, in the end, give us access to information "about groups of people, places, and how groups interact with particular places and other groups as they create and re-create their cultures and cultural identities" (Schall, 2010: 168). They can do nothing more than invite us to explore what is out there. That may be enough.

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[29] We have both an ancient and a contemporary setting within which to make sense of gender construction and representation. Moving from one to the other, we cannot, indeed we must not, assume that the gender potentialities available in our setting are identical to those of the ancient Mediterranean setting of the New Testament, and vice versa. This is set in sharper relief when Burrus notes the range of contemporary gender potentialities: masculinit(ies), femininit(ies), effeminate men, virile women, intersexed, transgendered, genderqueer (2007: 2).

3.3 Masculinity in Crisis?[30]

Is masculinity in crisis?[31] The popular media[32] and a growing body of academic work (Rabe, 2015: 166) would seem to suggest that men around the world are experiencing something of a crisis; a deep loss of masculine identity that is leaving men wondering around aimlessly, unsure of whether or where they may fit in society,[33] or actively attempting to (re)claim what has been *taken away*.[34] Some argue that the rise of feminism, and its various waves, has contributed to the erosion of masculine identity (Anderson, 2005, 2009).[35] Others prefer to think of the crisis as an evolutionary response to disruptive forces affecting every aspect of society, including how women and men see themselves and each other.[36] And, still others maintain that "crisis is already structured into the

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[30] Robinson (2007: 90-91) notes that the so-called "crisis in masculinity" entered the scene at the beginning of the 1990s.

[31] Employing the term *crisis* is intended to evoke alarm and is suggestive, also, of a terminal point, a kind of ending from which there seems to be no return.

[32] See, for example, Davis (2017), Ndlovu (2017) and Kastner (September 13, 2016).

[33] Daniël Louw (2008: 395) maintains that "it is not really a crisis, but a question as to whether men no longer fit into their traditional roles and that they will have to find a new, modern, useful place for themselves in the world. Men need to change."

[34] The notion that something as vital as masculine identity can be *taken away* from men is almost incomprehensible within the context of hegemonic masculinities. While the rhetoric associated with the "masculinity in crisis" perspective plays into and allows for a tacit form of victimism, the response to cover over the *loss* (real or perceived) is to accentuate masculinity, to compensate, if you will, with a form of hyper-masculinity. To assume the posture of a victim is too passive and vulnerable and compromised. For this reason, the vitriol is all the more focused and aggressive as men attempt to reclaim their *natural* masculine identity, an identity that cannot accept what is non-normative, or even heteronormative. On the essentialist notion of masculinity which argues that masculinity is always "at the centre, never the margin, always dominant, never subordinated" see, Chen (1999).

[35] Eric Anderson suggests that the combination of the Industrial Revolution and the first-wave feminism of this period contributed to the erosion and consequent deep insecurity that men began to experience (2010: 40).

[36] For example, Diane Abbott MP, the Labour's shadow minister for public health delivered a lecture on 16 May 2013 titled, "Britain's Crisis of Masculinity." In her lecture, Abbott (2013) maintains that as a result of "rapid economic and social change," male identity has been affected

masculine" (Buchbinder, 2012: 16).[37]

Whether we think the "crisis" is exaggerated rhetoric or not, for many the question of identity is front and centre and that question reflects on the growing understanding that the human person is thickly layered; that personhood is multi-dimensional and multi-axial (the intersection of gender, class, sex, race, political and/or religious ideology as constitutive of human identity). Perhaps, then, it is a crisis not so much of masculinity, but of the rupture, signalled by the crisis, to the normative discourse that threatens to destabilise all that is carried by the freighted masculinity.

To speak of the crisis of masculinity is, therefore, to pick away at the fixed, stable definition of masculinity that has exerted its power over society.[38] In other words, the crisis is a crisis precisely because the normative understanding of what constitutes masculinity is, for various reasons, deemed to be under attack or in the very least, threatened. And the threat is perceived to be such because the gender system is dependent on maintaining a series of binaries: normative versus heteronormative; strong versus weak; male versus female; dominant versus submissive.[39]

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deeply and is, at least in part, an explanation for some of the emerging problems evident in society. These problems, Abbott suggests, include: shallow relationships, poor health, hyper-masculinity, marginalisation of family, etc. See also, Steven Roberts (2014: 1-16) who offers an assessment of Abbott's lecture. This example, while from the UK, illustrates the global nature of the perceived crisis in masculinity.

[37] Building on Roger Horrocks' understanding of the nature of the crisis of masculinity, Buchbinder maintains that there is a difference between maintaining that *masculinity is in crisis* and *masculinity is a crisis*. He writes, "I shall suggest that masculinity *is a crisis* for men today – that the masculine gender is a precarious and dangerous achievement and is highly damaging to men" (2012: 16). In other words, men are confronted with a masculinity that is a crisis.

[38] The stability of masculinity is a perception that when interrogated against history simply does not hold. That being the case, any challenge to a particular manifestation of masculinity or a change of whatever kind, whether religious, political, social or economic, is perceived to challenge the illusion of stability.

[39] The construction of colonial identity is never so straightforward in maintaining a clearly defined 'us' and 'them.' Homi K Bhabha (2012: 37) frames it this way, "hierarchical claims to the

Those rallying around the "masculinity in crisis" narrative have reacted in various ways. Turning to the South African, evangelical, Christian context, we can see a clear attempt at reclaiming a *biblical* notion of masculinity (and femininity).[40] This, as we have already noted earlier, is evident in the work and ministry of Angus Buchan's *Mighty Men Conferences* (MMC) which according to their website:

> actively promotes authority and power through fellowship. We are committed to building principled men of faith, leaders and brave fathers with character, and integrity. We support men to succeed, mature and be spiritual fathers in their homes, churches and communities (2016).

The MMC Central SA, as a movement,[41] has hosted numerous conferences, starting in 2004 with only a small group of men who camped out on Angus Buchan's farm in KwaZulu-Natal. Since then, the numbers have grown and the last MMC events held in 2009 and 2010, attracted between 200,000 and 300,000 men.[42]

From a slightly different perspective, but with the same result—the reinforcement of a

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inherent originality of 'purity' of cultures are untenable, even before we resort to empirical historical instances that demonstrate their hybridity."

[40] Reclaiming *biblical* notions of masculinity and femininity often reinforce particular race and class ideologies because there is an assumed white, middle-class framework informing the interpretive enterprise, underwriting the social location and position of the reader/interpreter (De La Torre, 2002: 38). Buchan's attempt at building men of faith seems to ignore the systemic oppression of the apartheid era.

[41] Of course, one is to distinguish between men's movements that are seen, perhaps even experienced by certain men and women, to be "reactive, antifeminist, and committed to the restoration of male power," and the new men's movements, committed to gender justice (Rabe, 2015: 167; cf. Chitando, 2010; 2012; 2016).

[42] See, Sarojini Nadar's helpful exposé of the underlying links between discourses of submission and headship and violence against women which she believes are promoted through the MMC discourse (2009).

particular hegemonic masculinity—Gretha Wiid's *Worthy Women*[43] conferences are providing a response to the crisis by endorsing a particular notion of biblical sexuality.[44] Lilly Nortje-Meyer (2011: 1) notes, "[Gretha Wiid] suggests that women hand over their sexuality, their bodies and their sexual decisions completely into the hands of men. Her view is that the husband is the king, prophet and priest in the family and should be honoured accordingly."[45]

The likes of Buchan and Wiid represent a particular response to the perceived crisis, one that seeks to *return* to or *reclaim* an eroding notion of masculinity (and of a femininity defined with reference to masculinity; a typical binary construal of gender) without ever questioning the sometimes-corrosive(?) effects of the particular gender construction underpinning their position. In many ways, approaches like these, however sincere and well-meaning, only serve to reinforce the dominant and normative notions of gender in the South African context and continue to build on a singular understanding of how gender is to be understood.

Although dominant, there is a growing awareness of the polyphony of voices offering many different angles on our understanding of gender. Within this polyphonous setting, the crisis of masculinity, instead of being a harbinger of the destruction of the "natural order" of things, is proving to be an opportunity for others who have lived in the shadows of normative masculinity; an opportunity to re-(write)(right) gender beyond the binary normative.

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[43] One can also note the rise of conferences aimed specifically at women, including, *Mighty Women Conference*, *Arise Women's Conference*, *God's Karoo Women Conference* to name but a few.

[44] Gender and sexuality are often conflated because the underlying essentialism requires a correlation between biological sex, sexuality, and gender normativity. I will address this in greater detail at a later point.

[45] While Wiid is specifically tackling sexuality, her view makes it clear that men occupy a particular position in relation to women that has them placed firmly over women's bodies. She thereby reinscribes the active=men/passive=women binary.

3.4   Tracing the Contours of Scholarly Discourse

The recent (May and October 2017) social media flurry that erupted around the #MenAreTrash,[46] #MeToo[47] serves to foreground the fact that our society is deeply "structured by sex and gender" (Monro, 2005: 10). Moreover, social commentary of this kind is bringing to the surface just how deeply patriarchal South African society is and is alerting us to the potential toxicity of a dominant form of masculinity visible in our society. That particular formulation of patriarchy-cum-masculinity impacts all of human society and is not just about gender.[48] It is about the complex history of oppression in South Africa. It is, therefore also, about race and political ideology.[49] It is about bodies; whose bodies count and whose bodies are expendable.[50] It is about economics and class.

While the contemporary context provides a rich source of examples of how, in different ways, every aspect of our human society is somehow implicated in the question of what it

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[46] In a News24 user generated piece published 5 December 2016, *contributor*, Thabi Myeni speaks of a Men Are Trash Movement. She writes, "Men Are Trash is an anti-patriarchal movement and let's just be clear that it has nothing to do with the fact that men are trashy love interests/partners and everything to do with the oppressive systems that are imposed on womxn [sic.] that men nurture and even actively participate in" (2016).

[47] See, Thamm (2017) for a sobering reality check on the parallel universe South African women inhabit.

[48] Of course, this raises the question as to whether all forms of patriarchy are as toxic as they are sometimes made out to be. Would a reversal of patriarchy, a replacement with matriarchy, be any less toxic?

[49] Joseph A. Marchal (2009: Loc. 942 of 3871) notes that "the reasoning of ethnicity and racialisation are often also gendered in particular ways worth examining if one seeks to engage and assess colonised and colonising rhetorics of ethnicity."

[50] Satirist, Jonathan Shapiro's (Zapiro) "She's All Yours, Boss!" provides a visual reminder of how bodies continue to be used to make (valid) political points (Shapiro (Zapiro), 2017):https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/zapirocartoon/shes-all-yours-boss/). The cartoon depicts a black woman dressed in the South African flag, pinned down by the acolytes and cronies of the Zuptas (Zuma and the Gupta's) as Zuma and Gupta have at her for all she has. While the cartoon makes a strong and, perhaps, truthful point, the use of a black woman as the body on which this message is being inscribed, illustrates the ongoing problem in South Africa. Some bodies count more than others.

means to be human, in an intersectionally complex way, framing the question, with a suitable theoretical framework, is critical. Theoretical frameworks enable meaning-making. They bring together theoretical grids in order to provide plausible explanations and understandings of the phenomena under investigation. Thus, engaging in a discussion about gender, masculinity in particular, and what it means to be a gendered human can only be advanced through a clear articulation of the theoretical framework within which such concepts can begin to make more, perhaps even better, sense. In what follows, I provide something of a broad overview, loosely chronological, of the contours of scholarly discourse as it relates to gender studies.

While what follows represents something of a return to ground already surveyed (in chapter one and two), it must be noted that the preceding has only provided a cursory overview of gender studies more generally. This section moves more intentionally into an exploration of masculinity. Furthermore, as noted above (§ 2.6, fn. 15), the trajectory of this dissertation resembles something more akin to a helical than a linear progression of one idea to another. Consequently, with each return to a key theme or idea in this dissertation, the concept becomes more thickly textured and nuanced.

3.5   A Short History of Men's Studies

Tracing the history of Men's Studies is not without its challenges. Historiography is itself a gendered enterprise; history written by men, about men (for the most part and where it is about women, the narrative architecture is fundamentally masculine); men at the centre and therefore definitive for what constitutes the memory of the past. But as Björn Krondorfer (2010: loc. 83, italics added) reminds us, "Men are not naturally destined to be norm-setting creatures but are *people caught within their own rules of learned behaviours and acquired attitudes*." Men, like women, are gendered;[51] they are scripted or socialised to behave in certain ways. By design, the script by which men's lives are governed, men's bodies are regulated, is a dominant, and dominating script that pushes all other scripts to

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[51] The term *gendered* is used both adjectivally and verbally. In other words, the term is both used to describe the social conventions by which women and men are defined, and to indicate the notion that women and men receive the action of being gendered to perform in particular, conventional and normative ways. This is not to suggest an essentialist angle, but rather to note that gender is constructed. It is, therefore, always fluid, shifting with the sands of time.

the margins, and where possible, off the pages of history. This includes the elision of a range of masculinities and of femininities.

Cognisant of the complexities attending the task of surveying the landscape of Men's Studies, this section attempts to present such complexity without the temptation of smoothing over or resolving any conflicts or tensions in the field.

3.6 Origins[52]

Men's Studies, also referred to as Masculinity Studies, emerged out of Gender Studies (Punt, 2016: 2)[53] in the latter part of the twentieth century (1970s) as a response to the great strides of second wave Feminism (1960s-1970s) (Krondorfer and Hunt, 2012: 195-196; Marin, 2006) and the growing body of scholarship on gender, underwritten by the likes of such foundational figures as Beauvoir (1952), Foucault (1990), Butler (1990, 2004, 2007), Laqueur (1990) and Sedgwick (1993).[54]

As an academic intervention, men's studies signalled a shift in gender studies that sought to take the *lived experience of men* seriously, maintaining that, like women, men have to negotiate the complex terrain of what it means to be male;[55] an apparently shifting and unstable term. Kimmel and Bridges note that while "a vast majority of scholarship dealing with gender inequality focuses on women and the ways that they are structurally and

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[52] In § 1.4.1: Gender Criticism, I present basic theoretical coordinates for navigating gender. Here, as noted above, attention is given to tracing the development of masculinity specifically.

[53] Gender studies is itself an evolutionary expression of the feminist movement; a movement which ultimately births several offspring, including men's studies and women's studies, and a range of other configurations.

[54] For some, the emergence of men's/masculinity studies, regardless of its indebtedness, has removed the political edge of the gains made by the feminist movement by putting the very hermeneutical tools of the movement in service of (in)advertently re-inscribing male dominance. See, Rabe (2015: 165) for a reflection on the deep suspicion from some feminists in relation to masculinity studies.

[55] An echo of Simone de Beauvoir's famous statement—"One is not born, but becomes a woman" (1952: 249)—certainly rings true here for men, even though it is intended to draw attention to all that goes into the construction of "woman."

systematically subordinated to men and disadvantaged,"

> Scholars of inequality note … that there are two sides to inequality: disadvantage and privilege. Masculinities scholars study the various ways that men are—as a group—privileged, as well as focusing on the costs of those privileges and the ways in which not all men are granted equal access to them (Kimmel and Bridges, 2011).

Kimmel and Bridges are making the point that while the privilege of masculinity is accrued to all men by (vir)tue[56] of maleness, this privilege does in fact discriminate at multiple levels.[57] This is particularly evident in the South African context where being White and male accrues a very different kind of privilege than does being Black and male.[58] At another level altogether, sexuality is also implicated in the privilege of masculinity and here too we are able to discern discriminatory expressions of the privilege of a particular mix of sexuality and masculinity.

Historically, men's studies emerged "from two basic but connected impetuses that have subsequently often been held in tension" (Krondorfer *et al.*, 2012: 195), namely:

(1) Men's rights movement of the 1970s: this movement centred around the issues of reproductive rights and fatherhood and ignited a flurry of scholarly work that led to deeper theorisation on the topic of masculinity.

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[56] An intentional play on the Latin *vir* (ἀνήρ in Greek) which means *man*.

[57] The system of patriarchy discriminates not only between male and female, but between males and establishes a hierarchy of masculinity (see further, Buchbinder (2012: 65-96)).

[58] Krondorfer suggests a "male-gendered reading" (2010: loc. 86) as a way of attending to the fact that men ought not to be treated as a homogenous whole (to which we return). Male-gendered reading "assumes a male difference" (2010: loc. 86). He writes,

"men are men, but not all men are equal; men become men by articulating their distinctiveness from women; men become "straight" by distinguishing themselves from "deviant" male behaviour; men become heteronormative by mistaking *sameness* of discrete groups of men as *universal*; men become "real men" by reiterating the fictions they have helped to construe about the other" (2010: loc. 86).

(2) Feminist movement[59] and its attending methodological and philosophical framework offered academics working on masculinity an excellent compass of possibilities for navigating the unchartered landscape of masculinity.[60]

Since then, the field of Men's Studies has been "able to establish itself in its own right as a more systematic and coordinated academic realm resultant largely from the work of scholars found in more radical circles" (Krondorfer *et al.*, 2012: 196). While initially indebted to the Feminist movement, Men's Studies has also been "impacted by gay and queer theory[61] and their mainstay agenda of investigating the shaping of men's sexuality" (Krondorfer *et al.*, 2012: 196-197) and in its current form, Men's Studies is "a truly interdisciplinary area" (2012: 197).

As an interdisciplinary academic field, Men's Studies is ultimately interested in the production and reproduction of masculine identity. This interest is not to the exclusion of biological universals, but avoids the essentialist argument even in this area, noting that "While biological 'maleness' varies very little, *the roles, behaviours, bodies, and identities that are thought of as 'masculine' vary enormously*. This variation allows scholars to argue that masculinity is socially constructed" (italics added, Kimmel *et al.*, 2011).

Perhaps Kimmel and Bridges understate the important *symbolic* role of biological 'maleness' which they maintain varies very little. While the possession of a penis does not of itself infer masculinity, understood as a socially constructed phenomenon, the physical, fleshly penis within a patriarchal economy represents power. In other words, the penis is metaphorically reconfigured to become "*the abstract representation of male power*,

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[59] Michael Kimmel and Tristan Bridges put it this way, "Masculinity studies is a feminist-inspired, interdisciplinary field…" (2011).

[60] The academic problematisation of masculinity does not suddenly enter the historical scene for the first time in the twentieth century. Roberts (2014: 5) notes that "scholars have identified historical periods, predating both the women's movements and the development of the industrial order but also after, where masculinity can be deemed to have been in crisis."

[61] Queer theor(y)(ies) proves to be a particularly useful framework since "The central tenet of queer theory is a resistance to the normativity which demands the binary opposition, hetero/homo" (Hawley, 2001: 3)

focused and figured as a penis" (Buchbinder, 2012: 75); the penis becomes the phallus; the phallus is the symbol of masculine power.[62]

While discussions on masculinity usually focus on gender, the intersection of sex, sexuality and gender form a nexus of meaning that should always be kept in view. This is precisely the view Fausto-Sterling puts forward when she writes,

> … labelling someone a man or a woman is a social decision. We may use scientific knowledge to help us make the decision, but only our beliefs about gender—not science—can define our sex. Furthermore, our beliefs about gender affect what kinds of knowledge scientists produce about sex in the first place (2000: 3).

Further on she notes,

> Our bodies are too complex to provide clear-cut answers about sexual difference. The more we look for a simple physical basis for "sex," the more it becomes clear that "sex" is not a pure physical category. What bodily signals and functions we define as male or female come already entangled in our ideas about gender (Fausto-Sterling, 2000: 4).

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[62] Size matters. Fausto-Sterling's important study—*Sexing the Body*—of the underlying ideology informing the medical system makes it clear that in cases of genital ambiguity the size of the penis and/or clitoris determines 'gender' (re)assignment. In general, the medical practice for intersex babies depends on the measurement of the penis/clitoris. The size of the clitoris determines whether the reconstructive surgery will develop the clitoris into a penis or not. Of course, the point is that the gender assignment, linked as it is with the presence of a penis/clitoris, is done with the penis as the reference point—hence size as the determinant (Fausto-Sterling, 2000: 60).

Masculinity, then, is an amalgam, forged from sex,[63] sexuality[64] and gender[65] and each of these are discursively framed.

Before turning to a more localised treatment of the development of Men's Studies, the following salient characteristics serve as axiomatic points of departure for the discipline (Hearn, 2007: 16), here represented as a diagram:[66]
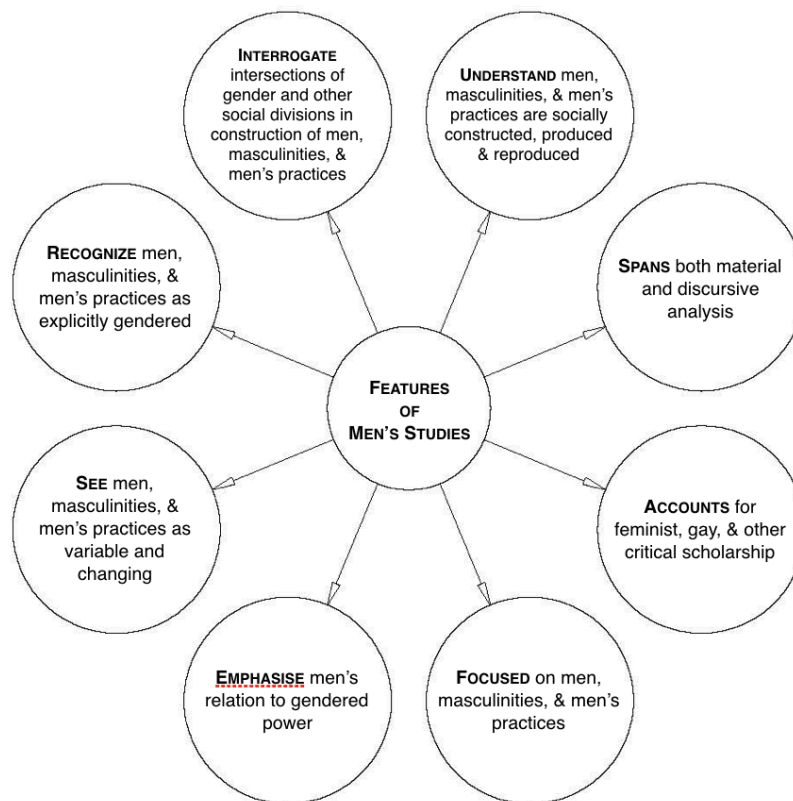
Figure 3-1 Features of Masculinity Studies

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[63] Sex typically refers to biological difference. However, as we have noted above (n. 62), even biology is discursively constructed.

[64] Sexuality denotes sexual orientation (homosexual, heterosexual, bisexual).

[65] Gender refers to the socially, culturally constructed idea of what constitutes masculinity and femininity; the performative aspect of being a 'man' or a woman' (Vander Stichele *et al.*, 2009: Loc. 101 of 3612)

[66] On the notion of masculine biography, see the important work of Krondorfer's *Male Confessions* (2010).

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3.7 Plastic Masculinities

In his discussion of human sexuality, Daniël Louw (2008: 352), citing Anthony Giddens, speaks of "plastic sexuality." The term is used by Giddens (1992: 2, *et passim*) to refer to "decentred sexuality, freed from the needs of reproduction." Louw's amplification is helpful, plastic sexuality "allows sexuality to be shaped by personal choice. It is designed for maximum freedom and minimum constraint." The notion of plasticity, which conveys an ease by which something can be shaped or moulded, when applied to gender, best captures a more recent development in recent scholarship.

Proffered in response to Connell's *hegemonic masculinity*, Eric Anderson developed a theoretical framework, based in social-constructivism, that seeks to accommodate Connell's theory, but addresses the inability of the theory to account for the "emergence of an archetype of masculinity that undermines the principles of orthodox (read hegemonic) masculine values" (Anderson, 2009: 93).[67] Anderson develops what he calls *inclusive masculinity theory*.[68]

Inclusive masculinity theory does not require one masculinity to dominate or, by implication, other masculinities to acquiesce (Anderson, 2009: 94). The theory allows for the co-existence of various masculinity archetypes without the attending social struggle and without the dominance of one group (Anderson, 2009: 95). There is also an absence of homophobia or homophobic discourse. Furthermore, inclusive masculinity does not exclude the possibility of masculinities that continue to value certain aspects of hegemonic masculinity. It does, however, find the outright expression of homophobia, misogyny and masculine bravado unacceptable (Anderson, 2009: 95).

At a more complex level, inclusive masculinity theory maintains that "In periods of high homohysteria, homophobia is used to stratify men in deference to a heteromasculine

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[67] The development of Anderson's inclusive masculinity theory is rooted in his earlier research into competing masculinities among heterosexual men in a feminised terrain (specifically, cheerleading) (2005).

[68] Inclusive masculinity theory seeks to offer an alternative to R. W. Connell's hegemonic masculinity theory (see, Connell and Messerschmidt (2005); Connell (2009, 1987, 2014a)). See McCormack (2012) for another development of the theory.

mode of dominance" (Anderson, 2009: 95). In other words, homophobia becomes a benchmark for what it means to be a man. Masculinity is defined by degrees of alignment with a heteromasculinity. In this context, heterosexuality becomes unstable. Men, regardless of orientation, are constantly having to prove or reprove their heteromasculinity through compliance to coded heterosexual behaviours (i.e., emotional and tactilely distant).[69]

Anderson argues that in periods of low homohysteria, there is a decline in conservative, orthodox, masculinities. Consequently, "softer masculinities will exist without the use of social stigma to police them" (Anderson, 2009: 96). Consequently,

> … the esteemed attributes of men will no longer rely on control and domination of other men; there is no predominance of masculine bullying or harassment and homophobic stigmatisation will cease, even if individual men remain personally homophobic. … inclusive masculinity theory maintains that … multiple masculinities will proliferate without hierarchy or hegemony, and men are permitted an expansion of acceptable heteromasculine behaviours (Anderson, 2009: 97).

Beyond the utopic idealism reflected above, Anderson is grounded enough to note that while in a culture of diminished homohysteria it is possible to entertain the idea of a "freedom of men having to prove their heterosexuality," heterosexism and/or homophobia will not cease to exist. Nor, for that matter, will it "guarantee the erosion of patriarchy" (Anderson, 2009: 98).[70]

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[69] Cf. Shefer, Ratele, Strebel, Shabalala and Buikema (2007)

[70] Taking up the work of Anderson, Steven Roberts' edited collection of essays questions the dominant view that masculinity is in crisis by appealing to inclusive masculinity theory (2014: 4). The collection of essays propose a fundamental rejection of "the central thesis that pertains to masculinity in crisis," maintaining the importance of "building arguments to reject this position," by showing how modern masculinities "are expressed and performed, and what consequences follow as a corollary" (2014: 3).

Connell's hegemonic masculinity while acknowledging the plurality of masculinities[71] does not allow for the existence of non-hegemonic masculinities. Framed another way, Connell offers, at least according to Anderson, a limited range of masculine archetypes.

While Anderson's inclusive masculinity allows for a greater fluidity/plasticity, it does raise the following questions:

(1) If inclusivity is defined with reference to orthodox masculinity, does it not run the risk of simply reinscribing orthodox masculinity?

(2) Since the theory allows for both orthodox and inclusive masculinities to co-exist, is there not a risk that aspects of hegemonic masculinity will be allowed to thrive (heterosexism, patriarchy, etc.) in oppressive ways that impinge on the human dignity of women and men? Framed another way, is there not a moral imperative to deal with spaces and expressions of masculinity that can be shown to have a direct and negative impact of the human dignity of others?

Inclusive masculinity theory may offer a helpful framework for the South African context, to which we now turn our attention, and may even provide a constructive mechanism for wrestling with the New Testament.

3.8 Men's Studies and (South) Africa

Within the South African context, we discern a more complex backdrop for the study of masculinity. While the academic landscape is shaped at the theoretical level by the body of scholarly work that has been produced, for the most part, by the gl*bal[72] North, scholars

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[71] Connell speaks of "protest masculinities" which contest current hegemonic masculinity. Connell describes protest masculinity as follows,

… a pattern of masculinity constructed in local working-class settings, sometimes among ethnically marginalised men, which embodies the claim to power typical of regional hegemonic masculinities in Western countries, but which lacks the economic resources and institutional authority that underpins the regional and global patterns (Connell *et al.*, 2005: 847-848)

[72] Language sometimes fails to convey nuance and it can also betray positions of power and unspoken assumptions (Schüssler Fiorenza speaks of the "brokenness and inadequacy" of language (2007: 1)). When speaking of the global North or global South I am aware that (i) these terms represent gross oversimplifications; (ii) as representative terms, used heuristically, there is

in the gl*bal South are beginning to focus their gaze on the impact of the colonial and apartheid past on gender discourse. Although poststructuralism has provided the "post," and all it implies philosophically, of *post*-apartheid and *post*colonialism, the systemic impact of these systems of oppression continue to exert a shaping influence on gendered identity (Ratele and Shefer, 2003). Awareness of this complex contextual reality is making its presence known in the growing scholarship of the gl*bal South. While this scholarship is still indebted to and continues to make use of the methodological frameworks of the gl*bal North, there is a deliberate attempt to develop contextual frameworks that make sense of indigenous[73] constructions.[74] The gl*bal North/South construction will receive more attention in chapter four where postcolonialism comes into sharper focus.

Marlize Rabe (2015: 165), from a sociological perspective, identifies Robert Morrell and Kopano Ratele as "two leading masculinity studies researchers" within the South African context. Both Morrell and Ratele have sought in their scholarship to draw attention to the

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an implicit violence in their use that silences those peripheral voices who happen to be subsumed under either the global North or global South purely on the basis of geographical proximity; and, (iii) while the terms attempt to frame discussions of power by crystallising characteristics of the North and South, and of their relationship to each other, the terms are overly reductionistic and consequently run the risk of reinscribing power differentials. I have chosen to employ the neologism *gl*bal* to signal both the problematisation of these terms and consequently, my awareness that the term can hide as much as it can reveal. Gl*bal is not as global as we think or imagine and the North and South within the context of a globalised world do not in themselves represent entities of singular character. Furthermore, I recognise that there are countries in the North and South that do not and should not acquiesce to the broad categorisations of gl*bal North and gl*bal South. To avoid the polarising binary, world-systems theory distinguishes between core, semi-periphery and periphery within the world economy (see, Thomas, 2015: 100-102).

[73] It may seem unnecessary to state, but it is important to foreground the fact that the theories and methodologies of the gl*bal North are as contextual and indigenous as the emerging frameworks of the gl*bal South. Even in this we note that what the gl*bal North produces in its scholarship is seen as universal and that all other methodological frameworks and epistemologies are indigenous and emergent and therefore overshadowed by and compared with the scholarship of the North.

[74] Examples of the shift towards contextualised masculinity include the work of Gupta (2011), Marin (2006), Mosse (1998), Powers (2009), and Chopra, Osella and Osella (2004).

"negative perceptions about men," arguing that these "have to be addressed since they are not applicable to all men" (Rabe, 2002: 165). Rabe's summation of Ratele and Morrell's scholarship positions them as treading a fine line in advancing such an argument ("not all men") in a context where the plight of women and marginalised groups struggle to gain airtime.

In a recent opinion piece in the Daily Maverick, Marianne Thamm draws attention to the tendency of men, in particular, to react to the discomfort of #MeToo which is foregrounding sexual abuse of women. She writes:

> That peculiar human affliction that results in the receiver of uncomfortable information which disrupts or unsettles a worldview or status quo, to turn this around and subvert or undermine it through inserting themselves into the narrative, rendering themselves as potential victims (2017).

To support her position, she goes onto cite the response of many White people in the face of #BlackLivesMatter and its attempt to uncover systemic global race and class privilege. That response is captured with the counter hashtag: #NotAllWhites, #AllLivesMatter or #Whataboutreverseracism (2017).

Rabe's summation, of course, does not intend to reduce the scholarship of Ratele and Morrell to the kind of reductionism and generalisation all too common in public discourse. Nor, would it be fair to assume that the important contextual work offered by Ratele and Morrell is unnuanced and really nothing more than a thinly veiled attempt at protecting hegemonic systems that privilege men at the expense of women and other marginalised groups.

The scholarship of Ratele is characterised by a deliberate and focused attempt to fill out the psychology of masculinity, especially of black masculinities. As a professor in the Institute of Social and Health Sciences at the University of South Africa, Ratele challenges the over reliance of scholarship on masculinity studies that uncritically position white, middle-class, Western men at the centre and therefore as archetypal for understanding masculinity.

Ratele's impressive list of scholarly publications and contributions continues to shape critical masculinity studies especially with reference to black masculinities.[75] His contextual sensitivity and engagement with the effects of colonialism and apartheid on shaping black masculinities represents a critically important voice with which to engage. However, given the scope of this dissertation and Ratele's focus on psychology, any further engagement is precluded.[76]

If Google Scholar statistics are anything to go by,[77] Morrell has exerted a considerable influence on shaping gender discourse in the South African context.[78] His list of publications is expansive and evidences both the breadth of his research interests and profound commitment to pursuing a rigorous scholarship in the areas of gender and masculinity studies within the context of South Africa.

Morrell's more recent works demonstrate an emerging focus on and critical assessment of the influence of the scholarship of the Northern Hemisphere on the scholarly work of the Southern Hemisphere. His 2016/2017 publications (to date) move the discussion of gender forward by drawing attention to the power differential that exists between scholarship produced in the gl*bal North and scholarship produced in the gl*bal South. Morrell's work is influenced by Raewyn Connell with whom he collaborates on a number of publications specifically dealing with the global knowledge inequality between Northern

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[75] Google Scholar metrics for Ratele indicate that he has produced 141 publications and since 2012 has been cited 1529 times.

[76] Excluding engagement with Ratele, however, is more of a pragmatic decision. The field of psychology, which focuses, broadly, on human behaviour and human emotion will not in the end serve the purposes of this dissertation.

[77] Google Scholar metrics are contingent on an author establishing a user profile and then populating that profile with their publications. The metrics provide detail analysis of the number of citations of individual journal articles, the h-index ("an author-level metric that attempts to measure both the productivity and citation impact of the publication of a scientist or scholar" (Wikipedia-contributors, 2017), and the i10-index (number of publications with at least 10 citations).

[78] Morrell, according to Google Scholar, has been cited 3538 times since 2012.

Theory and Southern Theory[79] (Connell, Collyer, Maia and Morrell, 2017; Connell, Pearse, Collyer, Maia and Morrell, 2017; Morell, 2016; Morrell *et al.*, 2016).

Morrell's scholarship on gender, which we have already dealt with in chapter two of the dissertation, provides important insight to the kind of scholarship that is located, reflective and active in making a difference in the discourse.

As part of grappling with the work of scholars engaged in gender and masculinity studies, especially Robert Morrell, I posed three interrelated questions, as follows, "If you were to look back on your scholarship on masculinity and gender in South Africa, what are the big ideas that have (a) motivated and sustained your interest; (b) characterised your scholarship; and (c) challenged you the most in the changing political landscape?" Morrell's response is duplicated here with some edits (2017b):

a. motivated and sustained your interest
    I think I probably mentioned but no harm in repeating that my interest in masculinity as an issue was prompted by the confluence of three things. My own personal journey (including divorce and psychotherapy, which made me think about my OWN masculinity); being asked in 1989 to teach students about feminism (which forced me to do some serious reading and to grapple with the question of how to teach feminism in a way that didn't totally alienate the male students) and thirdly, conducting historical research into the farming communities of the Natal Midlands and realising that I was totally blind to the

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[79] A theory that intends to "analyse and challenge existing global knowledge inequalities" (Morrell and Clowes, 2016: 1). Morrell and Clowes (2016: 7), citing Connell (2014b: 520), note the following:

"Most of the research that circulates widely, and that is accessible through mainstream databases, remains deep in the theoretical world of Karl Marx, Michel Foucault, Margaret Mead, Simone de Beauvoir, Juliet Mitchell, Judith Butler, and Joan Scott. This literature works on the tacit assumption that the global South produces data and politics, but doesn't produce theory. By "theory", here, I mean creating agendas of research, critique, and action; conceptualising, classifying, and naming; and developing methodology, paradigms of explanation, and epistemology."

gender element and this was probably what was most interesting! Once I was hooked, I found this confluence (personal, teaching and research) to provide great momentum. It propelled me into an international space as well as (momentarily) into a sort of activist space in SA and all of this helped me to sustain my interest. The fact that a lot of people got interested in the issue of men and masculinity also helped.

b. characterized your scholarship

My scholarship has been characterized by a contradictory amalgam of elements. As a small time, anti-apartheid activist I was used to the mode of critique—and so a lot of my work has this element—pointing out men's violence, making a case for taking masculinity seriously. Another element was a sort of people's history/bottom up concern with the objects of enquiry. Critique can objectify people, bottom-up approaches restore dignity and in my view, enhance understanding. So, I tried to see things from many angles and this makes my work possibly more complex than some—I eschew political correctness because I want to ask difficult questions but I don't only want to be perverse! I want to believe in things but at the same time I want to be open to persuasion. So, I would say that my work is NOT doctrinaire–I'd hate for it to be thought like that! I would say that my work is often historical (my first training)—so I like to place emphasis on context. I don't like discourse analysis which pretends that words exist in a bubble, separate from lived realities. I'd like to think that my work is educationally activist—because a lot of my work was conducted while I lectured in a Department of Education and I wanted to make a difference. Which leads me to my debt to Raewyn Connell—whose work I admire and has been deeply influential. Her work has always tried to make a difference (in fact this was the title of her first, 1982, book). I think another character of my work is collaboration—I've written with many people and often these have been incredibly fulfilling partnerships producing work with much greater impact than had I worked only on my own. Here my work with Rachel Jewkes would be the shining example.

c. challenged you the most in the changing political landscape?

A tough question. It is approaching 20 years since I first started doing gender and masculinity work and many things have changed in South Africa. I found the unrelenting fact of violence in the early period really tough (which is one of the reasons that I turned to look at fathers and fatherhood). Since then, since the advent of democracy and, more recently, since Zuma, the abandonment of democracy, the return to patriarchalism and the rise of anti-white racism, I have found it difficult to be positive about some aspects of my work. It feels for example, that engaging in policy work at the level of the state is rather futile. Lip service is paid to gender equality. Within Universities, on the other hand, there is now often a very mechanical view of gender equality, a quota system. This promotes essentialism and in turn this promotes stupid arguments that are often misandrist and racist. In fact, the underlying philosophy of feminism often seems to be abandoned when technocrats take over. The utterances of the ANCWL for example, provide some indication of the failure of gender equality initiatives in South Africa. Zuma as a representative and symbol of masculinity in South Africa is very, very depressing. Of course, there are alternative voices and Sonke Gender Justice and other organisations (including Mbuyiselo Botha) are terribly important in opposing the new misogyny but in all of this there is a new adverseriality that I had hoped we would leave behind in 1994. Naïve, I know. But I do think that South Africa needs a lot more love and understanding, forgiveness, to succeed. And I feel that hatred is a more legitimate emotion now than love. I miss the forceful presence of Madiba and Tutu and their unequivocal rejection of violence and intolerance.

Morrell's responses to the three questions illustrates, I think, precisely what is need in the field of biblical studies and gender/masculinity studies. There is a clear point of connection with gender that moves beyond academic inquisitiveness. It includes the personal and professional (teaching) space as well. It also reflects a ground-up approach to gender and masculinity which is particularly important in a context like South Africa.

In more general terms, moving from the example of Morrell, a clear move into areas of health and gender based violence can be discerned in the gender scholarship of South Africa. The HIV and AIDS pandemic is especially felt by women who are the most vulnerable to the disease. For this reason, the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians (established in 1989) continue to draw attention to the intersection of religion and patriarchal ideologies. Key figures in the Circle include Musa Dube, Sarojini Nadar, Denise Ackermann, Patricia Bruce, Dorothy Akoto, Elna Mouton, Lilly Nortje-Meyer, to name a few.

As a group of feminist scholars advancing "research, writing, and publishing from the experiences of African women in religion and culture" (Phiri and Nadar, 2012: 121-122), the HIV pandemic has been an area of particular focus and has led to some important work on the gendered nature of the pandemic. That is, within the context of the social-sciences, HIV is understood as a gendered pandemic in that the focus has been on prevention campaigns that target women (Phiri *et al.*, 2012). And, yet, as Chitando and Chirongoma note, "while it is clear that men are seriously implicated in the HIV epidemic, it has also become obvious that leaving them out of prevention, care and support programmes is counterproductive. There is therefore need to ensure that men remain very much in the picture, as nations, communities and institutions seek to provide effective responses to the epidemic" (2008: 61).

New Testament scholarship on masculinity in the South African context is an area in need of deeper and wider development. While scholarship on masculinity proliferates in other disciplines, the fruit of such labours often go unnoticed within the New Testament guild. There are, of course, one or two notable exceptions. Jeremy Punt's (2000, 2003, 2004a, 2008b, 2008a, 2010b, 2010a, 2011a, 2011b, 2012c, 2012a, 2013b, 2013a, 2014a, 2014b, 2016, 2017a, 2017c) work on gender, masculinity, Empire, postcolonialism, and queer theory is not only vast, but much of it is focused on doing serious business with the text, wrestles with hermeneutical implication of text and gender, and making meaningful connections, where these are possible, with the concrete realities of life in South Africa. Perhaps one other influential gender scholar is Johannes N. Vorster (2000; 2005; 2006; 2008, 2010a, 2011, 2012, 2015). His work is particularly important for the theoretical engagement it evidences.

3.9 Summary

In this chapter, I have attempted to present an overview of masculinity studies as a means of developing a gender critical optic through which to read 1 Thessalonians. The accent of this chapter has fallen heavily on the 'world in front of the biblical text,' a perspective so much a part of reader centred approaches which take the concrete challenges confronting readers as the starting point for textual engagement.[80] As I conclude this chapter, the following facets of a gender critical optic suggest themselves as key to its use as a lens through which to engage 1 Thessalonians:

(1) Through the Looking Glass

A gender critical optic can easily distort the text through a process of abstraction and myopia. Because it is a lens, it is something through which the text is viewed. The text becomes the object of our scrutiny. Through the gender critical lens the text is analysed and critiqued with a view to draw attention to the how gender is constructed and represented. In this process of analysis, the viewer, like the person behind the lens of the camera, can easily be abstracted—removed—from what is in front her/him.

As the word 'abstract' denotes (lit. from *ab-* 'from' + *trahere* 'draw off'), to look in on the text through a gender critical lens is also to set up a relationship of abstraction, to draw off/away from. While such a relationship may be well suited to certain forms of scholarship that continue to maintain the possibility of objectivity,

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[80] Reader centred approaches such as CBS (Contextual Bible Study), to which I have already alluded, represent a critical starting point for textual engagement within the South African context. In the contextual bible studies that I have facilitated with my students, I have always been struck by the particular relationship that exists between ordinary, marginalised readers and the biblical text. That relationship may be characterised as foundational. Ordinary readers in the South African context approach the text expectantly, exhibiting a dependence on the text as something like a life line. It must speak to the concrete situation of their lives as they eke out their existence amidst many challenges. Foregrounding the theoretical framework for understanding masculinity within the South African context, as I have done here, contributes an important angle of vision on the text. The angle provided by masculinity studies, it is to be noted, is more about the 'world in front of the text' than it is about the actual text. Understanding that world creates a bridge to the text.

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applying a gender critical lens is both about paying particular attention to the gendered nature of the text, not just aspects of the text, but the text itself, and it is about recognising and drawing attention to gendered viewer looking in on the text.

This is part of what I was attempting to foreground when dealing with the metaphors we use when speaking or writing about gender. The metaphors hide and reveal simultaneously and to the extent that we are able to put that front and centre, we will be able to hold a broader frame in place for our discussion of gender.

The letter authored by Paul, Silvanus and Timothy to the Thessalonian assembly is a gendered text. As I will show in chapter five, Paul (and his companion authors) is gendered. The text he and his companions author is also gendered in the sense that it is a product of a particular historical moment in antiquity which both explicitly and implicitly underwrote a patriarchal order. The letter to the Thessalonians is at least implicated in this system of Roman imperial ideology. Therefore, reading 1 Thessalonians using a gender-critical lens will bring to light aspects of the text that are sometimes missed.

(2) Developing Contextual Sensitivity: Local is Lekker[81]

While it is imperative that a gender critical optic be informed by the rigours of academic research and theoretical discourse, gender is, as I have shown in this chapter, context specific.[82] Gender is produced *in situ* and while the effects of globalisation mean that there are larger, Western, (and other) narratives of gender influencing South African realities, these narratives are merged, in a hybridised fashion, with the narratives of South Africa's complex pre-colonial, colonial, apartheid, post-apartheid past and present. In a similar way, engagement with the

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[81] A South Africanism which loosely translated means, *local is great* (lit. lekker means delicious or nice or tasty). To suggest that 'local is lekker' is also to push the idea that local is to be preferred and to be supported. When used by retailers, the idea is to encourage South African pride in purchasing that which is 'home grown,' instead of what is imported.

[82] This particular point of contextual sensitivity will be developed in more detail in the following chapter where I take aim at how too much of gender scholarship in the gl*bal South is fundamentally dependent on the scholarship of the gl*bal North.

biblical text of the first century CE must pay particular attention to context of the Greek and Roman world(s).[83]

(3) Masculinity Studies: A Pretence to Power?

In the process of developing a gender critical optic through which to read 1 Thessalonians, the optic has been honed to pay particular attention to masculinity. This chapter has presented an understanding of the complexities of masculinity and recognises the need for caution when dealing with a construction of identity that is systemically in favour of underwriting hierarchies of power. This is especially the case for any engagement with the biblical text.

As I have noted throughout, the bible, for better or worse, exercises an influential measure of power over the church in general, but certainly the evangelical church, in particular. Thus, to read the bible in order to elucidate masculine construction and representation, there is a risk of co-optation. Looking to an authoritative text (an authority attributed to the text and never claimed by the text itself), can easily sway readings that only affirm the emerging masculinity. Moreover, while my particular interest is in the discursive aspects of how the bible, hermeneutically, shapes masculinity, awareness of how easily an affirming masculinity archetype can control the narrative needs to be foregrounded.

(4) Kenotic Masculinity through Critical Consciousness

While this remains to be tested in my own analysis of 1 Thessalonians, a gender critical optic as a *critical* optic must, I suggest, serve a critical consciousness telos. In other words, the point of reading the biblical text through the optic is not to redeem masculinity, to buy back what has been taken. The point is to create critical consciousness around how the biblical text, as a sacred text, which is inscribed within complex and gendered hierarchies, enforces similar patterns of being because of the authoritative and spiritual valence with which the text is imbued. Criticality, however, is not the point. It is, in my estimation, the means to a *kenotic end*. Critical consciousness lays bare what is there to see through the lens of gender and then asks for a movement towards a post-critical playing field, one in which new masculinities can be explored and performed.

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[83] See, chapter five and six for engagement with the influence of the Greek and Roman world on gender constructions and representation.

4   INSCRIBING RELATIONSHIPS OF POWER: DEVELOPING A POSTCOLONIAL OPTIC

4.1   Introduction

In this chapter, the task of developing a postcolonial optic for reading 1 Thessalonians takes front stage. In order to get there, I first trace a very broad genealogy of postcolonial criticism before moving into its co-optation in the field of biblical studies. Once the theoretical dimension of a postcolonial optic is developed, I turn my attention to an exploration of colonial and/or imperial hegemony evident in the knowledge inequality between the gl*bal North and the gl*bal South. Attention is drawn to the knowledge inequality because at least part of the challenge with which South African scholarship is faced, is the absence of the kind of scholarship that not only takes the local context seriously, but also seeks to develop methodologies and theories that make sense of the context. To illustrate its importance, I turn to Oyèrónké Oyĕwùmí, a Nigerian feminist scholar who challenges the very notion of gender by taking her context, that of the Yorùbá people, seriously. Moreover, since one of the key aspects of postcolonial theory is the voice of the subaltern, I include a section on Contextual Bible Study (CBS) to which I have alluded at a number of points in this dissertation already.[1]

4.2   Genealogy of Postcolonial Criticism

In the strictest sense, the term *post-colonial*[2] refers first to the chronological period after colonialism in much the same way that post-modernism refers, at least in popular thought, chronologically, to the period after modernity. In other words, post-colonial initially referred to the post-independence period as colonised nations began to move towards declaring their independence of colonial power—which was never quite as straightforward as one might imagine or as might be suggested by the ease with which one is able to state the fact so succinctly.

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[1] I do not see CBS as an outworking of postcolonial (biblical) criticism, but I do see CBS as benefitting from the labour of postcolonial (biblical) criticism, especially in a South African context. Understanding the contours of our colonial and apartheid past is a critical piece in the CBS puzzle which, as a method of bible study, brings the flesh-and-blood experiences of marginalised into the interpretational enterprise.

[2] The hyphenated *post-colonial*, strictly speaking refers to the temporal "situation after the departure of colonial power." The non-hyphenated *postcolonial* is taken to connote "the more philosophical or political marker of resistance to the practice of colonialism than a historical marker, referring to a time after colonialism" (Punt, 2015: 14).

The notion was popularised in the 1970s, sometime before it was actually used explicitly to refer to a theoretical framework (the non-hyphenated *postcolonial*), when it was taken up by literary critics who deliberated the after effects of colonisation on subject peoples. According to Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (2007: 168), consideration of "the controlling power of representation in colonised societies" which would develop into colonialist discourse theory, and began with texts from the so-called 'holy trinity' of postcolonial theory, Edward Said's *Orientalism* (2014), Homi K. Bhabha's *Location of Culture* (2012), and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's *The Post-Colonial Critic* (1990).

While each of these works analysed the "effects of colonial representation … the term 'post-colonial' *per se* was first used to refer to cultural interactions within colonial societies in literary circles" (Ashcroft *et al.*, 2007: 168). As it is used now, postcolonial signifies "the political, linguistic and cultural experience of societies that were former European colonies" (Ashcroft *et al.*, 2007: 168).

However, as might be expected the term postcolonial or post-colonial, unhyphenated or hyphenated, is the site of much contestation. That contestation revolves around the materialist understanding of post-colonialism, post-colonial studies as "a field" of study, distinct from postcolonial theory, or rather, colonial discourse theory (Ashcroft *et al.*, 2007: 169). *Mutatis mutandis*, postcolonialism is now:

> used in wide and diverse ways to include the study and analysis of European territorial conquests, the various institutions of European colonialisms, the discursive operations of empire, the subtleties of subject construction in colonial discourse and the resistance of those subjects, and, most importantly perhaps, the differing responses to such incursions and their contemporary colonial legacies in both pre- and post-independence nations and communities (Ashcroft *et al.*, 2007: 169).

Postcolonial theory, of the kind developed by Said, Spivak and Bhabha, is heavily indebted to poststructuralism, to some of the key thinkers of this field (identified and represented as follows:
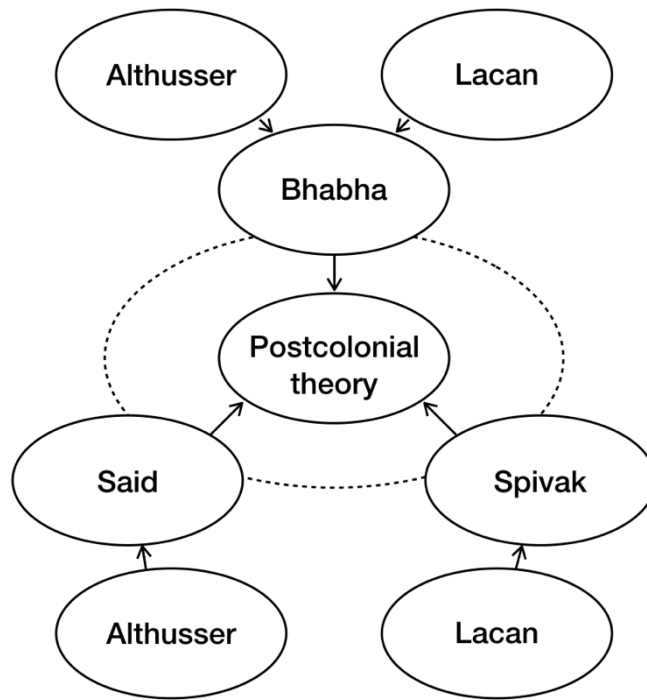
Figure 4-1 The Influence of Poststructuralism on Postcolonial Thinkers

Ashcroft *et al.* (2007) note that not only is the term postcolonial problematic, it should be problematised because, like so many other terms, including patriarchy, postcolonial takes on a representative and therefore universalising force that easily elides the distinctive features of each colonial-postcolonial context. That is, while the notion of colonialism as a form of domination, political, economic or otherwise—this term, too, has taken one more meaning than it can bear—identified in a number of different historical epochs and geographies, the peculiarities of each expression of colonialism, and therefore, postcolonialism need to be accounted for.

But as Ashcroft *et al.* (2007: 172) observe,

> To suggest that colonialism or imperialism were not themselves multivalent forces, and operated differently according to the periods in which they occurred, the metropolitan culture from which they proceeded, or the specific 'contact zones' in which they took effect, is clearly to over-simplify. But to suggest that it is impossible to determine widespread common elements within these local particularities, especially at the level of ideology and discursive formation, seems equally inadequate as a basis for any but the most limited accounts.

By way of analogy, just as white light passes through a prism and is refracted into the twelve

colours of the rainbow, so too, as colonialism, as a notion, passes through the prism of history, time, geography and ideology and is refracted into the multiple expressions of colonial thinking is made evident. The singularity of the notion becomes the multiplicity of its expression and experience.

4.2.1.1   Homi K. Bhabha's "The Location of Culture": Synopsis

A significant aspect of postcolonialism is its interest in the constructions and representations of subject people by colonial powers. This easily lends itself to a binary understanding of the coloniser and the colonised seeing them as polar opposites. Yet the work of Bhabha challenges the notion of binarism which maintains these *stable* opposites and advances a more nuanced understanding of the relationship of power between coloniser and colonised.

In order to challenge the binarism of coloniser and colonised, Bhabha sets about destabilising the notion of fixed identities by arguing that there is no such thing. In its place, Bhabha proposes that whatever identity markers (gender, class, nationality) are in place that they be thought of "sites of collaboration and contestation" (2012: 2). This leads him to develop the key ideas for which he is most well-known, namely, mimicry and hybridity.

Mimicry, according to Bhabha is a form of reforming, regulating and disciplining which makes "appropriate" the subject Other, but it is also "a sign of the inappropriate … a difference or recalcitrance," a form of resistance (2012: 86). In his chapter "Of Mimicry and Man: The ambivalence of colonial discourse," he cites Jacques Lacan as follows,

> Mimicry reveals something in so far as it is distinct from what might be called an itself that is behind. The effect of mimicry is camouflage…. It is not a question of harmonising with the background, but against a mottled background, of becoming mottled—exactly like the technique of camouflage practiced in human warfare (Jacques Lacan cited by, Bhabha, 2012: 85).

With the idea of hybridity, Bhabha means to draw attention to the complexity of the relationship between subject peoples and the coloniser, and more specifically, to how the identity of individual's is shaped by 'cultural hybridity,' by which he means the mix of influences that shape the individual and affect their identity. Postcolonial identity, that is, the identity that is shaped and influenced by the presence of colonial power, is complex. That identity reflects the mixing of cultural and linguistic imitations of colonial power with what the colonised already have in place, the pre-existing traditional customs. Furthermore, it should be noted, the pre-existing traditional customs or markers of identity continue to remain part of the identity of the

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colonised subjects. Emerging from this context is a new culture which results in a more complex understanding of identity.
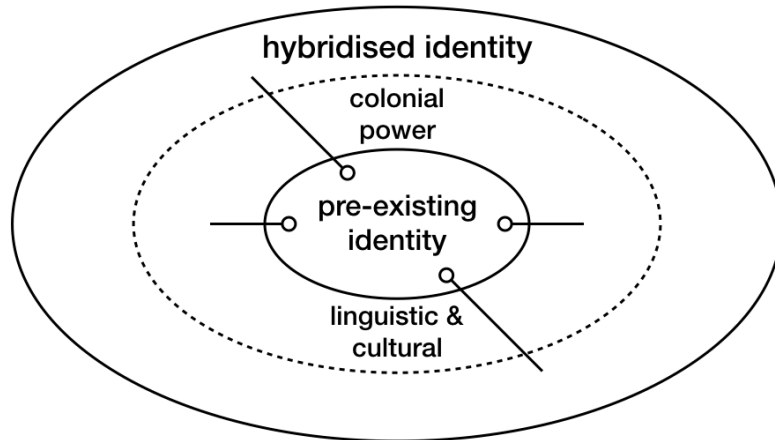
Figure 4-2 Hybridised Identity

Bhabha warns that hybridity should not be understood as "a third term that resolves the tension between two cultures" (2012: 113). In other words,

> Hybridity acknowledges that identity is formed through an encounter with difference. In particular, the condition of cultural hybridity has been highlighted by examining the post-colonial cultures of migrants which are based on fusions and translations of existing elements. … Bhabha … does not consider it as merely fusing existing cultural elements. Rather, hybridity refers to the process of the emergence of a culture, in which its elements are being continually transformed or translated through irrepressible encounters. Hybridity offers the potential to undermine existing forms of cultural authority and representation (2010).

4.2.1.2   Edward Said's "Orientalism"

The ground-breaking work of Said addresses the essentialism, and therefore, reductionism, that lies behind notions of what constitutes identity, especially through the eyes of those who have power over the 'narrative.' His work is a thoroughgoing critique of the West's construction of the Orient as part of an oppositional framework: the occident and the orient. He writes,

> Orientalism was ultimately a political vision of reality whose structure promoted the difference between the familiar (Europe, the West, 'us') and the strange (the Orient, the East, 'them'). This vision in a sense created and then served the two worlds thus conceived … The vision and material reality propped each other up, kept each other going (2014: 43-44).

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Said is not just suggesting that the problem is the stasis of the definitions. He is pointing to the control exerted by such a conceptualization. In other words, the West, the 'us,' needs the Orient, the 'them' to remain fixed and defined because at least a part of the West's narrative of self-identity is defined oppositionally. Said (2014: 208) observes, "The very possibility of development, transformation, human movement—in the deepest sense of the word—is denied the Orient and the Oriental. As a known and ultimately an immobilized or unproductive quality, they come to be identified with a bad sort of eternality."

The West's stereotype of the East has them trapped in a history of a bygone era. And, it is this fixed portrayal of the Other from the perspective of the authoritative West, that maintains the West=superior, the East=inferior.

Pre-emptively, we may note that the Roman Empire's sculptural programme which sought to memorialise the victories of the Caesars were not simply symbols of those victories; they became the means of setting the identity of the conquered and effeminised nations in stone. The replication and dissemination of, for instance, the Dying Gaul (a sculpture found in many places outside of Gaul/Galatia), solidified the identity of the conquered Gaul's who would be never more than the nation of weak, compromised, dying bodies under the dominion of the Romans (see, Lopez, 2008).

4.2.1.3   Gayatri Spivak's "Can the Subaltern Speak?"

Spivak's work, which is strongly influenced by Edward Said, addresses the problem of the representations of the subaltern—those of low social (and usually, economic) status—by those who are in positions of power in society. The representation by others of the subaltern denies them an independent agency to give speech to their own story; it is a form of "epistemic violence" (1990: 15, et passim). They have been spoken on behalf of by the powerful who are in full control of the narrative.

As we have noted the influence of poststructuralism on Bhabha and Said, we note its presence in Spivak, too. She questions the homogeneity of historical representations of the subaltern as if all subaltern peoples are alike; which becomes a mechanism of controlling human potential. She writes, "This question of representation, self-representation, representing others, is a problem" (1990: 63).

Spivak's contribution to postcolonial theory is the analysis of culture that draws attention to the role of language as a means of constructing "reality."

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4.2.1.4   Salient Features of Postcolonial Theory through Spivak, Said and Bhabha

Before moving onto the intersection between postcolonial criticism and biblical criticism, as a means of preparing for our engagement with 1 Thessalonians, it is important to draw this brief overview of the work of Spivak, Said and Bhabha together.

(1) The construction and representation of identity is never an innocent exercise.

(2) Constructing the identity of the Other implicates the identity of the one doing the constructing and defining. While the objective in constructing the Other as other is to demarcate the 'us' and the 'them,' both groups are changed in the process.

(3) Colonial identity is not pure. This is true for the coloniser and the colonised. Identity is hybridised in the process of colonising the other.

(4) Colonial subjects, through the act of mimicry, which at first is enforced for the purpose of asserting dominance over the subject, enact a form of resistance precisely through mimicking "appropriateness." In a sense, colonial subjects become "better" at representing what is colonially fitting (as noted in our brief overview of South Africa's colonial past, the baptism of indigenes by the Moravian Mission became problematic because it implied that the indigenes would be afforded the same civil and political rights.

4.2.2   Postcolonial Criticism Intersects with Biblical Criticism[3]

The value of postcolonial biblical criticism, which first made its appearance in the 1990's (Sugirtharajah, 2012: 41) is evidenced in its ability to render interpretations of the biblical text that both deconstruct the politically hegemonic aspects of the text and of its interpretations. Postcolonial biblical criticism, however, "is about more than ideology criticism, in that it specifically addresses the silencing of the Other through the colonial strategy of posing the colonised as the inverse of the coloniser, requiring simultaneously the notion of emptying the colonised world of meaning" (Punt, 2003: 63).[4] This inverted identity construction plays out in a number of areas not the least of which is gender.

Postcolonial biblical criticism is not only marked by deconstructing hegemonic hermeneutical

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[3] In this section, which seeks to locate biblical criticism within postcolonial criticism, the focus is decidedly on the hermeneutical implications and insights. There are, of course, other ways of attending to the relationship between postcolonial theory and biblical studies, such as, showing the actual application of postcolonial theory in textual engagement. An element of that will be included in chapter six as I read 1 Thessalonians through a gender critical and postcolonial optic.

[4] Cf. Sugirtharajah's notion of critically representing the "other" (2012: 12).

practices and hegemonic texts. It is also marked by its attempt to present constructive counter-narratives that "go beyond the narrow and restricted confines of theoretical parameters and the academic environment and to see a *connection between scholarly commitment and active involvement*" (Sugirtharajah, 2012: 20, emphasis mine). Jeremy Punt (2007: loc. 5302) pushes this notion still further when he observes,

> Globally, imperialism, neocolonialism and Eurocentrism are alive and well, and seldom denied, if not always acknowledged as such. The legitimating and totalising discourse of the Bible and its reception histories are also implicated in these hegemonies of imperialism. Postcolonial biblical interpretation provides the opportunity to investigate this entanglement of the biblical with colonising discourse and practice.

And, bringing it closer to home,

> In Africa, discursive imperialism bolstered by the Christianity project with a co-opted Bible was and is still rife, where 'imperial travelling agents employ texts to subjugate geographical spaces, to colonise the minds of native inhabitants, and to sanitise the conscience of colonising nations' (2007: loc. 5302).

Postcolonial biblical criticism seeks out *alternative hermeneutics*.[5] However, this does not in and of itself solve the ongoing problem of reading the biblical text in hegemonic ways, it merely serves to draw attention to this tendency. The dismantling and overturning happens not in the naming and shaming, but in the move towards the other, even the other guilty of reading the biblical text in hegemonic ways. To attempt a dismantling and overturning that simply pronounces judgment on the perpetrators of such diabolic and oppressive readings of scripture does nothing more than to cast out and in the process, establish one's self as the new authoritative voice, the new centre.

Truth-telling must happen, but it must happen in ways that do not perpetuate the replacement of one hegemonic system with another. To read through postcolonial lenses, is to read towards restoring human dignity, to read transformationally, which is to read openly, to read in the

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[5] Punt (2015: 5) describes it this way, "postcolonial biblical criticism can best be described as a variety of hermeneutical approaches characterised by their political nature and ideological agenda, and whose textual politics ultimately concerns both a hermeneutic of suspicion and a hermeneutic of retrieval or restoration."

public space where both the church and the academy can wrestle with the realities of life and gender in a post-apartheid South Africa.

Postcolonial biblical criticism, therefore, does not simply problematise the biblical text, it seeks to offer alternative readings of the text—however thick, layered and conflicted the text may be—that generates life. Joseph Marchal's (2008: loc. 158, emphasis mine) attempt to draw feminist and postcolonial biblical criticism together because of their shared vision for liberation argues that "feminism should lead to a *substantial transformation of society*" which he links "to other struggles against systemic forms of oppression," hence postcolonialism, and that "feminists [and postcolonial biblical critics] can and should work toward significant changes in the world." Or as Marchal (2008: loc. 182) goes onto state, more explicitly, "both (feminism and postcolonialism) are seeking to critique oppressive forms and construct liberating options for the future."[6] Punt (2003: 61, emphasis mine) articulates it this way,

> A postcolonial study concerns itself with social formation and analysis as well as cultural production, and it is therefore an *attempt to rewrite history*. More than that, but not excluding the attempt at rewriting history, *postcolonialism posits a reflective modality which allows for a critical rethinking (thinking "through" and therefore "out of") of historical imbalances and cultural inequalities which were established by colonialism*.

Marchal (2008: loc. 182-189) also proposes that Schüssler Fiorenza's *kyriarchy* proves to be a helpful catchall term that,

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[6] The motivation to move towards "significant changes in the world" is never innocent. The dismantling of hegemonic discourses within the Christian tradition often translates in the dismantling of the biblical text; better yet, the dethronement of the biblical text. I maintain, in agreement with critical scholarship, that at least part of the problem lies in the text, or rather, in the enthronement of the text. But, I differ with the solution on offer. Relegating the biblical text because it is implicated in hegemonic gender systems and is itself a reinscription of hegemonic gender systems of antiquity cannot be the answer in a context, like South Africa, where the biblical text is still a "go to" for so many. In my experience with students and members of congregations, I have found that introducing a critical lens on the text opens conversations for a more authentic wrestling with the complexities of life. Awareness of power, subjugation of women, conflicting perspectives in the biblical text, while initially creating a shock to the system, enables the kind of transformational readings/interpretations of the biblical text advocated by feminist and postcolonial scholars.

Highlights how multiple and mutually influential structures of domination and subordination function together in pyramidal relations determined not only by sexism, but also by racism, classism, ethnocentrism, heterosexism, colonialism, nationalism, and militarism. Thus, a feminist project that focuses its efforts on recognising, critiquing, and resisting *kyriarchal* structures (and their multiple effects) should find common cause with postcolonial efforts that grapple with gender, sexuality, and status alongside and within racial, ethnic, imperial, and colonial formations.

Because the colonial/imperial project often constructs identity in ways that cast the colonised as barbarous, uncivilised, and a host of other binary opposites, postcolonial biblical criticism offers a new angle of vision, a critical rethinking, on male gender identity, especially within the South African context where gender identity is still constructed around binaries, by inviting transgressionary thinking (a thinking beyond the fixity of the binary formulation). Sugirtharajah (2012: 15) notes that "transgressing the contrastive way of thinking" is one of the key themes/activities of postcolonialism,

The binary categorisations include coloniser/colonised, centre/margins, modern/traditional, and static/progressive. It [postcolonialism] queries the presences of such dualistic thinking, and applies deconstructive techniques to show that though the histories and orientations of colonised and coloniser are distinct, they overlap and intersect. It encourages productive crossings between the two.

Framed from a Ricœurian angle, in a pre-critical mode of thinking and viewing the world, there is an 'us' and there is a 'them,' totally distinct one from the other. In this mode, energy is put into maintaining the distinctives that separate one from the other. In a critical mode, however, an awareness of the complexity and degree of overlap that exists between the 'us' and the 'them' emerges. Colonially, the coloniser and the colonised have, by virtue of the system of oppression, created the opportunity for an overlap and intersection (an opportunity for hybridity). But what of the post-critical mode? How does Ricœur's post-critical position reimagine human identity and interaction between the coloniser and the colonised? Does it just come down to acknowledging and foregrounding differences and then parting ways? For Ricœur, the movement into post-critical awareness is a movement that invites imagination beyond the critical awareness, in this case, of the hegemonic forces at work in the text and in textual interpretation.

Thus, while postcolonial criticism invites a rewriting of history, a movement, I would like to suggest is more akin to Ricœur's post-critical act of imagination, such rewriting ought not result in a history that excises the coloniser.[7] While postcolonial biblical criticism seeks to *represent* the voice of the Other, the colonised, it must do so with reference to the coloniser who engages in the process of *othering*. Identity is negotiated. The colonial project needs both the coloniser and the colonised as part of the construction of oppositional identities. Colonialism constructs the relationship between the coloniser and the colonised. They are bound to each other, the coloniser and the colonised.

Stephen D. Moore (2011a: loc. 233), employing Bhabha, frames this oppositional construction of identity this way, "the relationship between the coloniser and the colonised is characterised by simultaneous attraction and repulsion, which is to say *ambivalence*." In other words, the rewriting of the history of the other is a rewriting of the history of a now hybridised identity, identity "as hyphenated, fractured, multiple and multiplying, 'a complex web of cultural negotiation and interaction, forged by imaginatively redeploying the local and the imported elements.'" (Punt, 2003: 66). Moore (2011a: loc. 233) argues that hybridity, "is never a simple synthesis or syncretic fusion of two originally discrete cultures, since a culture can never be pure, prior, original, unified, or self-contained but is always already infected by impurity, secondariness, mimicry, self-splitting, and alterity." By rewriting history, postcolonial biblical criticism also attempts to affirm the agency of the colonised in the present (Punt, 2003: 66).

South African hermeneutics is important as an emerging theological voice within the academy, exerting a critical influence as it challenges the gl*bal North to reconsider the voice of Other. Moore (2011a: loc. 442) observes,

> While the locus of lived Christianity has moved decisively to the global South, the North continues to be the sanctioned training ground for academic biblical scholars, but students from the South in European or North American universities

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[7] Within the post-apartheid South African context, it is important to note that the drive to have street names renamed and the vestiges of colonial and apartheid history removed is a critical, and essential, part of re-writing/re-righting history. There is, however, a risk that historical ignorance may lead to the repetition of that history. The removal of the reminders of the constructed 'superiority' of the colonisers and the architects of apartheid should be removed by reframing them as a memory of the oppressive past and not as a memorial to colonial/apartheid superiority. Statues and sculptures and street names from the past need to be re-contextualised in a new narrative that marks the ongoing struggle for a new South Africa.

all too often experience their training in terms of arid irrelevance and even continued colonisation. Making biblical scholarship more relevant to a large portion of the planet's population is not the least significant benefit of postcolonial biblical criticism, whatever it is destined to become.

Consequently, postcolonial biblical criticism presents an opportunity for the academy and the church to engage in the *contact zone* as "an attempt to invoke the spatial and temporal copresence of subjects previously separated by geographic and historical disjunctures," and we may add, theological and hermeneutical disjunctures, "and whose trajectories now intersect" (Pratt cited by Marchal, 2008: loc. 1278-1285). Of course, the notion of a *contact zone* is not, as Marchal (2008: loc. 1278) submits, "meant to indicate a happy or uncomplicated exchange between equals; rather, it involves 'conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict." It is clear that both the church and the academy have an interest in gender identity, whether male or female, and that this interest represents an intersecting of trajectories.

This begs the question of whether it is possible in the *contact zone* of the church and the academy, especially through the postcolonial lens, to generate an understanding of male gender identity with possibilities. Susan B. Abraham (2011: loc. 583) sums up the importance and value of postcolonialism when she writes,

> What postcoloniality advances for critical thinking is an analysis of conditions of unequal power that is not limited to the historical phenomenon of European colonialism over the past five hundred years. Consequently, postcolonial theory cannot be said to have a clearly identifiable object of analysis, since it engages in local and global critiques of power while seeking to represent, recognise, or subordinate agency. Precisely because it presents materialist critiques of power, postcolonial studies must remain both oppositional and self-critical.

Postcolonial criticism in the context of biblical hermeneutics is given expression and gives expression to a multiplicity of modes of engagement and textual interpretation. Sugirtharajah (2012: 16), having distilled fourteen key interrelated themes and activities, observes, "postcolonialism is essentially an interventionary tool. Its argumentative and contestatory nature makes the practice defy boundaries and disciplines."

4.2.2.1   Salient Aspects of Postcolonial Biblical Criticism According to Sugirtharajah
As noted above, Sugirtharajah (2012: 14-16) identifies fourteen key interrelated themes and

activities of postcolonial biblical criticism. I highlight here those aspects that are relevant to this study:

(1) Recognising the effects of cultural displacement wrought about by colonisation. This is surely relevant to the study of the NT in general, and to Paul in particular. Diasporic Judaism is an important factor in understanding the first-century CE situation of Judaism and the emergence of the early Christ-follower communities.

(2) Hermeneutically, "decentring universal and transhistorical values of Western categories of knowledge." This particular point comes into sharper focus in the next section, below.

(3) Challenging binarism in relation to the NT (including vanquisher/vanquished, centre/margins, etc.).

(4) Foregrounding the power relations present in the practice of representation. For example, one could consider the rhetorical representational effort on the part of Paul (and his co-authors) as at least an expression of this.

(5) "Decentring dominant forms of knowledge which envisioned the world from a single privileged point of view which simultaneously elevated the cultures of the coloniser … and undermined those of the colonised."

In the following section, I turn my attention to a topic of great import, I believe, for South African biblical scholarship. It concerns the inequality in knowledge production between the gl*bal North and the gl*bal South, and the consequent need for (South) African scholarship to forge new methodologies and produce knowledge that makes sense for the context instead of perpetuating a dependence on the West to address problems and questions we are not asking.

4.3   In the Shadow of the West

In chapter three, I set about tracing the landscape of gender and masculinity studies. As I did that, I was deliberate in drawing out the peculiarities of masculinity, its construction and representation within the context of a post-apartheid South Africa. I concluded that chapter by noting a dearth of masculinity scholarship in relation to the NT.

Upon reflection, it would have been easier, perhaps even expected, to launch that chapter with a comprehensive account of the developmental history of Men's Studies, its emergence as an academic discipline and a sketch of the rank and file of authoritative voices that have shaped the discourse. While an approach like this has its place, and has received some consideration in this dissertation, I am confronted with the fact that so much of the knowledge

production in gender and masculinity studies originate from the gl*bal North.

As a scholar located in the gl*bal South, but no less implicated in a system that navigates a scholarly terrain mapped by the gl*bal North, critical engagement with "authoritative" sources remain an important part of the academic enterprise, but such engagement is to be critical in at least three senses. First, it is to be critical in the typical academic register where sources from various perspectives are drawn into a contestational space, where some measure of adjudication takes place, and academic decisions are taken in support, or in advance, of this or that conclusion. Second, critical engagement with the sources cannot be undertaken at the expense of a fully valorised academic subjectivity firmly located in the gl*bal South.[8] Moreover, the fruit of such labours should be more than a repackaging of what has already been produced in the gl*bal North.[9] Third, and perhaps more importantly, I use the term critical to refer to an act of engagement that does not just pit one Northern or Western[10] authoritative voice against another, but calls the very academic hegemony of the gl*bal North into question by bringing the marginalised voices of the gl*bal South into the conversation. Indeed, the point is to enact something of a reversal of the power differential between North and South, to no longer give primacy to the scholarship of the North over the scholarship of the South.[11]

Recognising the power relations between texts and their interpretations, feminist scholar, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, advances a paradigm which she calls *rhetorical-political* (2003,

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[8] That subjectivity may need to be reclaimed or rediscovered. Subjectivity poses a challenge to Cartesian individualism by drawing attention to the determining factors constructing human identity. Cartesian individualism maintained the autonomy of the individual self, separate from the world, thereby downplaying the importance of social relationships. Subjectivity identifies the role of language, discourse and ideology in shaping identity. Within the (South) African context, where social relationships play a significant role, the question of identifying the role of language, discourse and ideology will need to be answered. Suffice to say, while there will be some similarities between the gl*bal North and the gl*bal South, Africa is not subject the same historical trajectory that sees a move from modernity to postmodernity, the ostensible context within which the philosophical notion of subjectivity emerges (Ashcroft *et al.*, 2007: 201-207).

[9] To get this right, scholarship in the gl*bal South needs to proceed with their work from the position of new knowledge creation that arises from methodologies and practices that emerge from the soil of our own context.

[10] The term *Western* (and its cognates), together with global North/South, is to be problematised. I use the term here to roughly correlate with gl*bal North (see, fn. 20).

[11] This must move beyond viewing the gl*bal South as a mere resource for the gl*bal North to exploit.

2010). The rhetorical-political paradigm intends to draw attention to the ways in which both the text and the interpretation (and by extension, the interpreters or interpretive community) exercise a rhetorical power which can either be used for liberative or oppressive purposes. Schüssler Fiorenza's paradigm has application for our discussion of masculinity studies and of the power relations between the gl*bal North and South.

The texts produced by the gl*bal North have shaped much of the discourse and theoretical modelling on gender and masculinity and have assumed an authoritative status within the academy.[12] The authority attributed to these texts is, of course, derivative; derived from the notion that whatever is produced in the North carries more intellectual-scientific weight.[13] This authoritative attribution is axiomatic; that is, it is taken for granted as the starting point for academic-scientific enquiry. Consequently, it sets the agenda for the discipline through the construction of a common language and symbolic system of meaning, setting the rules of academic gender engagement (the metaphors of mapping, performing, scripting all come to mind as expressions of a particular worldview).

To flourish in this *habitus,*[14] scholars are expected to play by the rules without critical consideration of how "fair play" within the rules serves only to reinforce the dominance of the scholarship of the gl*bal North, thereby creating a relationship of dependence. In other words, scholarship of the gl*bal South is dependent on the categories, methods and practices of the gl*bal North; this is the assumed *habitus;* it is scholarship in the language and intellectual/philosophical register of the North. Oyèrónké Oyĕwùmí (1997: 22) frames the situation with her incisive diagnosis when she writes, "the nature of the academy, especially its logic, structure, and practices" constitutes the academic *habitus* beyond which many

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[12] It also serves a generalising function, often assuming a more universal application, so that what is true in one location, is, inevitably, true elsewhere, and more boldly, true everywhere.

[13] What is produced in the gl*bal South is often nothing more than a re-production or re-packaging of the knowledge of the gl*bal North.

[14] I borrow the term *habitus* from French sociologist, Pierre Bourdieu, since it perhaps captures best the perspectival nature of the academy. In other words, players in the academic field are socialised into the *habitus*, a reinforcement of deeply engrained habits, skills, practices, and dispositions that become *habituated* or embodied, and thus *naturalised*. Within the field of gender studies, the *habitus* is clear enough and the perspective offered by the gl*bal North is seen as *the* perspective. Perspective is about how the world is made. One's perspective/view of the world goes hand in hand with the making and the unmaking of the world. It is about how the world is shaped. And in this sense, the gl*bal North clearly exercises a hegemony.

African scholars are unable to imagine an alternative.

Oyĕwùmí continues, "In general, African intellectuals seem to underestimate or fail to grasp the implications of academic practices for the production of knowledge. Research, teaching, and learning in academic institutions are not innocuous business practices" (1997: 24). Attending to the rhetoricity of the "authoritative" texts produced and reproduced by academic institutions, as suggested by Schüssler Fiorenza's rhetorical-political paradigm, brings to light the nocuous aspects of these systems of knowledge production and stands to lead us towards a more ethical and responsible theorisation within the field of gender and masculinity studies.

Moving to gender and masculinity studies, Oyĕwùmí's critical analysis of the dependence of African scholarship on the West and Schüssler Fiorenza's rhetorical-political paradigm, clears the way for investigating the persuasive power and argumentative function of the "authoritative" texts produced in this discipline. The investigation, however, is not as straightforward as pitting North versus South. That cannot be either the point of the investigation, or of this dissertation. We must search for an appropriate metaphor by which some meaning may be construed for how South and North can reconceive the relationship beyond the negativity of dependence of the one on the other, of the need of the one for the validation of the other. This is no small project[15] and raises some important questions for consideration. Does the gl*bal South play by the rules of the North, and run the risk of simply reinscribing its dominance, to prove that what it has to offer has academic-scientific value? Does the gl*bal South set about the task of defining its own gender discourse without reference to the North, a kind of isolationist approach? Can the gl*bal South be seen as Other vis-à-vis the gl*bal North, not in the usual, pejorative manner where the Otherness of the South results in our objectification, there for the gl*bal North to fix its gaze on us, an exotic and wild and desirable species, a resource to be plundered, but rather as unique and fully valorised and independent Other?

The work of Morrell, Connell (2007), Comaroff and Comaroff (2015, 2012) and others offer an

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[15] The project cannot be, as it has been, construed as a project in which Africa (and the gl*bal South) simply learns to embrace the West (gl*bal North). Oyĕwùmí (1997: 25) writes,

Embracing the West is nothing new; it is actually a failed programme of action. The idea that Africa can make a choice about whether it wants to embrace the West or not is a displaced metaphor. The point is that Africa is already locked in an embrace with the West; the challenge is how to extricate ourselves and how much. It is a fundamental problem because without this necessary loosening we continue to mistake the West for the Self and therefore see ourselves as the Other.

important hermeneutical reference point that brings the need for the scholarly discourse of the South to reflect on gender with contextual sensitivity, or what Morrell and Clowes call an "eco-culturally sensitive"[16] research (2016: 3) into sharper focus. "Southern theory," write Morrell and Clowes, "should reflect the context in which it is produced and contest the conditions of research that historically contributed to both knowledge and material inequalities. Its purpose should be emancipatory, contributing to the democratisation of knowledge" (2016: 193).[17]

Achieving the democratisation of knowledge calls for a deliberate conscientising that draws attention to "the ongoing global inequalities in the realm of knowledge production" (Morrell *et al.*, 2016: 2). And, part of that conscientising includes, at least, a critical assessment of the relationship between North and South. As we have noted already, acknowledging and owning the reality of the inequality of knowledge production between North and South should not be the telos or goal of our discussion. Nor should it simply result in neat categorisation. The inevitable polarisation that results from the categorisation of North and South represents a failure to wrestle with the complexities of how power differentials construct and co-construct identities and roles. What Northern theory is to Southern theory implicates the one for the construction of the other and vice versa.[18] In their response to this anticipated problem, Morrell and Clowes (2016: 3) write,

> The danger is that these geographical categories artificially separate out or categorise works. In our argument, we aim to show that while gender research in South Africa drew on existing debates in the North, it also engaged with debates and thinking emerging out of local concerns that contributed to and developed

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[16] Eco-culturalism is a "holistic frame that takes culture seriously … and draws attention to an ecology—a system that connects all things," without reducing human identity to one form of essentialism or another. Essentialism, whether of gender or race, "prevents the kind of inclusive conversation that goes beyond essentialism and builds bridges between positions (and across identities)" (Morrell, 2017a).

[17] My earlier evocation of the metaphorical construction, *academic discourse as an invitation to open table-fellowship*, aligns well with the notion of the democratisation of knowledge.

[18] Homi K. Bhabha's *Location of Culture* (2012) represents an important theoretical framework for examining the complex ways in which the identity of the North and South are not straightforward opposites. For Bhabha, hybridity refers to the "space in which cultural meanings and identities always contain the traces of other meanings and identities" (Ashcroft *et al.*, 2007: 53-54). In Bhabha's own words, "hierarchical claims to the inherent originality or 'purity' of cultures are untenable, even before we resort to empirical historical instances that demonstrate their hybridity" (2012: 37).

debates as well.

South Africa's foray into gender theorisation does not presuppose the emergence of or imply a dependence on Southern Theory. Rather, the complex political landscape, especially during the 1980s and 1990s played a significant role in the growing interest in gender research. This research showed clear linkages with the rise of feminism in South Africa (Morrell *et al.*, 2016: 2). Thus, the trajectory of South African gender research with its clear linkages to feminism and contextual and political consciousness reflects

> … organic national developments in the academy and in politics where the period covered in this review [1960-2014] coincides with the increasing opposition to apartheid including a rise in guerrilla warfare, trade union organisation and the popular mobilisation and in 1990 to the freeing of Nelson Mandela and in 1994 to the first democratic elections. We point to a longer trajectory of gender research, showing how it was linked to feminism in South Africa and how it sought to analyse patriarchal relations while also contributing to civic actions that challenged it (Morrell *et al.*, 2016: 3).

Using a quantitative bibliometric method,[19] Morrell and Clowes track the trend of gender publishing in South Africa between 1960 and 2014. They found that prior to the mid 1970s, publishing on gender in South Africa was negligible (2016: 6). Around the late 1980s, early 1990s there is a sharp rise, reaching a plateau in the mid 1990s. An explosion of publications is witnessed from 2005, peaking in 2009. At this point, Morrell and Clowes note "a curious decline which becomes accentuated the closer one comes to the chronological end point of the data set" (2016: 6).

Because of the complex history of South Africa—colonialism and apartheid intermingled—gender research took root in an emancipatory narrative in which race, class and gender intersected. South African scholars put the "feminist theories developed in Europe and North America" (Morrell *et al.*, 2016: 11) to use in the concrete setting of South Africa, enhancing and amplifying these theories by establishing "the importance of history and context and 'coloniality of power'" (Morrell *et al.*, 2016: 12).

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[19] This method has close affinities with systematic reviews used in the psychology discipline and is a helpful, focused way of determining research trends.

It is this proclivity of South African gender scholarship to employ the theoretical frameworks of Europe and North America to which Morrell and Clowes draw attention and on which they focus their discussion by drawing on Connell. Citing Connell's article in *Feminist Studies*, "Rethinking Gender from the South," they note that

> The problem is not that local content is absent from Southern writing, but that local realities are reduced to the status of a 'case' framed by metropolitan [Northern] conceptualisations. A typical gender studies article from the periphery combines local data or examples with one or other theory from the metropole (citing Connell, Morrell *et al.*, 2016: 8).

The answer to the conundrum of binary inflection, inferred from the application or operationalisation of Northern or Southern Theory, cannot be solved without reference to a more complex understanding of the relationship between the gl*bal North and gl*bal South. As Morrell and Clowes make clear, Connell understands that "the global economy 'doesn't produce a simple dichotomy' but rather 'massive structures of centrality and marginality, whose main axis is the metropole-periphery, North-South relationship'" (2016: 8-9). But, "she has difficulty in avoiding a slide back into a North-South binary" (2016: 9).

Thus, Southern theory advances and encourages the kind of knowledge production that gives primacy to local, indigenous methodologies and frameworks. It does so not at the expense of ongoing participation and collaboration in the global network of the academy.[20] Rather, it pursues wholeheartedly the democratisation of knowledge, attempting to provide a corrective to the knowledge inequalities between North and South without neglecting that a good deal of the theory and methodologies developed in the North as "a critique of Northern society, its economics, politics and world views" (Morrell *et al.*, 2016: 8). The implications of this paradigmatic shift in scholarship for gender studies is far-reaching and can be seen not only in the gender work being done by Robert Morrell and others, but in another influential figure in feminist scholarship, African scholar, Oyèrónké Oyĕwùmí.[21]

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[20] This perspective is foundational for the ongoing discussions about the decolonisation of education taking place within higher education institutions. For an insightful piece on the importance of this debate, see Hanne Kirstine Adriansen's *Global Academic Collaboration: A New Form of Colonisation?* (2016).

[21] Northern theory, southern theory when taken seriously poses a real challenge to the scholarly endeavours of those located in the global South. This is tangibly so in the writing of this dissertation. There is a risk that by choosing conversation partners that may be little known because of the

4.4 A Feminist African Perspective: A Case in Point

Oyěwùmí's scholarship contests the "imposition of Western gender categories," notably the ideology of biological determinism, on gender discourse evident in the scholarship on the Yorùbá (1997: Loc. 37 of 5709). And, in the preface to her book, *Invention of Women: Making an African Sense of Western Gender Discourses*, Oyěwùmí declares her agenda upfront and thereby signals an important shift that challenges the universal claims of Western scholarship in the arena of feminist discourse, and can be summarised as follows:

(1) *Interrogate* Western assumptions about sex differences from the perspective of Yorùbá society. The purpose of the interrogation is to create a local gender system.

(2) *Challenge* key ideas common to Western feminism, including:

    a. That gender categories are universal and timeless ("in the beginning there was gender");

    b. That societies everywhere are organised around gender as a fundament;

    c. That there is an "essential, universal category 'woman' that is characterised by the social uniformity of its members";

    d. Subordination and subjugation of women is universal;

    e. The category "women" is precultural, fixed in historical time and cultural space in antithesis to another fixed category—"man."

While Oyěwùmí challenges the imposition of Western gender categories, she is doing so particularly with reference to the implications of this discourse on the formation of the Yorùbá. The approach, then, and not necessarily the conclusions she draws for the Yorùbá is what is to be foregrounded. Framed another way, the exercise of Oyěwùmí's scholarship which is in the service of the Yorùbá, challenges us as South African scholars, to consider the ways in which our gender discourse has been framed and informed by Western categories.[22]

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indebtedness to the scholarship of the North that any conclusions or ideas that are put forward will be held with some suspicion and invite misgivings about whether due deference has been paid and due homage given to the scholarly illuminati of gender studies and/or feminism. Of course, these should be considered as at least part of the number invited to the table of fellowship that is scholarly work of writing a dissertation. This is, I guess, something of a conundrum.

[22] While frameworks serve a heuristic function, they can also obscure as much as reveal. Kathy Ferguson (1993: 7, italics added) articulates it this way, "The questions we can ask about the world are enabled, and other questions disabled, by the frame that order the questioning. *When we are busy arguing about the questions that appear within a certain frame, the frame itself becomes invisible; we become enframed within it.*"

To argue the case of Westocentricity, a term Oyěwùmí uses, Oyěwùmí turns to Yorùbá studies "because scholars of Yorùbá origin are very well represented" (1997: 27). She notes in this context that "African studies is one of the few areas in the academy where one can claim to be an expert without the benefit of language competence" (ibid.: 27), that Yorùbá "scholars continue to build knowledge about our society in the English language" (ibid.: 27).

> The problem of gender and its constructs in Yorùbá language, literature, and social practice calls for immediate attention. Yorùbá language is gender-free, which means that many categories taken for granted in English are absent. There are no gender-specific words denoting son, daughter, brother, or sister. Yorùbá names are not gender-specific; neither are ọkọ and aya—two categories translated as the English husband and wife, respectively (ibid.: 28-29).

Oyěwùmí points to a patriarchalising process evident in Yorùbá scholarship; an attempt to recast the history and culture of the Yorùbá with the male as the assumed norm (mimicking the West). This, she maintains, is achieved, "primarily through translation" (ibid.: 29). In many instances, the non-gender-specific terms used in Yorùbá culture are tamed into submission to a patriarchalising narrative (cf. Oyewùmí, 2011: 10) that works on the assumption of Western priority; a world view which is itself deeply patriarchal (or in the parlance of Schüssler Fiorenza, *kyriarchal* (2007: 14)[23]).

Yorùbá scholarship is framed by the exigencies of Western scholarship; it is a form of scholarship in the academic register of the West which has, according to Oyěwùmí, placed "Gender as an analytic category … at the heart of contemporary Yorùbá discourse" (1997: 30). She writes,

> … very little has been done to untangle this web of Yorùbá/English mistranslations. Gender has become important in Yorùbá studies not as an artefact of Yorùbá life but because Yorùbá life, past and present, has been translated into English to fit the Western pattern of body-reasoning. This pattern is one in which gender is omnipresent, the male is the norm, and the female is the

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[23] Schüssler Fiorenza defines *kyriarchy* as "an analytic category," which "articulates a more comprehensive systemic analysis of empire, in order to underscore the complex inter-structuring of dominations, and to locate sexism and misogyny in the political matric—or better, 'patrix'—of a broader range of dominations" (2007: 14).

exception; it is a pattern in which power is believed to inhere in maleness in and of itself. It is also a pattern that is not grounded on evidence. Based on a review of the existing literature, it does not appear that Yorùbá scholars have given much thought to the linguistic divergence of Yorùbá and English and its implications for knowledge-production (ibid.: 30).

Yorùbá scholarship receives a rich contextualisation throughout Oyěwùmí's work. She traces the concrete manifestations of the influence of Western thinking on Yorùbáland, including the areas of education (segregated and differentiated learning instituted for boys and girls with a very clear bias towards male children),[24] religion (a complex tussle between the Yorùbáanising of Christianity and a Christianising of Yorùbá religion with masculinity as the point of reference (ibid.: 140)) family (kinship terms do not encode gender; instead, they encode seniority (ibid.: 42; 2011: 11), politics and legal systems (effectively reflecting a male bias and a completely Western view point).

Oyěwùmí brings her book to a conclusion by reminding the reader that "Western discourses, feminist and nonfeminist alike, assume that all societies perceive the human body as gendered and then organize men and women as social categories based on this assumption" (ibid.: 175). Yet Oyěwùmí has been at pains to argue for the contextually honest appraisal of Yorùbá culture, noting that "not all societies use the 'evidence' of the body to constitute gender categories" (ibid.: 175). Oyěwùmí is not, of course, denying that there are societies that use the perception of the body as constitutive. She is also, therefore, not arguing that one way of understanding human identity is to be prioritised over others. She writes,

> … there are many categories that appear to ignore the body. After all, even in the West, despite the deeply held assumption of gendered human bodies, the body is assumed to constitute evidence for another category—race. Gendered bodies are neither universal nor timeless. Yorùbá social categories were not based on anatomical differences (ibid.: 176).

The contextual awareness and sensitivity of the scholarship of Oyěwùmí certainly stands as a challenge to South African scholars. In the very least, NT scholarship should be challenged to reflect on the extent to which our scholarship is indebted to the methodologies and

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[24] See also the important work of Constantine Ngara, especially his essay *African Ways of Knowing and Pedagogy Revisited* (2008).

underlying philosophies of the gl*bal North. The question is not intended to lead us to a position of complete abandonment of the scholarship of the gl*bal North. That would be absurd in a globalised network where academic citizenship is simultaneously local and global. Instead, the question calls for thoughtful reflection on the nature of our scholarship and then to imaginatively pursue alternatives.

4.5 Summary

I bring this chapter to a conclusion by suggesting an alternative strategy for beginning the process of reframing the NT and gender/masculinity. That reframing inverts the typical power dynamics evident in the relationship between trained and untrained readers.

4.5.1 Contextual Bible Study

Contextual Bible Study, or CBS, is a reader-centred approach to conducting bible study with ordinary, untrained, readers. As a methodology for reading/interpreting the bible, it places a high premium on the importance of social location of the reader/interpreter. Such sensitivity informs and shapes interpretative practices and reflects a more broadly reader-centred approach to determining the meaning of the biblical text.

While the notion of a reader-centred approach has often focused attention on the textual reader—the reconstructed reader implied by the text—developments in biblical criticism signals a shift to what Fernando F. Segovia (2000: 30) calls the,

> flesh-and-blood reader: always positioned and interested; socially and historically conditioned and unable to transcend such conditions—to attain a sort of asocial and ahistorical nirvana—not only with respect to socioeconomic class but also with regard to the many other factors that make up human identity.

This shift in focus and approach to interpretation makes a clear distinction between learned, "critical interpreters" (Kahl, 2007: 148) and ordinary readers (West, 1993: 9).[25] Advocates for

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[25] Werner Kahl employs the term "intuitive interpreters" to designate interpreters who by "intuition, that is, by relying on common sense and an inner feeling of what is true … arrive at certain interpretations that, to them, seem to be self-evident" (2007: 148). The nuanced nomenclature employed by Kahl signals an important recognition of what is often the case in the South African context where literacy levels remain low. Eric Anum (2007: 9) offers an insightful perspective when he characterises learned readers/interpreters as possessing composite skills for critical interpretation of

this method of interpretation and biblical engagement argue that learned readers carry a responsibility to use such skills as they have acquired in the academy to *facilitate* readings of the text with ordinary readers whose social location—especially those on the economic and social margins of society—plays a significant role in determining the meaning of the text.

The distinction between learned and ordinary readers implies, furthermore, a centre-periphery dichotomy, with the learned/critical interpreters occupying the centre and the ordinary readers/interpreters occupying the margins. The centre-periphery dichotomy highlights not only a deep tension, methodologically, between the *centralised* knowledge of the academy (and often the church) and the *localised* knowledge of the ordinary, pre-critical, reader/interpreter, but alerts us to consider the hegemonic ways in which both the academy and the church have often silenced local knowledge and insight into the meaning of the biblical text.[26]

Drawing on the interpretations and insights of ordinary readers/interpreters proposed by the contextual bible study method poses a challenge to the monopolising efforts of the academy to control "hermeneutic authority, suppress ambiguity and ambivalence, and curtail the practice of reading differently" (Punt, 2004b: 309). While methods such as contextual bible study suggest a preferential option for the poor and marginalised readers/interpreters, it is important to note that the value and role of the learned/critical reader/interpreter remains vital to the reading exercise. Reading with others, especially the economically and socially marginalised, is a dialogical enterprise that draws the learned expertise of the academy into conversation with the localised knowledge of ordinary readers/interpreters.[27]

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biblical texts, usually belonging to the "middle or elite class," "urban dwellers influenced by Western education and values."

[26] The implied dichotomies of centre/periphery and trained/untrained are never quite as clean and neat. For example, it is hardly the case that pastors in the evangelical tradition can be considered "untrained." The designations, therefore, also infer a form of relativism. Pastors are usually more "trained" in interpretation when compared with members of the church. But, when the comparison is made between the "trained" of the church and the "trained" of the academy, the church "trained" are, relative to the academy "trained" (lecturers, professors, etc.), "untrained." Furthermore, Bhabha's notion of hybridity is applicable here. The identities of the "trained" and "untrained" are hybrid identities. The point of noting the centre/periphery and trained/untrained dichotomy is a political-rhetorical one and means to bring into sharper focus the power differential attending such dichotomies.

[27] Employing Bakhtin, Punt (2004b: 309) suggests that there are two powerful forces at work in matters related to bible translation and usage: centripetal or monologising forces that exercise hegemonic control of the text and centrifugal or dialogising forces that allow divergent interpretations of

Crucial to the success of drawing the academy (and church) into dialogue with ordinary readers is the recognition of *otherness*. That *otherness* concerns both the text (with its multiple layers of context) and the context of the reader(s), whether of the academy or from the margins of society.

While this dissertation does not incorporate ordinary readings of Paul's letter to the Thessalonians, my commitment to this approach very much informs my engagement with the text itself. Framed another way, drawing on the insights of critical scholarship (gender criticism and postcolonial biblical criticism) in my reading of 1 Thessalonians, the emerging interpretation prepares the way for contextual bible studies with men's groups as a way of conscientising men to alternative constructions and representations of masculinity.

4.5.2 Connecting Postcolonial Biblical Criticism and Contextual Bible Study

The following emerge as possible points of connection and confluence between PBC and CBS:

(1) CBS is acutely invested in creating spaces for subalterns to give voice to the concrete experiences of life on the margins of society and for a deep reflection on how (indeed, if) the bible intersects with that experience.[28]

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the text. Punt's assessment manages to strike a healthy balance between centripetal and centrifugal forces, recognising the important role each plays.

[28] During my tenure (2008-2016) at Cornerstone Institute, I facilitated a number of classes over a period of seven years in which students conducted CBS with marginalised groups of various kinds. The readings conducted by the students, often surfaced issues related to faith in the face of challenging life circumstances. Many of the students experienced a deep tension between their own social location (typically privileged) and the social location of their fellow-readers. This tension raised awareness about the power dynamic at play in the act of reading with ordinary readers and is captured by the words of one of the students in her academic journaling:

"I became painfully aware this week of how much power we had over the people from Westlake. While one of the students was telling the story, I was aware of how much power he had over the text. I think he did a great job telling the story but it was still his own summary of the story. And then when another of the students translated the story into Afrikaans, yet another layer of interpretive power was evidenced. Then later when we were in small groups the spokesperson, who happened to usually be white people, were summarizing what the small group had said and had a bit of their own interpretation in it. I personally was faced with a very stark example of how much power I had when Fortune, one of the community members, asked me to retell the story with smaller words. As I was telling the story I knew that I was changing the story a bit because I was using different and smaller words so that she

(2) CBS attempts to decentre the hegemony of the gl*bal North in the interpretive enterprise.

(3) CBS represents an alternative hermeneutic committed to liberative readings that make a difference. One of the key features of the process is the push to identify action steps that impact the community.

(4) CBS subverts representations of marginalised groups by creating spaces for alternative perspectives to emerge.

(5) CBS highlights the complex relationship between contextual issues and the bible and does not provide an option for stepping back from either the concrete realities of the text or from the bible.

4.5.3 Postcolonial Biblical Criticism, Contextual Bible Study, and Thessalonians

As already noted above, in this dissertation no attempt is made to conduct a contextual bible study with, for example, a men's group, to share the insights and incipient theology (Cochrane, 1999) that emerge as a consequence. However, the purpose of the study of 1 Thessalonians from a gender and postcolonial biblical critical perspective is to establish points of deep connection between the text so construed and the contemporary setting of men in South Africa. The fruit of this labour prepares the way for contextual bible study and invites the possibility of the church and the academy coming together to respond to what some perceive to be a crisis in/of masculinity.

In the following chapter, I move behind the text of Paul's letters to look at the embodied Paul within the context of antiquity. Juxtaposing the embodied Paul and the Pauline body of texts, I address the question of how bodies of authoritative texts construct and regulate gendered bodies. Again, this chapter aims to make further connections between textual constructions and representation of masculinity and the hermeneutical implications thereof.

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could understand what was going on. I was so uncomfortable with how much power I had over the text and over Fortune, I knew I technically wasn't doing anything wrong and I knew I was sticking to the text as much as I could but I was still so aware and so tense about the reality that was right in front of my face."

5 CONSTRUCTING AND REGULATING MASCULINITY IN ANTIQUITY

5.1 Introduction

Physiognomy[1] is concerned with how we read bodies. In this chapter, I explore the hermeneutical relationship between textual bodies and physical bodies by looking at the Pauline letters within the context of Roman Imperial ideology. With an understanding of the contextual backdrop against which and within which Paul's letters are to be understood, consideration is given to the ongoing influence of a body of texts, such as the Pauline corpus, in shaping bodies, arguing that bodies of texts rub up against physical bodies, shaping identity both positively and negatively. Careful analysis of the scripted nature of bodily comportment is given by drawing attention to the regulative, normativising role of textual bodies on physical bodies, whether ancient or contemporary. In so doing, this chapter seeks to wrestle with the hermeneutics of identity formation both in the Pauline letters and in the reception history of these letters for the church.

5.2 Gender and Identity: Text and Image

Before moving into the discussion of textual embodiment and textually constructed bodies, it will be helpful to briefly engage the question of how text and image converge to shape gendered identity.

Identity in the ancient world was actively constructed (Punt, 2012b) and its construction was achieved through both text (as a crystallisation and reproduction of memory) (Assmann, 2011) *and* image (especially in the period of the Roman Empire).

The early Christ-follower communities of the first-century CE were rooted within a rich textual tradition, and were themselves developing a textual tradition of their own, which both served as a way of reflecting and constituting a particular identity. These texts were a crystallisation

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[1] Recognising that physiognomics is a field of study on its own, reference to it in this chapter is to foreground the complex ways in which gender was constructed and represented in antiquity. In a fashion similar to the work of Caroline Vander Stichele and Todd Penner's *Contextualising Gender in Early Christian Discourse: Thinking Beyond Thecla* (2009), physiognomics features as part of contextualising gender in the Greek and Roman world. Cf. the work of Malina *et al.* (1996) where physiognomics serves as lens for assessing personality (Ibid., : 101).

of the cultural memory of the Christ communities and served "to stabilize and convey that society's self-image" (Punt, 2012b: 30).

Texts have "both a 'life' and an 'effect'" (Vander Stichele *et al.*, 2009: 83). As such, an examination of the 'life' and 'effect' of texts, "helps us to appreciate better how *the shaping of a body of literature has a correlating effect on the formation of early Christian identity"* (2009: 83, italics added). So, while the early Christ-follower communities were engaged in an exercise of scripting bodies through the development of a body of texts, the enterprise was, in macrocosm, being undertaken by the Empire, where the role of texts as a reproduction of memory, even mythical memory, in the construction of social identity can be seen, as for example in Virgil's *Aeneid*.

To read a body of texts is to read the body of a community and to do so is to read how bodies, individual and collective, were visually presented, re-presented, imaged, and re-imaged in the first century. In this setting, gender becomes just one more way in which the bodies of women and men become the social and political sites for regulating and disciplining social norms and conventions, and for reinscribing the deeply entrenched hierarchy of the Graeco-Roman world (Punt, 2010b: 145). Thus, "the human body constitutes one of the most important maps, for it is a microcosm of the larger social macrocosm" (Neyrey, 1991: 283). The physical body, however it is (re)presented, is a symbol of the social body, the body politic. Punt (2010b: 151) notes, "notions of the body expands also to the socio-political terrain, where the hierarchy of the body both informed and was inscribed by imperial power."

While bodies become the sites for imaging the social structuring of society, it is important to note that not all bodies were the same. Some bodies mattered more than others. Some bodies were merely scaffolding for the construction of identity for bodies that really mattered (e.g., slave bodies and the bodies of conquered nations were all textually represented to underwrite the identity of those in power).

Textual representation intersects with art, architecture, and sculpture which become important intertexts for making sense of how bodies were being configured (and often disfigured) (Kahl, 2000, 2010). Engagement with texts and the broader material culture, enables a more complex picture of how bodies were constructed to emerge. Furthermore, such engagement also enriches the interplay between text and image in the construction of identity. This is critical to the question of gender since in many ways the images we have to work with often provide evidence of how identity was in fact constructed quite apart from the ideals expressed in some of the texts. In this regard, Davina Lopez, who is particularly interested in the manner in which

the defeated nations are depicted in Roman sculpture, writes, "The nations, who had been defeated and enslaved by Roman military power, were displayed as part of the sculptural programme of a public space honouring the emperors as gods" (Lopez, 2008: 2; Lopez, 2012).

Aside from the sculptural programme to depict conquered nations as female bodies (e.g., the many friezes of the Sebasteion at Aphrodisias), we may note, too, how women's bodies became the site of Roman imperial ideology, with emperors using their wives (particularly in terms of their dress and hairstyles) to persuade other women, especially those of higher social rank, to conform to the normativising script of the Empire. This illustrates the use women's bodies for political and social ends, and functioned as the means by which a normative sense of gender distinction and place in society. Winter (2003: 176) frames the matter this way, "The imperial clothing and hairstyles of wives were meant to make them icons and trend-setters and ... were deliberately used to counter influences in society which were judged detrimental to its well-being."

5.2.1   Scripting Gender: Paul and Bodily Performance

The apostle Paul understood his vocation to be centred in the proclamation of the gospel (1 Cor. 2.1-5) and that this good news message about Jesus' death and resurrection was a performative utterance.[2] Paul expected his words to have an effectiveness, that the proclamation of the gospel would issue in the transformation of minds (Rom. 12.2). But such transformation was not limited to minds (*nous*, as a way of thinking or manner of thought). Paul envisioned his proclamation of the crucified and resurrected Christ being inscribed onto the very bodies of his readers. Framed another way, Paul was scripting bodily performance. He was not just (re)shaping the thinking of those who had responded to the gospel, he was (re)socialising their behaviour, he was (re)inscribing their bodies (cf. 2 Cor. 3.2-3) always with reference to the Christ story.[3]

As an active agent in the process of (re)socialising or (re)scripting, Paul wanted his readers

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[2] Luke Timothy Johnson (2001: 27) develops this notion of performative utterance in his commentary on Romans. He writes, "The 'good news from God' is not simply verbal. It is what we would call a performative utterance, one that has the capacity to change and transform lives."

[3] The bracketing of the prefix (re) signals the fact that Paul did not have a blank canvas from which to operate. Bodies, minds, communities were already shaped, socialised, and inscribed. Indeed, the very point of this essay is to draw attention to the fluidity of identity(ies) and to underwrite the notion of construction. This notion is both active and passive. It is being done to a subject and being done by subjects.

to,

> see the world in dramatically new ways, in light of values shaped by the Christian
> story. … to change in fundamental ways and to shape a different kind of
> community, rethinking their inherited sociocultural norms and practices as well as
> their ingrained conceptions of value, honour, and leadership (Hays, 1997: 11-12).

But Paul was not the only active agent in this process of (re)socialisation, nor would he ever be the last. Subsequent interpreters of Paul have engaged in similar processes of (re)socialising the community of faith and have done so using similar modes and mechanisms of shaping individual and communal behaviour.

In this chapter, I step back from the abstract theologising that often accompanies discussions about what it means to be shaped by the gospel story, or more generally, the Bible, and attempt to uncover the hermeneutical positioning that underpins these discussions. The argument proceeds as follows. I begin with an exploration of physiognomy within the context of Greek and Roman thinking. The physiognomic texts available to us provide a point of entry into the conversation about how bodies of texts influenced and shaped physical bodies by regulating and legitimating the performance of (normative) bodies. In this, some attention is given to the concretisation of the textual prescription of these texts, mediated through the material culture (sculptures, friezes, coins, etc.). This provides a rich contextual backdrop for reading Paul's letters. Here the focus is not so much on providing a new reading of Paul (though something of this will feature). Rather, my intention is to draw into sharper focus the way in which both Paul configured bodies through his letters and how the Pauline corpus (the *body* of Paul's letters) continues to be used as a means of (re)configuring bodies.[4] Locating Paul firmly within this context, (re)configures Paul as a bodied individual susceptible to the shaping influence of the material culture and as an active agent in the (re)shaping of the communities to whom he addresses himself.

5.3 The Ancient Art of Reading Bodies

What does the body reveal about character? This is essentially the question that lies at the

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[4] As noted throughout this dissertation, I attempt to sound a double ring in my approach to Paul and gender construction and representation. The first ring is to take the context of the first century CE seriously; the second ring, to always have an eye on the hermeneutical implications for gender identity construction and representation in response to the biblical text. This chapter, in particular, makes the connection between a body of (Pauline) texts and the bodies of readers (including the original readers/hearers) and contemporary readers/hearers.

heart of physiognomy. The ancients believed that there was a correlation between bodily comportment and character; that the external gave access to, or at least insight into the internal. Perhaps more pointedly, that the external was largely determinative for the internal. The history of this art/science goes as far back as the Babylonians (Lincicum, 2013: 58; Popović, 2007: 4), but sees its fullest development during the Greek and Roman period with a number of influential texts emerging during this period.[5]

The textual data we have at our disposal provides insight into the kinds of connections the ancients made between the external appearance and internal character. While this body of texts is important for the purposes of this article, it is equally important to note that aside from the textual/theoretical foundation provided by these sources, there is evidence to support "the pervasive influence of physiognomic thought on literary portraiture and descriptions of personal appearance in antiquity" (Lincicum, 2013: 62) that goes beyond the texts, a kind of "physiognomic consciousness."

While the exact methodology of reading bodies differs from handbook to handbook, the basic approach is the same. Inductively, physiognomists move from identifying the physiognomical signs of the human body to making connections with a corresponding set of character traits (Leunissen, 2012). The point of departure for this process is that "the human body is a signifier, full of signs that, taken together, show the competent reader certain things (the signified) concerning individual types of people whose bodies are scrutinised and described" (Popović, 2007: 4-5).

Scrutinising body types, bodily comportment (how individuals carry themselves), facial expressions, the expression of emotions or passions represent the range of physiognomic

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[5] One of the most influential of these texts is *On Physiognomy*, usually attributed to Aristotle but now believed to have been written by two of his students. Authorial designation is now indicated as Ps.-Aristotle (pseudo-Aristotle). *On Physiognomy* sets the groundwork for a number of other influential texts that emerged during this period, including: a handbook by Polemon of Laodicea, a compilation of Ps.-Aristotle, Polemon's handbook and the work of a Hellenistic physician, Loxus, by Anonymous Latinus.

signifiers used by the physiognomists to adjudicate matters of gender,[6] ethnicity,[7] and affectivity.[8] Caroline Vander Stichele and Todd Penner (2009: loc. 703) drive the point home,

> the way a person looked signalled something quintessential about their inner virtue, and, vice versa, a person's character was made visible on his or her outward body. In this way, virtuous people were expected to bear physical features that marked such virtue; villainous individuals likewise bore evidence of their wicked character in their own flesh.

Reading bodies is no straightforward matter. Bodies, ancient or contemporary, must be read contextually. Bodies are (re)configured and (re)constructed at the nexus of sociocultural, economic and political forces. In other words, the 'rules' for how to interpret bodies are not a 'natural' given. Our reading of bodies, and of what kinds of bodies are normative, changes over time and is influenced by social, cultural, economic and political forces that we are often unaware of.[9]

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[6] Gender is conceptualised within the Graeco-Roman context as a spectrum of masculinity and femininity, always with masculinity as the point of reference (the so-called, one-sex model). The ideal man (*vir*), the active (penetrative) male becomes the model of humanity. The colonial project of the Roman Empire represented a dramatic redefinition of what it meant to be human. Conquered nations (*ta ethne*) were dehumanised, a process that saw conquered nations paraded as effeminised bodies. The correlation between the Romans as representing the true humanity, depicted in the male form, and the conquered, effeminate nations as subhuman, meant that the nations' bodies became the site of political contestation. Vander Stichele and Penner (2009: loc. 975) note in this regard, "The body becomes the primary site by which to establish personal and corporate identity, either by mastering, constraining, or restraining one's own body and a larger body politic, or, conversely, by controlling, denigrating, or mutilating the body of another, one's enemy or subordinate."

[7] Leunissen (2012: 8) notes how some physiognomists made connections between the "physical characteristics of human ethnic groups" and temperaments. The example she cites notes a correlation between the redness of hair found in the Scythians who tended to be rash and quick to anger such that red haired individuals, like the Scythians, are likely to be rash and quick to anger. This racialised form of physiognomics can be traced in the important work on the racialised identity of the Galatians (see Brigitte Kahl (2010) and Davina C. Lopez (2008)).

[8] Physiognomists noted a connection between the physical features of a person and the strong emotions or passions of that person (Leunissen, 2012).

[9] Of contemporary relevance is the recent Pretoria Girls' High School protest, which started on 27 August 2016, over the school's unreasonable code of conduct which details what is/is not allowed in respect of hairstyles. The issue of hairstyles, of course, provides a window into how bodies are

In Pseudo-Aristotle (*Analytica Priora*, 70b7-14) we read:

> It is possible to judge men's [sic] character from their physical appearance, if one grants that body and soul change together in all natural affections … and also that there is one sign of one affection, and that we can recognise the affection and sign proper to each class of creatures, we shall be able to judge character from physical appearance.

And in Seutonius' *De Vita Caesarum*, we are given a glimpse into the reading of Gaius's body. Seutonius, it is clear, intends to (re)present him in a negative, disparaging way (illustrating, once more, the connection between physiognomics and rhetoric):

> He was very tall and extremely pale, with unshaped body, but very thin neck and legs. His eyes and temples were hollow, his forehead broad and grim, his hairs thin and entirely gone on the top of his head, though his body was hairy. Because of this to look upon him from a higher place as he passed by, or for any other reason whatever to mention a goat, was treated as a capital offense. While his face was naturally forbidding and ugly, he purposely made it even more savage, practicing all kinds of terrible and fearsome expressions before a mirror. He was sound neither of body or mind.

And perhaps closer to home, the *Acts of Paul and Thecla*, a late second century apocryphal writing that seemed to enjoy some level of popularity (with 80 Greek MSS in existence) (Snyder and Ritzema, 2016: np) provides a description of Paul, with muted physiognomic tones, "a man small in size, bald-headed, bandy-legged, of noble mien, with eyebrows meeting, rather hook-nosed, full of grace."[10]

These examples alert us to the power dynamics involved in reading bodies. Framed as a

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regulated and how such regulation underwrites racist attitudes by normativising a particular hairstyle. As it turns out, this is an issue that is bigger and deeper than hairstyles. It intersects with the use of one's mother tongue in the schooling system as well.

[10] As another example, we would think it foolish to continue to hold to the idea that all red-haired individuals are bad tempered and likely to fly off the handle just because they happen to have red hair; a view popularized in one of the physiognomic handbooks, using the red-haired Scythians as the point of departure.

series of questions:

(1) *Who gets to read bodies?* There is always an 'us' and a 'them'; an 'us' doing the reading from a particular vantage point, and a 'them' being read. So, the question is meant to foreground the positionality, and attending power, of the one doing the reading versus the 'other' being read.

(2) *By whose standards are bodies being read?* The politics of body reading establishes not just the 'who' in relation to body-readers and bodies-read, but the measure by which those bodies are being read. The measure is used to normativise and regulate bodies and is usually codified (textualised) in some form or another, either as a literal canon of texts, or embodied in other aspects of the material culture (sculpture, art, coinage, architecture).

(3) *Who established these standards?* Implicit in the act of reading bodies against a particular measure is the idea that there is a definite subjectivity involved in the establishment of these standards.

Figure 5-1 Claudius conquers Brittania, depicted as a female body, exposed and vulnerable (nd: Online: https://www.nyu.edu/projects/aphrodisias/seb.sculp.photo2.jpg)

The reading of bodies presupposes a regulatory framework that establishes a normative body type; an ideal character; a preferred way of conducting and carrying one's self in public. The influence of the physiognomic texts, as I have already asserted, moved beyond the texts themselves. The material culture (of which the texts are a part) actively scripted how bodies behaved.[11]

Examples of the material culture's ostensible influence on how bodies were shaped include the Sebasteion (temple complex) at Aphrodisias (mentioned above in §5.2), the coins commemorating the capture by the Romans of various nations (e.g., Judea capta coins), the sculpture of the dying Gaul, etc. These images, aspects of the material culture, conveyed the Roman conceptualisation of the bodies, particularly the bodies of the conquered 'other.'

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[11] For an exploration of the relationship between legal texts and gender identity within the broader context of the New Testament, specifically with reference to the juristic script and its role in shaping bodies, see Stegmann (2014: 420-425).

The temple complex at Aphrodisias is particularly striking. Here bodies of conquered nations are (re)read, (re)configured as emasculated (feminised), weak, subjugated individuals at the hand of the Roman emperors who are spatially, visually, depicted as being over and against the feminised, conquered nations. Figure 5-1 reflects one of the friezes from the temple complex and depicts, very graphically, the (re)construction of the bodies of the conquered Brittania. The semiotics of the power relation is clear. Davina C. Lopez (2008: 37-38) provides insight,

> Such feminisation articulates a position of lowliness and humiliation in a Roman-defined, male-dominated hierarchy. The people are passive, penetrated object; they are rendered harmless by defeat and disarmament. The nations' collective femininity is not only humiliating, but contributes to the definition and reinforcement of Roman masculinity.

Whether we are looking at the physiognomic handbooks or the broader material culture, bodies were being read and scripted. Both text and image contributed to the construction of bodily identity. And both text and image became a powerful hermeneutical *canon*[12] of texts readily at hand to subtly and not so subtly inscribe and regulate bodies.

5.3.1   From Paulus ad Corpus to Corpus Paulinum

We do not typically think of Paul as having a physical body. That is, we are not conscious of his, or any other individual's, body when reading his letters. We are mindful of his 'superior' intellect, his unrelenting faith, and his passionate missionary zeal and for these excellent qualities, we have laid claim to a quite specific version/vision of Paul: Paul the theologian (Dunn, 1998; Ridderbos, 1997), the missionary to far-flung communities (Hays, 2004), the apocalyptist (Beker, 1980), or Paul the Palestinian Jew (Wright, 2013).

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[12] I use the term *canon* purposefully to (1) foreground the ordering (regulatory) function fulfilled by the physiognomic handbooks and the broader material culture; and, (2) signal the authoritative nature of certain texts, not least the Pauline corpus which has become for many the 'canon within the canon.' The Pauline corpus fulfils this canonical function as a set of *authorised* and *authorising* texts that regulate not just theological discourse (providing us with many of the key concepts such as justification by faith), but also the shaping of our bodies both collectively and individually. See the work of Jonathan Pennington (*Reading the Gospels Wisely: A Narrative and Theological Introduction*) for a well-argued case for reclaiming the theological value of the notion of a 'canon within the canon' (2012).

Our portrait of Paul has him firmly established as the wellspring of our theological discourse.[13] His contribution to the New Testament (nearly a third of it) represents an impressive *body of literature*, both authoritative and authorising. Indeed, the *corpus Paulinum* functions as a canon within the canon, defining some of our key theological concepts and framing our ongoing discourse. This kind of positioning and portraiture of Paul stems from an intrinsic quasi-gnostic[14] tendency that has disconnected Paul from the corporeal reality of being a first-century Palestinian Jew, living as the colonised *other*, moving, bodily, from Roman province to province with the good news of Jesus Christ.[15]

Instead of an animated, physical body, both present in the actual text and behind the text, shaping it, we are left only to confront a figment of literary imagination; worse still, a literary body of texts which has been disentangled from the messiness of life in the first century CE. Handling a body of texts is quite different from handling a body. Framed another way, we can continue to read the text of Paul's letters without taking notice of the (male) body behind its writing or the bodies reflected in the letters themselves, or even the broader historical context. Or, we can choose to read these letters by foregrounding the presence of bodies.[16]

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[13] Artistic representations of Paul, while clearly foregrounding the body of Paul, typically play on a cognitive, thinking, intellectual depiction of the apostle (see for example, Valentin de Boulogne's *Saint Paul*, ca. 1618-1620, or Rembrandt van Rijn's *Paul in Prison*, 1627).

[14] The reference to quasi-gnostic is meant *only* to draw attention to what appears to be an intrinsic tendency within much theological discourse to elevate the spiritual over the physical, and consequently to have a lower view of the latter. Jeremy Punt elaborates on this tendency by firmly locating it within the concrete setting of (South) Africa. He writes (2010a: 78), "The very awareness and effects of the focus on bodily or corporeal existence in (South) Africa is often in direct contrast to some trends in the area of religion and spirituality, and to the growth of Pentecostalism on the sub-continent in particular." Punt does not wish to target a particular religious formation (i.e., Pentecostalism). Instead, he wishes to draw attention to the tendency in this and other religious formations to be "other-worldly" focused at the expense of the very real corporeal and existential realities of the flesh and blood member of these groups.

[15] In much the same way that the quest of the historical Jesus attempted to reclaim Jesus the Palestinian Jew by stripping off all the theological accretions that had covered over the 'flesh and blood' person of Jesus, living and breathing within the concrete realities of first-century Palestine, the new perspective on Paul repositions Paul within history. Of course, the "new perspective" is deeply invested in (re)positioning Paul within a particular history engaged in the critical, theological, question of what is meant by "justification by faith," and as a consequence, falls into the same trap of overriding the bodily reality of Paul, preferring instead to pursue the theological agenda so dominant in Pauline studies.

[16] Marianne Bjelland Kartzow (2012: 29) makes an important point when she notes,

The failure to take note of the presence of bodies represents a significant hermeneutical blind spot. With the erasure of bodies from our reading of these texts, we have (un)intentionally played into a process that systematically establishes the text, in this case the *corpus Paulinum*, as somehow removed from concrete historical realties and have thereby also signalled the erasure of bodies in the interpretive enterprise. This does not mean, from a hermeneutical perspective, that no attention is given to the 'world behind' the biblical text. Indeed, the historical-critical method[17] is alive and well, and continues to exercise an almost hegemonic control over interpretive practices. But what is absent from our reading, from our interpreting, is a hermeneutical reflexivity that foregrounds the bodies involved in the interpretive exercise and in the text itself and this has meant that we have often not noticed the consequent power move that has the text, now a body of texts, (and its interpretation) wielding power over bodies.

This, I suggest, stems, at least in part, from a particular view of Scripture; the bible as inspired and authoritative Word of God, the Christian canon, to which I alluded in chapter two. The idea that the bible is inspired and therefore a quite different kind of text means that our engagement with it often results in interpretations that, while taking historical setting seriously, aim at universal application, the so-called *timeless* quality of the bible. Such interpretations minimise the importance of social location (either of the text as a means of accessing the concrete world informing and shaping its production, or of the interpreter/interpretive community), sacrificing specificity for the sake of generality. The darker side of this kind of approach can be seen in the use of the biblical text as a means of manipulating or influencing readers in negative ways.

Removing the human, bodily, element from the Pauline corpus means that we are left with a text onto which we have superimposed this notion of divine inspiration which only fuels the

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By paying attention to discourses of bodily processes in antiquity, we do not get access to the actual bodies—we are unable to touch them or see them. Rather, the theories used to reflect on bodies enable scholars to pay close attention to the physicality and materiality of human life and identity and to the various relations and conditions that shape these identities.

[17] The historical-critical method is not without its problems. Melanie Johnson-DeBaufre (2012: 13-32) has written an excellent essay on the shifts that are being signalled in relation to a problematised view of history, particularly with reference to the study of Paul's letters. See also, Punt (2015: 3) who notes that "to a large extent biblical scholarship in South(ern) Africa is still predominantly of the historical critical variety, and—it al all—accommodating of some of the so-called alternative approaches therein." Punt's point is that the biblical guild, generally, is resistant towards approaches like postcolonial biblical criticism.

view that the text carries more weight and is therefore authoritative. The authority of the Pauline corpus is seen as an intrinsic quality of the text itself and this, I would suggest, downplays the human element so significantly as to almost erase it completely. Consequently, we no longer read bodies in the actual text, but we do use the body of this text, of the Pauline corpus, to read (regulate, shape, inform, mould, normativise) bodies in the communities of faith where this canon within the canon continues to play a significant role.

Like the physiognomic handbooks of antiquity, the *corpus Paulinum*, and its interpretation, rubs up against physical bodies and in so doing shapes identity. The problem is not that the text is used this way. It is, rather, that we assume a derivative authority for our interpretations and thereby close ourselves to the possibility of other *plausible*, *legitimate*, and *valid* interpretations that may call our interpretations into question.[18] Because our interpretations tend to be so closed, their application to the formation of Christian identity also runs the risk of parochialism. This can play out in hegemonic hermeneutical practices that simply underwrite the power of the dominant, of the denominational majority.

Anthony C. Thiselton (2009: 339) reminds us that "hermeneutics nurtures respect for 'the other.' It endeavours to train habits of 'listening' to the other (including texts) on its own terms, before laying out some conceptual grid into which 'the other' must fit." Hermeneutics, he continues, "nurtures patience, tolerance, the capacity to listen, and respect for the 'otherness' of the other, rather than 'mastery' by reason alone."

Careful, patient, and attentive readings of Paul's letters reveals just how much these texts em(body). This is further enhanced when a gender-critical lens is applied;[19] the conversation concerning the hermeneutical relationship between physical bodies and bodies of texts, becomes more sharply focused.

Cynthia Briggs Kittredge (2012: 118) reminds us of why attentive readings of the kind described above are important, especially in relation to the question of how this particular *body of texts* continues to shape contemporary bodies:

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[18] On the notion of framing interpretations along the lines of *plausibility, legitimacy, and validity*, see the excellent introduction by Cristina Grenholm and Daniel Patte's *Gender, Tradition and Romans: Shared Ground, Uncertain Borders* (2005).

[19] The use of a gender-critical lens already signals a shift in reading Paul's letters that takes social location seriously and is a reminder that "Christianity is 'gendered'" (Grenholm *et al.*, 2005: 11).

The epistles are read publically in churches weekly, preached on, taught about, and heard and received as authoritative sacred texts in Christian contexts. Different denominations regard Paul's letters differently—some giving them more weight and others less, but still they are significant as scripture in these communities. Beyond their role in churches, Paul's letters have shaped ideas about gender in Western culture, and the letters continue to operate as an authority in political debates about women's roles, the legitimacy of same-sex relationships, and the shape of the family.

Our preoccupation with the textual Paul, the *corpus Paulinum*, and the inattentiveness to the presence of bodies suggests a kind of impatience with the text. Framed another way, in our attempt to get to the *principle*, the *theological proposition*, our hermeneutical engagement does more harm to the bodies who turn up week after week to have these texts read, preached, and taught, always with the expectation that in their reading, preaching and teaching, the texts will somehow make sense of their very real, very bodily, concrete lives. The expectation is not met, for our reading practices are too far removed from the presence of bodies.

Grenholm and Patte (2005: 16) state the matter this way,

We need to strive for better understandings of our analytical, hermeneutical and contextual choices … we have to take on responsibility for our interpretations. As we read with others, and especially with those who bear on their bodies and their souls the marks of unfulfilled righteousness, of unsatisfied justice-love, indeed of manifest oppression, injustice, and degradation—discerning the analytical and hermeneutical choices we make cannot be a detached intellectual exercise.

We can no longer allow physical bodies to be the casualties of our hermeneutical practices. How we use texts and their interpretation(s) impacts bodies. Choosing approaches that are deliberate in tracing the relationship between physical bodies and bodies of texts, therefore, stands to foreground the very real corporeal presence inscribed into the letters of Paul. In the following section, our focus is turned to bodily presence in Paul's letters.

5.3.2   Bodily Presence in the Letters of Paul

Approaching Paul's letters from a gender-critical perspective opens up the conversation that expands the scope of biblical studies to include not just the "study of 'other ancient texts,'" but also, and importantly, "the spheres of their impact," both in the past and in the present (Vorster,

2014: 2).

Gender criticism draws attention to the gendered nature of the biblical texts, a reminder that the texts are themselves gendered, serving the interests of the dominant in a stratified, hierarchical system that always plays out on physical bodies.[20] The text, then, provides critical insight into its ongoing impact, past and present, on bodies.

There are obvious markers in the biblical text that signal the presence of bodies. Each of these markers seek to underwrite the power of the dominant and include *inter alia*:

- Referencing body parts;
- Kinship relationships (genealogies as a particular mode of expressing these relationships);[21]
- Identification of actual persons (named or unnamed);
- The architecture of social structures is about bodies: where bodies fit, which bodies fit, how bodies should behave, regulation of bodily performance, social conventions, the legal system is coded in gendered ways, the purity system, for example, is about bodies (clean/unclean);
- The patronage system is about relationships of power that designate bodies as occupying particular status within the system; and,
- Since gender has more to do with performance of a particular kind than with an individual's anatomical sex, activities such as public engagements (e.g., challenge and riposte) become arenas for practicing and vigilantly protecting gendered identity.

Allying a gender-critical perspective with a discursive-rhetorical approach furthers our

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[20] The biblical texts are products of a socially stratified imperial context. As such they are reflective of a system that has men at the top of the structure. Of course, not all men are equal. As Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (2009: loc. 168-171) reminds us

"Roman kyriarchal imperialism is exemplified by a monarchical pyramid of intersecting structures of domination that incorporates elements of traditional practices (for example, the Senate). At its apex stood the emperor, who is called pater partum or the 'father of all fathers,' and who is divinized and acclaimed as 'God of Gods and Lord of Lords.' Roman imperial power was seen as *Pax Romana*, a beneficial system of peace for all conquered peoples."

[21] See, Punt's (2014b) article, *Writing Genealogies, Constructing Men: Masculinity and Lineage in the New Testament in Roman Times.* Punt explores the interplay between genealogy, masculinity and power within the imperial frame, providing a fruitful cultural-critical angle of vision on the New Testament as a whole, but with an attentive eye on the Pauline corpus.

argument by surfacing the constructed nature of bodily identity.[22] When Paul is writing to the Thessalonians or the Galatians, or the Roman church, he is in the first instance seeking to convince his audience, to persuade them of this or that, and by so doing shape their identity. Rhetorical criticism helps us to take note of the fact that Paul is putting his words into the service of constructing the identity of his audience whom he rhetorically (re)presents in his letters.

Paul's letters provide us, the readers, with a point of access. Through his letters we are enabled to *historically* (re)imagine the circumstances of the original, intended audience, in response to which Paul is writing. *But we (re)imagine through Paul's eyes*. Paul is (re)presenting the issues. He is (re)presenting the audience. And, we are dependent on his construal of the matter and of the audience and we (dis)trust that he is (re)presenting them accurately and faithfully.[23] In this we are forced to recognise the constructed nature of the discourse of Paul's letters and that his rhetorically persuasive responses to "their problems" are a very concrete manifestation of how he intends his words to shape this particular audience. In other words, Paul is actively constructing their identity through the construction of his argument in which he seeks to persuade the audience to behave, act, conduct themselves in a particular way.[24]

Paul's letters, therefore, should be understood as part of a complex rhetorical performance that has both his words and his bodily comportment clearly in view. Jennifer Larson (2004: 88, 89) reminds us that rhetorical performance "is explicitly evaluated in terms of male sexual

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[22] It is also important to note that rhetoric is closely related to physiognomics and this in turn plays out in the material culture. Sandnes frames it this way, "The science of physiognomics was … closely related to rhetoric. …. An obvious illustration of the kinship between physiognomics and rhetoric is the vast amount of statues from this period" (2002: 26).

[23] There is no reason to *doubt* or *question* Paul's ability to represent matters faithfully, but we must disavow ourselves of the view that what Paul is doing is providing us with a complete and unbiased perspective. Paul is (re)presenting the issues and the audience from his perspective and to privilege his view over against other, alternative, perspectives or views is to give too much power to Paul (and his interpreters). This is particularly important in the context of the epistolary genre which is by definition an act of communication between an author and a receiver. It is, by implication, dialogical.

[24] See Richard B. Hays, "A Hermeneutic of Trust" (2005b: 190-201). Hays argues for an approach to the text of Scripture that first trusts. When applied to Paul's letters, we trust, take at face value, that Paul intends to (re)present the matters faithfully. This must be our starting point, but it cannot result in us not seeing the very real power differential between Paul and his audience whose voices are in effect silenced, or drowned out by Paul's (re)presentation in these letters.

vigour," with Paul's letters serving "as a substitute for one's physical presence." This meant that Paul's ability to master his audience through his rhetorical persuasiveness went to the very heart of his bodily identity, his masculinity. Yes, Paul is convinced that the power of the gospel lies in its ability to transform lives, but he also understands that the world in which he is engaging is a world that is constantly reading his body, measuring his ability, his rhetorical prowess. That world maintained that

> the right to speak in public was dependent on one's recognised masculine status. A man who renounced his masculinity by participating in passive sexual acts, dressing as a woman, or the like could lose his political rights, including the right of public speech. Therefore, an opponent might try to impugn his rival's masculinity by accusing him of gender deviance (Larson, 2004: 90).

Thus, when Paul is writing to the congregations scattered throughout the Mediterranean, he is simultaneously engaged in an exercise that is assertive of his authority through a rhetorical (re)presentation of himself and constructing his audience, now a (re)presentation of Paul's argument and less an actual historical datum. After all, Paul is bodily present in his letters.[25] Paul is not just rhetorically constructing his audience, he is simultaneously constructing his own identity. The most obvious place where this plays out is in the autobiographical pieces he often includes in his letters, here appealing to the *ethos* aspect of rhetoric.

In a rhetorical flourish that extends from Gal. 1:11 all the way through to 2:14, Paul (re)presents himself in a quite specific way. Careful reading of this extended autobiographical section makes it clear that Paul is not simply rehearsing his conversion story. He is deliberate in his (re)presentation, piecing together significant aspects of his experience to further his argument. Richard B. Hays (2000: 213) frames it this way, "Paul is also offering himself as a model, an authoritative pattern for the Galatians as they seek to understand how to live faithfully before God."

As a model, Paul pushes his body to the front as he seeks to persuade his audience through his autobiographical narrative. His body, a canvas of the transformative work of the gospel, *his* gospel. Paul is defending the gospel, but his defence is a defence of his body which carries the marks of the gospel (6:17b). As a carryover from the opening line of letter (1:1), Paul

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[25] See Philemon 12 where Paul asks Philemon to receive Onesimus, where Onesimus becomes a representational figure, literally Paul's heart "ἔστιν τὰ ἐμὰ σπλάγχνα" (he is my own heart).

makes it clear that his commissioning as a preacher of the gospel is not by human commission, nor from human authority. Paul is authorised through Jesus Christ and God the Father and is sent by him. His gospel is not from a human source (1:11, 12); he does not confer with any human authority (1:16) and God is witness to the veracity of what he says (1:20).

Paul is a *credentialed* body who exerts his position over against the recalcitrant Galatians, some of whom seem to be calling his authority into question. The language of this piece is unmistakably forceful. There is an aggressiveness about his posture. Paul is asserting himself over and against the Galatians. Paul is passionate about the gospel and he is driven by its power in his own life to bring the Galatian bodies back into alignment.

Establishing his authority, his agency—the ability to act or perform an action[26]—becomes the foundation for the theological assertions made by Paul in the opening autobiographical piece. And in this, Paul brings together his story and the Christ story so that the two are understood to be interconnected and almost indistinguishable. Where does Paul's story end and Christ's story begin? It is difficult to answer this question since Christ's story is taken up in Paul's own story. It is an embodied story and for this reason no one should make trouble for Paul (6:17a).

The rhetorics of Paul's autobiographical piece should not be missed. Paul's telling of his *conversion*, and it is his telling, it is a rhetorical move. He means to employ it in the service of his argument.[27] Moving from the presence of Paul's body in the letter to the Galatians, Brigitte Kahl's work on Galatians (2000, 2010)[28] foregrounds the presence of other bodies. She (2000:

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[26] On the notion of *agency* as it is used in postcolonial studies, see *Post-Colonial Studies: Key Concepts* by Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin (2013).

[27] Cf. Phil. 3 where Paul presents his *transformed* body in another autobiographical piece which is also part of the rhetorics of the letter. Perhaps more pointedly, Paul's autobiography(ies) has similarities with what Krondorfer calls *confessiography*, a term he coins (2010). By confessiography, Krondorfer means "the sincere attempt of a male confessant to investigate himself in an introspective and restrospective mode, often triggered by some rupture in life and followed by a transformative experience" Krondorfer (2010: 10). This kind of writing is different from "autobiographies, memoirs, diaries, novels or poetry;" (Krondorfer, 2010: 10) they are public.

[28] Kahl's 2010 work, *Galatians Re-Imagined: Reading with the Eyes of the Vanquished*, while dealing with Galatians is focused on providing a "critical re-imagination" which she defines as (2010: 27):

39) argues that the word material of the letter suggests that Paul is in the process of re-conceptualising male and female as being an issue at the core of his messianic argument. In fact, it is Kahl's (2000: 40) contention that "in terms of word statistics Galatians could be perceived as the most 'phallocentric' document of the New Testament." To support this, she cites statistics as follows, here modified in the form of a table for ease of reference (2000: 40):

Term	Textual Reference	Total in NT
ἀκροβυστία	2:7; 5:6; 6:15	20 times
περιτομή	2:7, 8, 9, 12; 5:6, 11; 6:15	36 times
περιτέμνω	2:3; 5:2, 3; 6:12, 13 (x2)	17 times
σπέρμα	3:16 (x3); 3:19, 29	43 times
ἀποκόπτω	5:12	6 times

The presence of the male body in Galatians is remarkable, and yet so little attention has been given to it in our interpretations.[29] Thus, Kahl's reading of Galatians illustrates the importance of hermeneutical approach. The decisions we make in relation to the text will always hide or obscure certain aspects of the text and uncover or bring into sharper relief certain others. These are conscious decisions. They are deliberate and reflect the positionality of the interpreter. Kahl is intentional with her approach and the hermeneutical fruit it bears brings the presence bodies in Paul's letter to the Galatians to the fore.

Of course, the presence of bodies in the letters of Paul need not be restricted to actual, physical bodies (or their parts). Indeed, I have already proposed that bodies make themselves known in a variety of ways. Included here is a fairly important and obvious presencing,

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a method that supplements the traditional set of historical-critical and ideological-critical methodologies. It draws on images and other visual or written sources—including spaces, buildings, performances, and rituals—to deconstruct and reconstruct our perception of the ancient world in its interaction with the "world(s)" of the text. In stark methodological contract to the prevalent hermeneutical pattern of a dematerialized and disembodied theological reading, critical re-imagination seeks to restore Paul, his Galatian congregations, and their dissention about justification by law or faith to their specific material, sociopolitical, and historical context.

[29] The presence of male-words in Galatians leads Kahl to suggest that Paul is primarily addressing the Galatian brothers and that "the sisters should not be mixed into this dialogue too hastily" (2000: 41). This is a remarkable move on the part of Kahl especially because her reading ultimately results in a redefinition of masculinity so that the mothers (Gal. 4) become the point of reference for belonging and identity.

understood as a construction, of bodies through metaphorical discourse. Most interpreters of Paul note the frequency of the metaphorical use of body language in Paul (e.g., the connection Paul makes between the *ekklesia* and the body of Christ, or the use of body parts to explain the importance of the gifts of the Spirit).[30] With this metaphor, Paul is able to (re)configure the notion of community as a systemic, unified political entity. As such the metaphor functions as a powerful device for tackling a range of issues. This is borne out in his letter to the Corinthians.

The dominance of the metaphor in 1 Corinthians makes itself known from the opening lines where the community is addressed as a particular expression of God's people in a particular geographical location, "τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ τοῦ θεοῦ, ἡγιασμένοις ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, τῇ οὔσῃ ἐν Κορίνθῳ, κλητοῖς ἁγίοις, σὺν πᾶσιν τοῖς ἐπικαλουμένοις τὸ ὄνομα τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ ἐν παντὶ τόπῳ αὐτῶν καὶ ἡμῶν·" (To the *church of God that is in Corinth*, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, *together with* all those who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours) (1 Cor. 1.2). This body, a designation Paul uses to great effect in 11.29 where the socially stratified community is showing its true colours, is (should be) a manifestation of the body of Jesus Christ. Consequently, what is true of his (Jesus') body, Paul tries to argue, ought to be true of this ἐκκλησίᾳ τοῦ θεοῦ (the church of God).

Paul's letters are not only gendered, they play a role in gendering his audience. Subsequent interpreters of Paul's letters, likewise, are engaged actively in the process of inscribing bodies through this body of texts. In our conclusion, we draw our argument together by speaking to the hermeneutical role of this body of texts in shaping identity.

5.3.3   Paul Critically Re-Imagined

Davina C. Lopez, to whom we have already referred at a number of points in this dissertation, presents a critical re-reading of Paul, with postcolonial sensitivities, that results is a thickly textured reading, one in which we may reimagine Paul as vulnerable to the imperial system and who is, consequently, in solidarity with those on the underside of imperial power (2008: loc. 68). As Lopez herself has noted, the point of such a critical re-reading of Paul is not, in the end, to redeem or rehabilitate Paul, or to reinscribe old Pauline hierarchies, or even to maintain the scholarly hierarchies of Pauline scholarship. Instead, the point is to confront the rather messy history of antiquity and of contemporary scholarship and ecclesial engagement

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[30] See, Sandnes, Karl Olav. (2002). *Belly and the Body in the Pauline Epistles*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

head on.

An approach of this kind has far reaching implications for how we understand gender construction. It challenges naïve and pre-critical readings that are fixed, static and monolithic on matters concerning gender. Similarly, it also challenges the tendency within the academy to problematise the text to the point of no return, thereby effectively excluding it completely from the discourse. Lopez's reading, then, continues to emphasise the place of the biblical text, but in her presentation of Paul, works through the often-ambiguous layers, both within the text and within the history of its reception.

To position Paul with the *others*, in solidarity with the vanquished, "those who are the subjects, not objects, of biblical consciousness" (Lopez, 2008: loc. 115), is to change the discourse both within the academy and the church where positive and negative construals continue to perpetuate the colonial exercise of representation (à la Said). Lopez (2008: loc. 115-123) observes,

> by going to the defeated nations and meeting them where they are—in the dominated places all over Roman territory—Paul recognises their humanity in a context that has chronic dehumanisation as divine mandate. In our own context of chronic dehumanisation orchestrated by divinely ordained empire, and in our own acceptance of its terms in many subtle and often undetected ways, I ask us to be challenged again and again by Pauline imagination.

Lopez establishes her case for Paul's identification and solidarity with the other by looking to the powerful sculptural programme employed by the Roman Empire. These visual aids in the first-century are perhaps the only mode, given the low levels of literacy, of conveying, and in the process shaping the colony, the ideology of the empire. Of significance for Lopez is the manner in which the defeated nations are depicted in Roman sculpture.

Against this visual backdrop, Lopez (2008: loc. 184) contends, specifically in relation to the letter to the Galatians, that

> If we examine Paul's rhetoric in light of such images, we can see that his "good news" to the nations is that they no longer are captive and enslaved to a victorious general or raped and killed by divine emperors, but are (re-)born as children of Abraham and belong to the God who brought the Israelites (and others) out of Egypt.

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Imperial visual representation of conquered, defeated nations embodied in feminine bodies is ubiquitous and Lopez draws a rich catalogue of images and archaeological artefacts together to carry her argument. One such example is the *Judea Capta* coin, of which Lopez writes (2008: loc. 697):

> The coin captures the point well enough: Roman forces have defeated and *feminised* (i.e., placed in the subordinate female role) the people of Judea. Such feminisation articulates a position of lowliness and humiliation in a Roman-defined, male-dominated hierarchy. The people are a passive, penetrated object; they are rendered harmless by defeat and disarmament. The nations collective femininity is not only humiliating, but contributes to the definition and reinforcement of Roman masculinity. The soldier appears as a real man. Allusions to penetration and domination emphasise and reinforce his prowess. In this respect, the positioning of his dagger in his groin area appears to be no accident. This representation of territorial conquest thus renders as naturalised a potent pattern of gender relations.

Through Paul's identification with the conquered, defeated nations, feminised as they are through imperial visual representation, Lopez (2008: loc. 2284) is able to suggest that,

> Becoming like Paul means giving up the dynamics of domination symbolised by impenetrable imperial masculinity, unveiling a larger umbrella of patriarchal power relationships. Disidentification [sic] with such hierarchy includes (re)turning to identification with the other, feminised, nations destined to be conquered by the Romans.

Lopez (2008: loc. 2284) continues, "Paul's masculinity changes from dominant to non-dominant and undergoes further shift toward femininity in Galatians." It is this shift which signals for us the possibility of reading the biblical text with a hermeneutic that can move beyond the pre-critical, and idealist, lens that fixes gender identity, and towards a more flexible notion of gender identity, whether of male or female. In chapter six, attention is given to Paul's rhetorical self-representation in 1 Thessalonians as a means of exploring this notion further.

5.4 Summary

For many within contemporary faith communities, religious texts are seen as stable,

unchanging and reliable sources for life and faith. Within the Christian tradition, this text, the Bible, is understood to be authoritative. While few would deny the necessity to interpret this text, such interpretations presuppose stability as an inherent quality of the actual text itself. The text as fixed. And if the text is both stable and fixed, our interpretations of it are likely to be, or at least expected to be seen as stable and fixed.

Expectations like this often fail to recognise the complexity of biblical interpretation and culminate in the minimisation of multiple interpretational possibilities. This in turn impacts the role this text plays in shaping identity, especially the affective quality of the bible as a discourse that constructs that identity. The biblical text is a (re)production of social conventions and norms. Judith M. Lieu (2004: 180) brings this across clearly when she asserts

> If gender is constructed, and for antiquity constructed for us primarily through literary texts, then that means that maleness no less than femaleness is constructed. An understanding of this lies at the heart of the move from 'women's studies' to 'gender studies,' and from an analysis of 'women in the ancient world' to acknowledgment also of 'making men.' When our literary texts speak of Greek-ness, Roman-ness, barbarian-ness as articulated through bodies and bodily behaviours, they are 'writing' gender.

When we fail to recognise the discursive role exerted by these texts and continue to ignore that they are "products of a male elite," and that the "process of selecting, of presenting a specific point of view as the norm, and hence to problemise, the pervasive assumption of male normativity," (Lieu, 2004: 179) we end up closing down possibilities not just for the meaning of the text, but for its hermeneutical implications for gendered identity.

Like the physiognomic texts, Paul's letters have, in the history of their reception, as more or less stable, shaped identities. But in this there is a not so subtle hint of irony. The new identity which Paul constructs is "inherently unstable. That instability also emerges from a further question, namely regarding the gendered nature of this identity" (Lieu, 2004: 198).

To cite Lieu (2004: 209) one last time,

> When we attempt to trace the specifically Christian contours in the changing landscape of the body in late antiquity we are most faced with contradictory signals and uncertainly mapped paths. Certainly, the body as problem was deeply embedded in all forms of Christian identity, but no less was Christian identity

embedded in the perplexities and the dynamics of its age. Yet what it offered, through its texts at least, was a language and a story in which both problem and solution could find their place.

The world of Paul, the Roman world in which "the Romans represented themselves as the hyper-manly chosen race, destined to enact a specific fate for all the nations: conquest, capture, and domination," (Lopez, 2008: loc. 2640), represented in clearly gendered ways, where masculinity, of a quite specific kind, wins the day through effeminising the other, is a world not too different from our own.

Understanding Paul and his identification with the feminised, vulnerable other, represents an important hermeneutical opportunity to break the carapace of binary gender identities in a post-apartheid South Africa.

6 A GENDER CRITICAL, POSTCOLONIAL READING OF 1 THESSALONIANS

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I attempt a reading of 1 Thessalonians using the gender critical and postcolonial optic, developed in the earlier chapters of this dissertation, as part of a discursive-rhetorical analysis.[1] This reading needs to be contextualised against the three interpretational aspirations noted in chapter one (§ 1.5), namely:

(1) Contribute to the democratisation of the interpretive enterprise;

(2) Draw attention to how gender and power are constructed in the text (and how the text constructs gender and power); and,

(3) Query the singularity of constructions of biblical masculinity.

However, before launching into the substance of this chapter, it is perhaps beneficial to return to some of the critical coordinates of the preceding chapters.

Framing the entire dissertation is the contextualisation of this study within a post-apartheid South Africa. As we noted in chapter two, that context is complex in its history (a point to which we returned in chapter five when dealing with postcolonial biblical criticism). In turn, the historical complexity is implicated in the interpretational tradition of the church, which renders a flat, monochromatic reading of gender, and which has been problematised throughout the study.

Chapters three and four amplify the work of chapter one by deepening the characterisation of the bifocular optic of gender and postcolonial biblical criticism. The gender critical optic is an intentional lens through which the discursive-rhetorical reading of 1 Thessalonians is conducted. In chapter three, the construction and representation of masculinity within the South African context received targeted attention. Salient features emerging from this chapter include an awareness of the how masculinity is negotiated; that dominant (sometimes hegemonic) forms of masculinity side-line non-dominant forms; and, that there is a very real power differential at play in the mapping of gender, generally.

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[1] See § 1.4 for an initial explanation of the discursive-rhetorical approach to 1 Thessalonians (and below § 6.2).

Chapter four attends to postcolonial biblical criticism and highlights the complex interrelationship between conqueror and conquered. That relationship brings to light the important concepts of ambivalence, mimicry, and the absence of subaltern voices. Finally, in chapter five, textual and physical bodies are juxtaposed to demonstrate the hermeneutical implications of textual engagement for gender construction and representation by focuses specifically on gender in antiquity. Chapter five also focuses on the rhetoricity of representation and construction.

Turning to chapter six, the engagement becomes more focused as attention is turned to a careful study of 1 Thessalonians. In chapter six, I draw attention to the gender and postcolonial aspects of my reading of Paul's letter to the Thessalonians. Moreover, since gender criticism and postcolonial biblical criticism are invested in tracing the discursive qualities of texts and pay particular attention to the rhetoricity of these texts, my approach to 1 Thessalonians brings a discursive-rhetorical angle to the reading.

6.2   Engaging Paul: A Discursive-Rhetorical Engagement

Engaging with Paul's letter to the Thessalonians from a discursive-rhetorical perspective means paying careful attention to the way words and their configuration are used by the author(s) to influence and shape the hearers (audience)—hence rhetorical—and, to consider the ways in which the text of the letter discursively constructs the identity of the audience and thereby regulates their behaviour, or at least is used regulatively—hence discursive.[2]

Rhetorical approaches (i.e., approaches that attempt to locate or frame Paul's letters with reference to ancient rhetorical types) to 1 Thessalonians are hotly contested and present a

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[2] Discourse refers to "as system of statements within which the world can be known. It is the system by which dominant groups in society constitute the field of truth by imposing specific knowledges, disciplines and values upon dominated groups. As a social formation it works to constitute reality not only for the objects it appears to represent but also for the subjects who form the community on which it depends" (Ashcroft *et al.*, 2013: 37). Thus, in Paul's world, the discourse of the Roman Empire defined reality, shaping the world in a particular way. As we will see with Paul's letter to the Thessalonians, Paul and his co-authors offer a *counter-discourse* (a term first coined by, Terdiman, 1989), but it is no less a discourse. That is to say, Paul means it to construct a particular christomorphic reality.

challenge when applied to epistolary analysis.[3] In addition to the inconsistency in Paul's ostensible application of these methods, as Ascough (2017: 31) notes, one should ask whether, "The lack of consensus perhaps points to a deeper methodological question—namely, is it even appropriate to apply strict categories of ancient rhetoric to letters?" Gaventa (1998: 5) draws a similar conclusion and notes an implication for establishing the purpose of the letter, "… there is little agreement on the precise [rhetorical] form, and therefore the purpose, of 1 Thessalonians."

Attending to the discursive-rhetorical texture of Paul's letters exposes the intentionality behind Paul's words. Paul means to achieve something with his letters. In his absence, his letters function as a surrogate for the continual work of socialising the ἐκκλήσιαι that he and his co-workers established. Furthermore, an engagement of this kind also means to elucidate the politics at play in both text and interpretation. Textual engagement, then, always involves the textual world with its discursively proscribed politics and the interpretational world of the scholarly and ordinary reader communities, each with their own discursively proscribed politics. That is to say, texts and their interpretation are embedded within a political matrix (patrix?); it is about power; the power to shape meaning and the power to shape identity. In a more pastorally nuanced, but no less political, articulation, Richard B. Hays speaks of Paul engaging in the "conversion of the imagination" (2005a).

I identify three heuristically important questions to consider when engaging Paul's letters with a view to tracing out the discursive-rhetorical texture. These questions attempt to draw attention to words, to what worlds are being constructed with the words, and the web of meaning created by their interconnectedness. They include:

(1) How does Paul rhetorically present himself and/or his co-workers (if identified)?
This question takes as its starting point that, at best, all we have access to is a rhetorical self-presentation of Paul and his co-workers. The author controls the autobiographical narrative. That is not to question the historicity of Paul as an actual flesh-and-blood figure,[4] a question precluded from investigation in this dissertation. It is, rather, to focus attention on the discursively mediated construction of identity,

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[3] An important collection of essays tracing the debate and offering a snapshot of specialists who apply rhetorical and epistolographic methods can be found in Donfried and Beutler (2000), "The Thessalonian Debate: Methodological Discord or Methodological Synthesis?"

[4] Earlier in the dissertation, some attention was given to Paul as a flesh-and-blood male in order to foreground the fact there is a gendered, embodied Paul behind the text, creating the text within a gendered matrix/patrix.

whether of Paul or his co-workers. This affirms the fact that the sources with which we work are not disinterested accounts of historical data. Paul is intentional with the words he uses to present himself and he wants his readers to see him in a particular way. In this sense, Paul gets to control his autobiographical narrative, a narrative he puts in the service of his argument (this corresponds with the notion of *ethos* as a means of persuading an audience).

Framing the question from a gender critical and postcolonial perspective, Paul's rhetorical self-presentation draws attention to the ambivalence and hybridity of being constructed by Roman imperial discourse, Paul and the Judeans as conquered, and as we have discovered, paraded as feminised bodies (e.g., chapter five). However, Paul's letter to the Thessalonians also demonstrates a counter-discourse as Paul assumes a posture of resistance vis-à-vis Roman constructions of masculinity and as he positions Jesus Christ as Κυριός (used throughout 1 Thessalonians: 1.1, 3, 6, 8; 2.15, 19; 3.8, 11, 12, 13; 4.1, 2, 6, 15*2, 16, 17*2; 5.2, 9, 12, 23, 27, and 28). Countermanding the discourse of Roman imperialism, Paul and his co-authors, paradoxically, assume a feminine role (τροφὸς); an ironic twist to the dominant narrative of masculinity.[5]

(2) **How does Paul rhetorically (re)present his audience?** Correlate with the question above is the question of what such (re)presentations say about the power dynamics at play between Paul and his audience. As with the rhetorically constructed Paul, so too with the rhetorically constructed audience. We have no access to the audience except through the text of Paul's letters. Of course, we may take at face value that Paul, apostle of the crucified and resurrected Christ, means to *faithfully* (re)present his audience (and in many cases the 'enemy' against which Paul seeks to position his gospel and himself). But, as with all letter writing, the letter is only one half of a conversation and a strong hermeneutic of suspicion should be exercised as well. This question invites careful consideration of the silences that must surely be accounted for in any analysis of an epistolary text given its one-sidedness and echoes Spivak's notion of the silencing of the subaltern.[6]

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[5] Queer theory suggests itself as a useful way to unpack the form of resistance that is in evidence in Paul's assumption of a feminine role.

[6] In some cases, we have evidence (in the text itself) of correspondence, or letters the exchange of letters (e.g., 1 Cor. 7.1, "Now I will respond to the matters about which you wrote;" or earlier, 1.11, "For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people…").

The exact make-up of the Thessalonian community is debatable, but the text does hint at the possibility that this community was largely constituted by the 'working class' (a term I use loosely). See for example, 4.11 where Paul and his co-authors exhort the Thessalonians to "καὶ ἐργάζεσθαι ταῖς χερσὶν ὑμῶν" (and to work with your hands). This exhortation is generally taken to describe "a Thessalonian Gentile community of low economic and social status which is interested in Judaism" (Nasrallah, 2005: 498-499). If Nasrallah's reading is correct, Spivak's notion of the subaltern begins to provide an interesting angle on the letter. As Spivak notes, the representation of the silenced other is a form of "epistemic violence" (1990). The rhetorical representation of the Thessalonians by Paul and his co-authors is an important dimension in unpacking the relationships of power in the text itself. It also has currency as a description of the power differential between the church and the academy, or the church clergy and the laity, or dominant masculinity and marginalised masculinities. For this reason, I have argued for the necessity to draw on the CBS method of biblical study, especially in the South African context. Thus, attending to the rhetorical construction of Paul's audience in his letter to the Thessalonians by drawing attention to the postcolonial notion of how representations of the other serve only to prop up those in whose power it is to construct, by representation, the identities of those who are silenced.

To be fair, as we address this question of representation, we must keep in mind the value attached by postcolonial biblical criticism to both a hermeneutic of suspicion, which means to call the very act of speaking on behalf of the silenced other into question, and a hermeneutic of retrieval. Punt (2015: 5) states it this way, "postcolonial biblical criticism can best be described as a variety of hermeneutical approaches … whose textual politics ultimately concern both a hermeneutic of suspicion and a hermeneutic of retrieval or restoration."

(3) **How does Paul rhetorically present his agents of the gospel?** In a few instances, Paul presents specific individuals as agents acting on his and the gospel's behalf. Quite apart from the practical function fulfilled by these individuals, they perform a rhetorical role that helps to construct the relational dynamics of all parties involved (e.g., Timothy in 1 Thessalonians or Timothy and Epaphroditus in Philippians). Moreover, Paul himself is an emissary of the gospel of Christ crucified and resurrected, sent by God. Closely related to the notion of agency is the advancing of the gospel made possible by the network of roads which made travel just a little more possible.

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Musa Dube frames the discussion with four critical questions for analysing imperialising literature:

    i.   Does this text have a clear stance against the political imperialism of its time?

    ii.   Does this text encourage travel to distant and inhabited lands, and if so, how does it justify itself?

    iii.   How does this text construct difference: Is there dialogue and mutual interdependence, or condemnation and replacement of all that is foreign?

    iv.   Does this text employ gender representations to construct relationships of subordination and domination? (2012: 57)

Dube's first three points speak directly to representation as a mechanism for securing position and legitimating the activities of the coloniser. Reading Thessalonians along these lines raises the critical question of the plausibility of interpretations that cast Paul in the role of 'coloniser.'[7] Thus, while the question of plausibility must remain front and centre, activating hermeneutical imagination that entertains a range of possibilities at least invites critical reflection on how literary representation potentially underwrites imperial/colonial ideology.

As we move into our analysis of 1 Thessalonians, these three questions will aid our reading by drawing attention to the thickness of the rhetorical texture of this letter.

6.2.1   First Thessalonians: Interpretational Coordinates

6.2.1.1   General Orientation

Paul's letter to the assembly (ἐκκλησία) in Thessalonikē, an assembly of Gentiles "of low economic and social status" (Nasrallah, 2005: 498-499), represents a crystallisation of his earliest theologising in response to the *ad hoc* contingencies of the community (Beker, 1980). His epistolary correspondence serves the rhetorical function of shaping the identity of the community in the face of such exigencies as are noted in the letter (marked by the formulaic περὶ δέ, "now concerning" (4.9; 4.13 [δὲ … περί]; and 5.1), drawing attention to the contextual realities framing both the situation (re)presented in the letter, and Paul's response to them.

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[7] For an insightful analysis of the ambivalence of a figure like Paul when viewed through a postcolonial optic see, Punt (2015: 213-228) and cf. Marchal (2008) whose approach to Paul provides less margin for ambivalence.

As the earliest extant letter of Paul and, therefore, of the early Christ follower communities, 1 Thessalonians offers us a unique insight into community identity formation and negotiation in the shadow of the Roman Empire, particularly when contextualised against the backdrop of the historical setting of Thessalonikē (§ 6.2.1.2, below).[8]

The shadow cast by Roman imperial ideology was large and foreboding and complex. Paul's responses to the Thessalonian community, and indeed any of the other communities that he and his fellow-workers had established, play out in this shadow. Its presence is felt in the text, in the rhetoric, in the casting of author and addressees, and in the moral exhortation that seeks to ensure that what was reflected in the behaviour of the community resembled the model of Jesus Κυριός and not that of Caesar.

The letter is strongly pastoral—as with so many of Paul's letters—and is particularly praiseworthy of the Thessalonians who have done well to imitate Paul, Silvanus and Timothy, and the Lord (1.6). They have taken that imitation to another level by becoming an example (τύπον, 1.7) to all in Macedonia and in Achaia. The authors also note that the Thessalonians have become "imitators (μιμηταὶ) of the assemblies in Judaea in the Anointed One Jesus" (translation by Hart, 2017: loc. 9260). The letter celebrates the way in which the gospel has taken root in the lives of the Thessalonians; often expressing itself in their love (1.3; 2.8; 3.6; 4.9) experienced by Paul and company, and by the wider community. The Thessalonians are also encouraged/exhorted to increase their love (3.12; 5.8, 13).

There can be little doubt that the relational quality between Paul, his co-senders and the Thessalonians is healthy and that there do not appear to be any immediate concerns or conflicts between them or within the community itself, at least not of the kind and gravity one encounters in some of Paul's other letters (cf. 1 Cor 1.10 where Paul already draws attention to the fractious (σχίσματα) community conflict that is rearing its ugly head in the Corinthian ἐκκλησία). Framed another way, absent from the letter is a strong emphasis on calling the community to (re)align themselves with the teaching of Paul's gospel. Fatum (2002: 184) captures the essence of this letter when she notes that it "appears as a letter in which Paul has no need to defend either his gospel or its implications or the legitimacy of his apostolic

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[8] Malherbe (2000: 13) warns against drawing hasty conclusions that because this is the earliest extant letter of Paul that it would reflect earlier, less matured, thinking or that Paul was somehow still cutting his teeth in letter writing.

authority. In 1 Thess we are, literally, among friends; the letter is neither polemic nor apologetic…."

6.2.1.2 Date and Historical Setting of Thessalonikē

Written around 50-51 CE (Wanamaker, 1990: 30; Smith, 2000: 682; Malherbe, 2000: 73; Fee, 2009: 5), Paul's letter overlaps in time with the imperial reign of Claudius (41-54 CE) (Smith, 2000: 677). Thessalonikē had established itself as a loyal Roman city, enjoying the beneficence of the Romans. It was declared a "free city (having an independent government)," (Smith, 2000: 677; Malherbe, 2000: 14); a status, no doubt, maintained by a carefully manicured system of patronage and beneficence.

Furthermore, Thessalonikē appears to have played a fairly significant, if somewhat neutral (read, politically agile and vacillating),[9] role in the civil wars of the first-century BCE. Well positioned geographically (noteworthy is the close proximity to one of the main arterials connecting Rome and the East, the Via Egnatia; and N-S trade routes), the city also enjoyed benefaction from Roman officials and was accorded commercial and civic privileges (e.g., minting its own coins). It appears that Thessalonikē exercised considerable strategic aptitude for maintaining its status and exploited a range of options that would favourably dispose it in the eyes of the Empire. This includes a profusion of lavish honours bestowed on Roman rulers through the minting of coins (e.g., one such coin has the image of Julius Caesar with the inscription *theos* on one of its sides) to commemorate victories or note honours bestowed, erecting sculptures (e.g., a complete statue of Augustus which dates to somewhere between the reign of Gaius (37-41 CE) and Claudius (41-54 CE), overlapping with Paul's time in the city), and numerous inscriptions.[10]

There is strong archaeological evidence to support Thessalonikē as a site of the imperial cult and we may also note the influence of the *philoromenoi* (pro-Roman elites) within this particular community (Smith, 2004: 54). Later on, Thessalonikē would become the imperial headquarters under Galerius (beginning of the fourth century CE). But before this, Rome would move its mint to Thessalonikē (298/299 CE) (Nasrallah, 2005: 497-498).

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[9] Hendrix (1992) notes that the Thessalonians seemed to have found themselves constantly caught in the "crossfire of competing Roman powers." Punt (2012c: 199) speaks of the city's "checkered history in terms of local governor's actions."

[10] Nasrallah (2005: 497 ff.) provides a useful catalogue of archaeological and architectural aspects of Thessalonikē.

Both the historical setting and the material culture produced by it, bring the pervasiveness of Roman imperial ideology into sharper focus. "Place matters, space matters … experiences of space as lived and perceived depend upon the power exercised by or impressed upon the viewer" (Nasrallah, 2012: 57). In other words, the influence of imperial ideology on the masses is not restricted to the erudition of rhetorical texts; the very material culture with which ordinary people interacted on a daily basis actively scripted identity, including gendered identity. Furthermore, as I have noted above (§ 5.2, 5.3), the Roman Empire constructed social, political, religious, and economic reality within an explicitly masculine framework; a framework characterized by Schüssler Fiorenza as *kyriarchal imperialism*. Unpacking the idea, Schüssler Fiorenza (2009: loc. 168-171) notes that this framework was,

> … exemplified by a monarchical pyramid of intersecting structures of domination that incorporates elements of traditional practices (for example, the Senate). At its apex stood the emperor, who is called pater partum or the 'father of all fathers,' and who is divinized and acclaimed as 'God of Gods and Lord of Lords.' Roman imperial power was seen as *Pax Romana*, a beneficial system of peace for all conquered peoples.

The conquered, in turn, were cast, not, perhaps, as the children of the *pater partum*,[11] but rather as feminised bodies subjugated by the penetrative force of the Empire. With the impressive statue of Augustus and its imposing presence in Thessalonikē, the ideology was carried visually and served constantly as a reminder to the τὰ ἔθνη of their position/place in the Empire. The space was dominated by media of various kinds that carried the narrative of Roman supremacy, imperial peace and security (at the point of a blade), and was inescapable.

In his essay on the discursive practice of the household and the spectacle, Johannes N. Vorster (2010b: 392), citing Parker, notes,

> "Ultimately at the base of this cultural symbolism is the image of the idealised male body and the category of Woman. The male is active, the female is passive. The

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[11] We may note that conquered nations were typically cast as *Other* in relation to Romans. And while it is unlikely that conquered nations would have been considered as part of the Roman *pater familias*, it is possible to entertain the possibility that they may have been considered part of the broader *domus* (a term which grew in significance during the imperial period). *Domus* symbolised power and status and instead of conveying the notion of lineage, carried by the term *familia*, it spoke to the wealth and ownership of household (Vorster, 2010b: 390-391).

male is the penetrator, the female the penetrated… Thus, for the Romans, the gaze *is* male," for the *pater-familias* a constant reminder of his *potestas*, his control and dominion over the 'other' in his house, for the *civis Romanus* a constant reminder of the superiority of the family of the Roman nation, acquired by active, impenetrable manliness.

The historical setting of the letter to the Thessalonians, therefore, is about more than dates and arbitrary historical data. It is about recognising and tracing the concrete implications of that setting, however it is reconstructed, for shaping identity. Framed another way, how we frame the historical data at our disposal shapes our understanding of the discourses of gender and power.

6.2.1.3   Purpose and Occasion of 1 Thessalonians

Identifying the purpose of the letter is not without scholarly contestation and any conclusions on the matter are largely contingent on the type of rhetorical analysis employed (Gaventa, 1998: 5-6).

Fatum (2002: 186) locates the purpose within the social setting of Graeco-Roman antiquity, noting how important it was for a newly established community to secure its social identity by means of group adherence. The Graeco-Roman setting was a thoroughly dyadic context. Identity was a matter of group association and socialisation. Malina and Neyrey (1991: 95) provide the following helpful summary of Mediterranean culture of antiquity:

They are not individualistic, but dyadic. They think in stereotypes; they act in accord with the gender-based notions of honour and shame as this applies to males and females. As members of a strongly structured society, their symbolic universe is highly systematised and classifies things and persons in great detail.

This rich contextualisation goes some way to explain the radical departure implied by a conversion experience, and draws attention to the fact that this is a society "defined by publicness and collectivity … and organised on the basis of family relations, of trade, craft and neighbourhood associations and memberships of clubs and cultic assemblies" (Fatum, 2002: 185-186; Punt, 2012c: 210). Thus, breaking away from a grouping would inevitably result in some conflict and social ostracism, in evidence in the letter to the Thessalonians. This may also help to explain why Paul, Silvanus and Timothy reiterate in their encouragement, the behavioural, theological and apocalyptically defined boundaries that set this fledgling

community apart. And, as Fatum (2002: 186) notes, it also explains the great anxiety reflected in Paul, Silvanus and Timothy's desire to be present with the community.

Turning to the text, the following preliminary comments can be made on a letter that, as we have already asserted, strikes a strongly pastoral note:

(1) Paul, Silvanus and Timothy have desired to be reunited with the Thessalonian community (2.17: "περισσοτέρως ἐσπουδάσαμεν τὸ πρόσωπον ὑμῶν ἰδεῖν ἐν πολλῇ ἐπιθυμίᾳ")

(2) This desire is reiterated in 3. 6, 10. In v. 6, the text signals a mutual desire and in v. 10, it is amplified, "εἰς τὸ ἰδεῖν ὑμῶν τὸ πρόσωπον καὶ καταρτίσαι τὰ ὑστερήματα τῆς πίστεως ὑμῶν" ("to see you face to face and *complete what is lacking in your faith*" (Malherbe, 2000: 4, emphasis mine)). The authors reveal that their desire is not just to be reunited with the Thessalonians. Paul, Silvanus and Timothy earnestly seek to attend to the "incompleteness" of the Thessalonians' faith. Gaventa intimates that the deficiency in their faith is hope (1998: 45), noting its absence here when it is clearly present in 1.3. Gaventa also draws a connection with what follows in the text, to substantiate her proposed reading (4.13-18). Wanamaker's translation of "καταρτίσαι τὰ ὑστερήματα τῆς πίστεως ὑμῶν" captures the intensity of 3.10, "to complete the *deficiencies* of your faith" (1990: 138, emphasis mine). In 3.10, Paul identifies clearly the occasion for his letter: (i) to be face to face with the Thessalonians; and, (ii) to attend to their deficiency of faith. Based on the textual construction (neuter plural "τὰ ὑστερήματα" + genitive "τῆς πίστεως ὑμῶν"), Wanamaker is able to suggest that such a construction "indicates a concern not for a lack of faith on the part of his readers but for the need to deepen their understanding and encourage their Christian behaviour" (1990: 138).

(3) We note further, Paul is committed to strengthening (στηρίξαι (3.2))[12] the faith of the Thessalonians by sending Timothy. Such strengthening will, apparently, play out in the ongoing work of resocialising the Thessalonians' moral behaviour in chaps. 4-5 where the περὶ δέ formulation surfaces.

(4) And that he wishes to "εἰς τὸ γνῶναι τὴν πίστιν ὑμῶν, μή πως ἐπείρασεν ὑμᾶς ὁ πειράζων καὶ εἰς κενὸν γένηται ὁ κόπος ἡμῶν" (3.5) ("in order to know about your faith; that you had not somehow been tempted by the tempter and that our labour had been in vain").

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[12] Louw and Nida note that στηρίξαι carries the meaning "to cause someone to become stronger in the sense of more firm and unchanging in attitude or belief - 'to strengthen, to make more firm.'" (1988).

(5) In chapters 4-5, the authors provide responses to matters that have come to their attention, likely from the Thessalonians themselves, or from Timothy who had been to visit the community, returned and reported back to Paul (3.6). The first occurrence of περὶ δέ is noted in the pericope 4.9-12 and follows on from a discussion of sexual morality (to which I return later). The pericope focuses on brotherly love (φιλαδελφίας)—clearly anchored in the prayer for the Thessalonians in 3.11—and the moral obligation to conduct oneself with decorum (εὐσχημόνως)[13] vis-à-vis those outside (ἔξω) the community. The authors also call on the Thessalonians to be independent. As Malherbe (2000: 242) notes, the question with which the Thessalonians appear to be wrestling has to do with how to relate to the wider society, especially given the call to love one another all the more (brotherly love). In the second occurrence (4.13), the authors' attention is directed at the question of hope in the face of those who had already passed away. While Paul and his co-authors are responding to a pastoral issue, the response has a definite didactic angle that firms up the substance of their hope as they await the παρουσίᾳ. The third περὶ δέ (5.1) continues with the eschatological question and it is here that the notion of apocalyptic as a form of resistance literature emerges all the more clearly.

The purpose of the letter, then, consists of two interrelated, interconnected layers. On the one hand, the strongly personal and pastoral desire to be reunited to the fledgling community as they negotiate their existence within the context the Roman Empire and the social setting with its ostensive threat to the new community's identity. The second layer is concerned with the more specific matters which are signalled by the περὶ δέ formulation (4.9, 13; 5.1). This second layer is more clearly rooted in the apocalyptic-eschatological framework, signalled as early as 1.10. Furthermore, given that the περὶ δέ formulation occurs within chapters 4-5, we may also draw an inference regarding the moral exhortation that emerges here; namely, that what Paul, Silvanus and Timothy are calling for is contextualised by the expectation of the imminent return of Jesus Christ, and then for judgment and final vindication, and upper most in the minds of the Thessalonians, the reunification with those who have already fallen asleep (see § 6.2.1.4).

But as Fatum (2002: 184) insists,

> … the epistolary form and the paraenetic content constitute the specific character
> of 1 Thess. Both the letter and the community of recipients, who are to be

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[13] Εὐσχημόνως elsewhere occurs in the authentic Pauline epistles only in Romans, 1 Corinthians and here, Thessalonians.

strengthened by it in their mutual respect and concord, are defined by androcentric values and social conventions and organised in terms of the patriarchal structures so characteristic of urban society in Graeco-Roman Antiquity.

Fatum's reading brings sharper, gender-specific focus, to a possible purpose for the letter and firmly locates it within the concrete patriarchal structures of antiquity. In her reading, to which we return below, the exclusion of women ("they are not among the brothers of Christ" (2002: 194)), means men are front and centre. This leads her to conclude "Christian interpretation is androcentric interpretation and depends on patriarchal construction. If we want to confront the socio-sexual discrimination of our own time and context, we must be able to confront also, with critical consistency, the socio-sexual discrimination at the roots of our Christian tradition" (2002: 194).

Fatum's feminist interpretation is an important reminder of how the text circumscribes interpretational possibilities because it is framed within a (hegemonic) textual, patriarchal setting, and in a scholarly and ecclesial setting that privileges (white) male systems. The important critical lens that Fatum provides must be maintained and not relativized by attempts to explain away the politics of text and interpretation. That does not, however, preclude an additional lens that allows for the liberative trajectory of feminist interpretation to be sustained, but expanded to include other marginalised groups. The argument of this dissertation has been, from the start, that hegemonic forms of masculinity or the normativity of a particular masculinity are as violent for women as they are for men who do not "measure up" and are therefore excluded.

Lopez's work on Paul's letter to the Galatians, as we have noted, does not attempt to rehabilitate Paul, but instead offers an alternative framework by positioning Paul alongside the conquered nations of the Empire. It is possible, therefore, to read Paul as an ambiguous figure and his letters as equally ambiguous and that such reading is not against Fatum's argument, but perspectivally, another layer to the question of text and interpretation.

6.2.1.4 *Framing Thessalonians Apocalyptically*

Many commentators have noted the presence of an apocalyptic tenor in 1 Thessalonians (Wanamaker, 1990; Smith, 2000; Fatum, 2002; Nasrallah, 2005; Smith, 2009; Punt, 2012c; Burke, 2012; Ascough, 2017). This is an important feature of the letter since it supports the thesis that 1 Thessalonians, in particular, and Paul's letters, in general, can be understood to express a form of resistance against imperial ideology. However, to assert the presence of an apocalyptic tenor in the letter needs some explanation and unpacking. To this end, Nasrallah

(2005: 499, emphasis mine) notes, contextually, "Against the city's backdrop of imperial cult sites and local honours for Roman benefactors, Paul adopts the rhetoric and imagery of empire—*in an adversarial way*—in order to make his points." By noting the importance of the imperial cult, it is equally important to note that in antiquity religion and politics were not to be understood as polar opposites, but rather as mutually dependent and intersecting aspects of the very fabric of society. Brigitte Kahl (2010: 145) crystallises it this way:

> "The imperial cult, along with politics and diplomacy, constructed the reality of the Roman Empire." As a public "cognitive system," imperial rituals permeated the whole of society, functioning both through the still images of art and architecture, and their living counterparts at civic celebrations, sacrifices, meals, processions, prayers, and other ceremonies.

Textually, evidence to support the presence of apocalyptic undertones can be seen in: 1.10 ("wait for his son from heaven;" "delivers us from the wrath to come"); 2.19 ("coming" (παρουσία)[14]); and, in the larger pericope, 4.13-5.10 ("gather through Jesus those who have fallen asleep;" "descend (καταβήσεται) from heaven;" "snatched (ἁρπαγησόμεθα) up together with them;" "Day of the Lord;" "Peace and security (εἰρήνη καὶ ἀσφάλεια)"; the dualism of night and day ("sons of light" (υἱοὶ φωτός); "sons of the day" (υἱοὶ ἡμέρας), 5.5). In addition to language often associated with apocalyptic literature, the imagery, especially military, is pronounced in 4.13-5.10.

However, there is more to apocalyptic than the presence of catchphrases and keywords. Paul's gospel is framed eschatologically, and his view of the world in light of Christ's death and resurrection is thoroughly apocalyptic. That is, Paul anticipates a divine reckoning at which would-be powers would be exposed and dealt with, and the faithful vindicated and shalom restored.

In this, we may suggest that Paul's gospel constitutes a counter-discourse. Thus, when 1 Thessalonians is interpreted from a postcolonial perspective, what Paul and his co-authors claim, amounts to not just as act of apocalyptic resistance, but a challenge to destabilise the imperial discourse. The imperial discourse promised peace at the point of a sword (the Pax Romana which was meant to establish the *pax et securitas* or "εἰρήνη καὶ ἀσφάλεια"), but

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[14] Παρουσία occurs four times in 1 Thessalonians: 2.19, 3.13, 4.15, and 5.23.

could never deliver.[15] And, so the counter-discourse of the εὐαγγέλιον claims the very real possibility of peace and security.

Richard Horsley (2000: 303) provides a useful apocalyptic topos framing a narrative, or as it turns out, a counter-discourse, that he suggests informs Paul's arguments. The narrative scheme runs as follows:

> God's imminent judgment on oppressive rulers (foreign/domestic) → restoration of the 'kingdom' to the (faithful) people themselves → vindication of the faithful who had died before the judgement → establishment of peace/shalom.

The narrative is simple enough and avoids entanglement in the more complex aspects of apocalyptic as a particular genre (though there is a degree of overlap with aspects of the linguistic structure and lexical elements of the literary genre finding their way into the Pauline apocalyptic narrative). This narrative informs and shapes his responses to the ἐκκλσίαι scattered throughout the Roman Empire. Of course, the narrative backdrop to this is firmly located within first-century Palestinian Judaism[16] from which Paul emerges.[17]

Key aspects of an apocalyptic worldview include an interpretation of the "present earthly circumstances in light of the supernatural world and of the future, and to influence both the understanding and the behaviour of the audience by means of divine authority" (Collins, 1986: 7). An apocalyptic worldview is, therefore, perspectival, offering an interpretive lens for the Christ-follower ἐκκλησίαι, an angle on life and the world, especially in the face of oppression (very much in evidence in Paul's letter to the Thessalonians),[18] that assures God's involvement in history, and the vindication of the faithful whose lives bear witness to their allegiance to another κυρίος. Richard B. Hays (2004: 27) gives weight to this conceptualisation when he writes,

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[15] It is possible to detect an intertextual allusion to Jeremiah 6.14, "saying 'Peace, peace,' when there is no peace." Schotroff (1992: 157) suggests the phrase could well be a parody of imperial discourse.

[16] For which, see N. T. Wright's *New Testament and the People of God* (1992: 280 ff.).

[17] The notion of emergence must not be understood as reflecting a clean break from Judaism. Certainly, there are elements of continuity and discontinuity.

[18] Key terms include: προπάσχω (2.2); θλῖψις (1.6; 3.3; 3.7) and θλίβω (3.4).

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> Paul's eschatology locates the Christian community within a cosmic apocalyptic frame of reference. The church community is God's eschatological beachhead, the place where the power of God has invaded the world. All Paul's ethical judgements are worked out in this context. The dialectical character of Paul's eschatological vision (already/not yet) provides a critical framework for moral discernment.

Hays's depiction means to draw attention to the militaristic, war-like scenario typical of apocalyptic worldviews (e.g., the use of beachhead, invade) and of the clash of powers. Wanamaker (1990: 10) advances this with his useful synopsis of Paul's apocalyptic worldview, maintaining that it

> consisted in his belief that he lived at the end of the present age of rebellion from God, that God had acted decisively to bring about eschatological or end-time salvation in Jesus Christ, and that soon the Lord Jesus Christ himself would come from heaven to render judgment to the wicked and to consummate salvation for the elect of God.

One final element of an apocalyptic framing is the clear *inside* and *outside* grouping;[19] in postcolonial parlance, a clear 'othering,' an act of constructing the enemy and identity oppositionally. In the face of oppression, community solidarity is maintained by the clear demarcation of those who are inside and those who are outside. This is an important characteristic of apocalyptic and finds expression in Paul's letter to the Thessalonians where through their moral adherence to sexual purity they are able to maintain clear boundaries.

In summation, important interpretational coordinates include careful attention to the historical (imperial) context; geographical and, as it turns out, ideological location of Thessalonikē; the textual markers that aid a reading of the rhetorical landscape of the letter; and, the apocalyptic topos informing and shaping aspects of the Thessalonian correspondence.

6.2.2   Rhetorical Constructions and Metaphors

In this section, I turn to a discursive-rhetorical engagement[20] with 1 Thessalonians in order to

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[19] See, Knust (2004) for a clear demarcation of inside/outside constructions in 1 Thessalonians; also, McNeel (2014: 92 ff.)

[20] I use the term *engagement* because approaching the biblical text from the perspective of masculinity studies and postcolonial criticism with a focus on rhetoric is less about a method, and more

lay the foundation for a bifocular (combining gender critical and postcolonial biblical criticism) reading of the rhetorical texture of the letter.[21] The three critical questions delineated above in § 6.2 will serve only as a rough guide for my textual engagement.[22]

Engagement with the biblical text, different and distant as it is vis-à-vis our own time and place, demands a hermeneutical awareness and sensitivity. Such awareness and sensitivity is framed by Néstor Míguez (2012: 2) in the following way,

> The hermeneutical task is this: to discover the meaning of a shared history, a history inscribed in texts but that exceeds the texts themselves, because it has been transmitted by and takes place in a community that is heir to the first community that created that history with its own life. Biblical hermeneutics certainly rests on the polysemy of texts, but in our case it rests also on the acknowledgment of the same guiding axis of faith that, throughout history, has taken risks in interpreting those texts.

Míguez's grasp of the hermeneutical polysemy inherent in the biblical texts leads him to speak of the "'fetalisation' of the Christian message, which allows us to read it and develop it anew in each context. It presents an open possibility for diverse developments to arise" (2012: 3).

Similarly, Johnson-DeBaufre and Nasrallah (2011: loc. 2814-2817) remind us, rather pointedly,

> Engaging the Pauline letters as rhetorical instruments that construct both Paul and his audience in various ways might leave us less certain about what Paul the individual thought or accomplished. But it will give us more clarity about how a particular construction of Paul serves to authorise, valorise, or erase particular agendas and voices. More importantly, if we place the assemblies at the centre

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about an active process of conscientising that comes as a result of the approach. Thus, what follows is not a traditional exegetical analysis of the text. It reflects, in similar fashion, the interstices of multiple approaches, each with their own methodological parentage, evident in Punt's "Intersections in Queer Theory and Postcolonial Theory, and Hermeneutical Spin-Offs" (2008a)

[21] As noted above, the term rhetorical is used to designate a non-technical appreciation for how the words of the text work to construct meaning, the interest being the discursive aspects of the rhetoric

[22] That is, I will not slavishly be using the three questions to unpack the rhetorical texture of 1 Thessalonians.

and hear Paul's letters as one voice among many, we can imaginatively reconstruct and reclaim a richer history of interpretation of Paul, a history populated with subjects struggling in different ways within the varied contexts of empire.

With Johnson-DeBaufre and Nasrallah's words as an important point of departure, I turn to a discursive-rhetorical engagement with 1 Thessalonians.

6.2.2.1   The Rhetorical Construction of Paul and his Co-Workers

The letter identifies a collective effort[23] in its writing and is suffused with the use of first person plural verbs. The pronoun "we" (ἡμεῖς) occurs 43 times in the letter. Paul only uses the singular pronoun ἐγῶ once (2.18). In some ways, the rhetorical Paul is lost from view in this letter— perhaps by design, but certainly as a challenge to a preponderance of interpretations that continue to fix their gaze upon Paul alone(?).[24] Paul is part of a collective, joined in his writing with Silvanus and Timothy, joined to them in their shared ministry as his co-workers in the gospel.

Writing with co-senders was a common practice for Paul. With the exception only of Romans, Paul writes with a co-sender (see 1 and 2 Corinthians, Philippians, Philemon and Colossians). 1 Thessalonians, however, represents something of an anomaly in that Paul, rather consistently, continues throughout the letter to keep the collective in focus. In his other letters, Paul transitions from the collective to the first person singular pronoun and to singular verbs (Malherbe, 2000). Paul does not do that here in 1 Thessalonians.

Ascough makes a perceptive case for referring to a plurality when speaking of the authorship of 1 Thessalonians. He bases his argument on more recent socio-rhetorical analysis that fundamentally challenges the notion of authorship as it is typically understood. Ascough (2017: 20) proposes that "the writing of a letter such as 1 Thessalonians more likely was given over to a person professionally trained in the art of written communication." Ascough's proposal has us imagining Paul and his colleagues in a room together, "brainstorming ideas and arguing

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[23] Ascough (2017) speaks of the "Paul party."

[24] Though cumbersome, I have chosen to continue to refer to "Paul, Silvanus and Timothy," or to the "Paul and his co-author/workers" and by use of the third person plural pronoun. While this may make the reading tiresome, excluding Silvanus and Timothy from the picture does violence to the text and only perpetuates the academic and ecclesial construction of Paul as a singular force on a mission. The pattern must be disrupted.

about policies and procedures, while a scribe took notes, mentally and on a wax tablet, that he … would later craft into a rhetorically effective written presentation" (2017: 20). Thus, to follow through with his proposal, Ascough speaks of the "letter writers" (plural) rather than of Paul the letter writer. The words, therefore, of 1 Thessalonians are not his own words (with the exception of three passages where it is clear that Paul is pushing forward a particular idea or instruction in his "own" voice, so to speak (2.18; 3.5; and 5.27)). These words are the words of a community of authors addressed to a community in Thessalonikē.[25]

The implication of keeping Paul, Silvanus and Timothy, collectively, in focus when reading the letter challenges interpretational agendas that target Paul in a somewhat atomistic fashion; Paul removed from the concrete setting of the first-century. Ancient Mediterranean culture, as we have already asserted, was dyadic and this meant that "people were more oriented towards the group than is the ideal in modern, individualistic societies" (Moxnes, 1997: 20). This must surely impact how one interprets Paul (and constructs Pauline theology) and how one conceives of the inter- and intrapersonal aspects of rhetorical construction.[26]

This brings us to the question: How is the rhetorical "we" constructed in this letter as an inter- and intra-personal phenomenon?

The text positions Paul, Silvanus and Timothy as exemplars for the Thessalonian ἐκκλησία; the Thessalonians are cast as imitators (μιμηταὶ) (1.6) of him/them in response to the original preaching of the gospel and they are now celebrated as an example (τύπον) for others. The dynamics figured in this relationship set Paul and his companions in a rhetorically powerful position over the Thessalonians, supported as we will note, by the kinship metaphors used in the letter. The response of the Thessalonians to Paul, Silvanus and Timothy is expected to be mimetic, and suggests that 1.2-3.13 should be understood as an attempt by Paul and his co-authors to "re-establish the initial inter-dependence between the apostle and his converts, between father[27] and sons. And through the recollections of their common past he confirms himself as their personal authority and model" (Fatum, 2002: 187-188).

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[25] This represents a radical departure from how Paul's letters are typically handled by scholars and challenges the centrality and primacy afforded Paul in theological discourse by making clear that Paul and Pauline theology is communally oriented and birthed.

[26] It must be conceded that this "we" has greater rhetorical force since it is no longer Paul, the apostle, on his own. He is joined by Silvanus and Timothy.

[27] This father is not one individual. The singularity of the term hides the plurality of Paul, Silvanus and Timothy who are represented by the term.

Approaching the text from a gender hermeneutical perspective, Fatum is sensitive to the androcentric (cf. Cornelius, 2000) and patriarchal underpinnings of the text and is motivated to read towards the "idea of human equality" (2002: 194), but she finds this difficult. The odds are stacked against Paul precisely because Paul and his companions are implicated in a deeply patriarchal and androcentric system through which their privilege[28] is maintained. While Fatum offers a close reading of the text, it appears that she overlooks an aspect of the text that, I suggest, changes the tenor of the relationships the letter seeks to construct, maintain and validate.

While many commentators (see, for example, Malherbe, 2000; Ascough, 2017) take note of the prevalence of ἡμεῖς in the letter, interpretations continue to focus in on the singularity of Paul and his dealings with the Thessalonians.[29] Consequently, Silvanus and Timothy are read out of the text; they are, in effect, silenced despite being identified by Paul as important agents in the work of the gospel. Unlike many of his other letters, Paul remains consistent in weaving the "we" of himself, Silvanus and Timothy, throughout the argument of the letter. Paul does not position himself, singularly, in relation to the Thessalonians. He does not push his individual credentials to the front, asserting his claim on the Thessalonians as he does in Galatians or, even less problematically, in 1 Corinthians.[30] In fact, when Paul does present himself as "approved" (δοκιμάζω) by God (2.4), Silvanus and Timothy are there in the text with him ("*we* have been approved by God").

The rhetorical construction of the relationships between Paul and his co-workers and the Thessalonian community is strongly informed by the dominating language of kinship in the letter. At the meta-level the concentration of filial terminology speaks to the construction of

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[28] Privilege, of course, is relative. Paul, Silvanus and Timothy do not share in or have access to the same measure of privilege that freeborn males in the Empire enjoyed. Nonetheless, since masculinity is definitional for what constitutes humanity in the Empire, Paul, Silvanus and Timothy must be seen to be, at least in part, beneficiaries of the system.

[29] While Wanamaker notes the presence of the first-person plural used throughout 1 Thessalonians, he does not see this as exceptional vis-à-vis the rhetorical collective "we." He argues, instead, that on the basis of three passages in the letter (2.18; 3.5; and 5.27), "the letter should be read primarily as an embodiment of Paul's thought" (1990: 67).

[30] Wanamaker (1990: 68) explains, "Nothing in 1 Thessalonians indicates that Paul's authority or status was in doubt among his readers, and Paul's personal situation was certainly not as precarious at the time of writing as it was when Philippians and Philemon were written."

interpersonal relationships that reflects layers of power differential, especially when explored against the backdrop of Roman ideology, specifically, and the Graeco-Roman worldview generally.

Pushing forward with the collective identity intact,[31] this community has in Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy, infants (νήπιοι) (2.7), a nurse (τροφός)[32] (2.7), and a father (πατήρ) (2.11)—an odd combination to be sure.[33] The letter also implies a brotherly relationship between the Χριστοῦ ἀπόστολοι and the Thessalonian community.[34] The collocation of νήπιοι, τροφός and πατήρ presents an interesting challenge to our reading of Paul's letter to the Thessalonians—perhaps evoking some gender confusion or inviting a measure of gender transgression. With the use of these filial terms, Paul is, of course, employing, substantively, a metaphorical construction for unpacking his and his co-workers' relationship with the Thessalonians.[35]

In order to draw out some of the implications (entailments) of the kinship metaphors used throughout the letter, it is helpful to anchor each term lexically, semantically and rhetorically.

Νήπιοι (infants) / ἤπιοι (gentle). This represents a hotly contested issue of textual criticism with cogent arguments on both sides for either option.[36] The majority of English translations opt for ἤπιοι (translated as 'gentle' in the NIV, NRSV, ESV, KJV, NKJV, NAS). The NLT and the TNIV translations take νήπιοι (translated as infants, or children, young children), and is

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[31] Malherbe (2000: 86) notes that it is "natural to assume that they [Silvanus and Timothy] are included in the plurals throughout the letter…."

[32] τροφός likely refers to a nurse in general, a female individual who would take on the nurturing of a child after weaning from the wet nurse, τίτθη.

[33] Important to note that Paul and his co-senders depict God as "father" (1.1), making the striking claim that this community has its origin "ἐν θεῷ πατρὶ καὶ κυρίῳ Ἰησοῦ Χριστῷ."

[34] Ἀδελφός and its various cognates occurs 19 times in 1 Thessalonians (1.4; 2.1, 9, 14, 17; 3.2, 7; 4.1, 6, 10*2, 13; 5.1, 4, 12, 14, 25, 26, 27). While the notion of brother can obscure hierarchical relationships, it is important to note that there is a very definite power differential between brothers (for a detailed unpacking, see, Burke, 2003: 79-127).

[35] Grammatically, as Gaventa (2007: 17) notes, Paul is actually employing a simile (ὡς ἐὰν, as if).

[36] The merits/demerits of arguments for and against notwithstanding, I am persuaded in the end by the stronger evidence in support of νήπιοι, siding with the minority of scholarship and the stronger textual case.

supported by NA28.[37] Considering that the textual evidence supports νήπιοι, it is interesting to note that apart from McNeel (2014), Fee (2009), Gaventa (1998, 2007), Fowl (1990), van Rensburg (1986), and Crawford (1973), to name a few, the majority of scholars go with ἤπιοι because it presents less problems for interpretation.

Fee (2009: loc. 1425-1427), rather pointedly, addresses the pull towards ἤπιοι, when he writes,

> Paul now concludes his sentence with imagery that is so unexpected that it has had no end of being tampered with, first by some fifth-century scribes and then by modern scholars, so that Paul's own sentence and wording have been reworked to make it more accommodating to later, including modern, tastes.

Fee argues for νήπιοι and demonstrates the contrastive nature of the pericope, thereby maintaining the jarring quality of the collocation of the two metaphors (τροφός and νήπιοι): Paul, Silvanus and Timothy are (i) not like other philosophers ("abusive, greedy, seeking for glory" (Gaventa, 2007: 26)); (ii) they do not use such authority as they have as Χριστοῦ ἀπόστολοι to their own advantage; and, (iii) they have not been a burden, financially (2.9), to the Thessalonians (these constitute the so-called negative clauses of vv. 5-6 (Malherbe, 2000: 159). Instead, Paul and his co-workers presented themselves (i) in innocence (a likely inference to draw from the use of νήπιοι); (ii) with the affection of a τροφός, nurturing and tending to the maturation of the Thessalonians; and, (iii) a πατὴρ, guiding and directing them "περιπατεῖν ὑμᾶς ἀξίως τοῦ θεοῦ" ("to live lives worthy of God") (2.12).

Scholars who consider ἤπιοι the original formulation usually do so on the basis that in Paul's other letters, νήπιοι receives a negative connotation (Rom. 2.20; 1 Cor. 3.1; 13.11; Gal. 4.1, 3);[38] νήπιοι as an indication of immaturity, foolishness, and arrested in spiritual development.[39] However, it is conceivable for Paul to use νήπιοι as a description of himself and his co-workers precisely because it goes against the grain, because it is so jarring. Paul and his co-senders wish to cast themselves in a position both needful(?), innocent (infant) and caring, affectionate (nurse). Gaventa explains the mix of metaphors by drawing attention to the notion that this represents a *de novo* or a first (literary) attempt at articulating what it means to be an apostle

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[37] I note the additional metaphor and its complex and technical translation because it does in fact play into the discursive-rhetorical construction of the trio of Paul, Silvanus and Timothy.

[38] A classic case of the Reformation principle of Scripture interpreting Scripture.

[39] See, Wanamaker (1990: 99 ff.) for a more detailed analysis in support of ἤπιοι.

(given that 1 Thessalonians is regarded as Paul's first/earliest letter and that it is only in 2.7 that the term occurs, a departure from the 'norm' of his other letters). She (2007: 27) explains,

> [Paul] is struggling to identify two aspects of the apostolic role. The apostle is childlike, in contrast to the charlatan who constantly works to see how much benefit he can derive from his audience. The apostle is also the responsible adult, in the first instance the nurse who tends her charges with care and affection.

The use of νήπιοι invites us to consider whether it implies a reversal of roles between the Thessalonians and Paul, Silvanus and Timothy. Do the Thessalonians become parents to the Χριστοῦ ἀπόστολοι? This seems less likely to be the case. A more natural reading of the letter would suggest that God takes on the role of πατὴρ (1.1) to the νήπιοι, which according to Burke (2003) entails a loving, nurturing, yet also directing and guiding relationship.

Τροφός *(nurse).* Louw and Nida define the term as referring to "a person who functions as a substitute for a mother in the process of rearing children" (1988).[40] The term is to be differentiated from τίτθη, wet nurse. A τροφός would assume responsibility for a child after the weaning period and would have charge of the children, and in some instances, other individuals in the household. Gaventa (2007: 23) notes that in early Greek literature nurses were often depicted as slaves. According to Carolyn Osiek (2003: 259-260), however, nurses were not automatically assumed to be slaves. Some free woman assumed the role of nurse, likely because of dire circumstances (Gaventa, 2007: 23). The only difference, then, between a slave and a free nurse was that the latter had the liberty to contract for themselves.

The τροφός was "an important and beloved figure. Whatever the social status of the Thessalonian Christians, they could understand this reference to an important social relationship, one proximate to kinship itself" (Gaventa, 2007: 23). The text amplifies the use of τροφός with the addition of "τὰ ἑαυτῆς τέκνα," "*her own children*," from which "we may infer that Paul is alluding to the fact that a nurse who cares for other people's children cherishes her own even more. These words heighten the sense of Paul's love, concern and feelings of tenderness toward the Thessalonians" (Wanamaker, 1990: 101).

The rhetorical significance of this term as a description is that Paul, Silvanus and Timothy are identifying themselves as a τροφός. This is supported by the use of "οὕτως," (2.8) "*in this*

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[40] Louw and Nida locate the term within the "Help, Care For" semantic domain (35.52).

manner." In other words, in the manner of a nurse who tenderly cares for her own children, Paul, Silvanus and Timothy, care deeply for the Thessalonians. Ascough (2017: 36) proposes that the authors are employing a "from the lesser to the greater" argument such that whatever characterises the way in which a τροφός would be in relation to her charges, would be all the more so with her own children. This does not seem quite as necessary given the strongly affectionate tone of the letter, but supports it nonetheless.

While 'nurse' represents a term well established in the philosophical tradition, often used to "illustrate (either positively or negatively) aspects of the philosopher's relationship to his students," Gaventa (2007: 22) suggests that Paul's use signals an important departure from this understanding.

Offering a critique of the widely-accepted work of Malherbe, Gaventa (2007: 22 ff.) draws attention to three critical problems, summarised as follows. First, the use of 'nurse' in philosophical discourse tends to be abstract, establishing a distance between the 'nurse' and the speaker. In other words, philosophers use the term not as a self-description or metaphor, as Paul, Silvanus and Timothy do here, but rather to identify certain behaviours associated with the 'nurse'. Second, 'nurse' does not receive any sustained description in Dio Chrysostom's *Oration*—an important source for Malherbe—where a description of a range of philosophers receives attention. And, third, τροφός does not appear in any of the texts Malherbe uses for the construction of his argument. Τίτθη (wet nurse) is used.[41]

Gaventa (2007: 23) then moves into a more detailed exploration of τροφὸς, looking to Homer's *Odyssey* 7.9 and *Iliad* 389; Euripides' *Medea* 65; and, Demosthenes' *Oration* 57. Turning to two more texts, one from the Septuagint (Num. 11) and one from the Dead Sea Scrolls the Hodayoth (1 QHª 15.20-22), Gaventa (2007: 24) concludes that:

> Paul's usage of τροφός (nurse) does not derive from the topos of the philosopher
> and his gentleness. Instead, Paul draws upon a well-known figure in the ancient

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[41] Gaventa is maintaining a clear distinction between 'nurse' and 'wet nurse.' This is not uncontested. Some scholars maintain that the distinction is artificial and that the terms are more or less interchangeable. Gordon D. Fee advances something along these lines in a footnote in his commentary. He writes, "Gk. τροφός, a NT *hapax legomenon* whose meaning here is not quite as certain as the English translations suggest. It at least refers to one who nurses…. Although it could be a metaphor for a mother who nurses her infants, it could also refer to a wet nurse who does the same" (Fee, 2009: loc. 7787).

world, one identified not only with the nurture of infants but also with continued affection for her charges well into adulthood. Moreover, Paul's reference to himself (and others) as nurses bears an interesting resemblance to passages in Numbers and the Hodayoth where Moses and the Teacher of Righteousness, respectively, identify themselves with nursing roles.

Paul, Silvanus and Timothy are not like other philosophers or itinerants. They are Χριστοῦ ἀπόστολοι (apostles of Christ) (2.7) approved by God (2.4). Gaventa (2007: 26) maintains that since this is the first occurrence of the term "ἀπόστολος", Paul moves immediately to define or unpack the term (a view supported and expanded by Fee, 2009). In rapid succession, Paul literally blurts out a string of key metaphors, a kind of theological brainstorming on the go, if you will, represented by the diagram below:
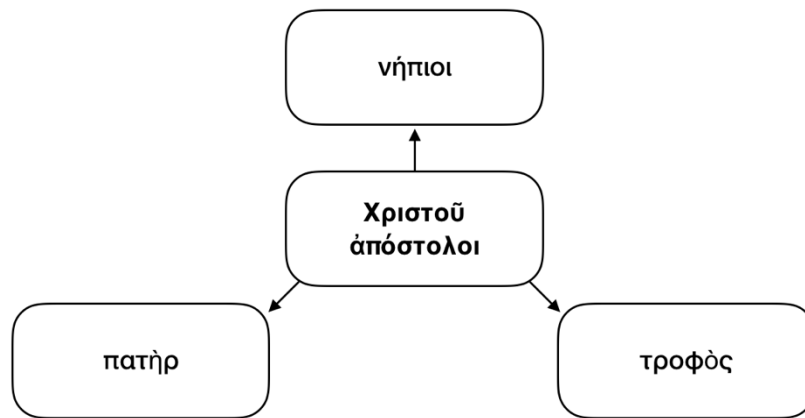

Figure 6-1 Unpacking Χριστοῦ ἀπόστολοι

Gaventa's treatment of the jarring nature of the mixed or inverted metaphors while alluding to the social implications of the rhetorical construction falls short of expanding our understanding of masculinity. She writes (2007: 27, emphasis mine),

> For what the text suggests is that the apostles of Christ are not to be understood in an *ordinary way*. To understand them, just as to understand the gospel itself, one must employ *categories that seem outrageous outside the context of Pauline paradox*. To apply the language of children and nurses to grown men is to create *a jarring image, one that challenges and expands understanding*.

Unfortunately, Gaventa does not unpack what is meant by these provocative statements (not ordinary way; categories that seem outrageous; jarring; challenging; expanding), which in the end promise more than they are able to deliver. Gaventa's treatment of the text does little to push beyond merely noting the jarring quality of the imagery encapsulated in the metaphors

Paul and his co-authors employ as a self-description. Certainly, for Paul, Silvanus and Timothy to identify themselves as a τροφός; that is, to identify as a woman in relation to the Thessalonians is deeply jarring and counter-imperial. After all, the very notion of what it means to be human in the Empire is defined strictly in terms of the degrees of masculinity—if one is a male—that one is able to accumulate (masculinity, here, as a scarce commodity for which men would compete).

But, are we pushing the metaphor too far by overemphasising the femininity of the self-identification? Perhaps we do not push far enough in this area. Perhaps as Fee (2009: loc. 1425-1427) notes in his treatment of the νήπιοι metaphor, we have tampered so with the text so as to make it more palatable, to fit the normalised (heteronormative) ideal of a stable masculinity.

The point of the metaphor is to disrupt our cognitive sensibilities by introducing and maintaining the tension between the "is" and the "is not" of the comparison. In other words, to speak of Paul, Silvanus and Timothy as a τροφός is to indicate both an "is a nurse" and an "is not a nurse." The metaphor's tension must not be resolved. Such ambivalence and tension play beautifully into a more plastic notion of masculinity that enables us to sit loosely with the fact that Paul, himself, is able to keep most social norms intact, except when he cannot because the apocalyptic-eschatological worldview destabilises such norms. Perhaps τροφός is one such example. The introduction of the term in the way Paul uses it as a description of himself and his colleagues represents a clear departure from the normative and imperially inscribed notions of identity. In short, τροφός, I suggest, leaves a margin of possibility beyond the normative discourse of the Roman Empire. And it is this margin of possibility that speaks to the possibility of an inclusive masculinity.

Πατήρ (father).[42] The Roman family reflected a strong bias towards men, establishing the *pater* (father) as the head of the *familia*, "the basic Roman social and property-owning unit" (Gardner, 1991: 4). In this role, the *pater* exercised almost omnipotent power and authority over the members of the household, which would include wives, children, grandchildren, and slaves (Lassen, 1997: 105) (and often their [slaves'] children, claimed as "property of the

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[42] This section on πατὴρ is comprised of work previously published in the *Oxford Encyclopaedia of the Bible and Gender Studies*, with some modification, and is used with permission from Oxford University Press. Original work: Stegmann, Robert N. 2014. Legal Status: New Testament, in: O'Brien, Julia M. (ed) *The Oxford Encyclopaedia of the Bible and Gender Studies.* New York: Oxford University Press.

estate" (Joshel, 2010: 119)). This power and control, known as the *patria potestas*,[43] over the household was a legal right of the *pater* and is noted by Gaius, a mid-second century jurist who comments on its uniqueness, "Again, we have in our power our children, the offspring of a Roman law marriage. This right is one which only Roman citizens have; there are virtually no other people who have such power over their sons as we have over ours" (*Inst.* 1.55) (Gaius, 1988). Thus, the *pater* would exercise this control for as long as he lived, regardless of the whether "his decedents matured and established independent households" (Arjava, 1998: 148). This had far-reaching implications for the legal status of the family members, the *filius familias* (male children) and *filia familias* (female children).

Under the *potestas* of the *pater*, adult children were not in any position to engage in economic transactions without the consent of the *pater,* could not own property and were often at the mercy (*clementia*) of the *pater* when it came to marriage. When adult children did engage in economic transactions, with consent, all acquisitions were accrued to the *pater*. Thus, adult children could make their way through life (at least for the duration of the *pater's* life) with either an allowance or a sum of money (or property), known as a *peculium*. Adult children were therefore nothing more than an extension of the *pater*, and lived under his *potestas* (Arjava, 1998).

The family served as an overlay for the empire, the Roman family as a microcosm of the empire. Structured as a larger family with a *Pater* (Caesar) in place, the empire was constructed to make a clear distinction between those who belonged to the family, Roman citizens, and those who did not.

We would, however, be amiss if we concluded from this that the relationship between a father and his children was devoid of any form of love or care and that the responsibility, particularly of the father, was merely to exert the *potestas* identified with his position as *pater*. While the foregoing reinforces the idea that the familial structures of antiquity were deeply hierarchical, emphasising the inherent differential of power between the *pater* and his children—and the

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[43] The *patria potestas* is assumed to be in view even in Jewish sources of antiquity. Burke (2003: 44, fn. 34) directs attention to the work of Heinemann and Goodenough who are both of the opinion "that the patriarchal focus of Philo's discussion of parental discipline were greatly influenced by Roman laws relating to *patria potestas* (paternal power)—the absolute power that the patriarch held over all members of his household right up until his death." Burke's work offers a very helpful and insightful treatment of an array of Jewish and non-Jewish sources in order to unpack the construction of kinship language for 1 Thessalonians.

husband and his wife—there is evidence in both non-Jewish, Graeco-Roman sources, and in Jewish sources, that point to the importance of nurturance and affection. These sources also point to the biological obligation of father and mother to children in education and in being an example to children (Burke, 2003).

Bringing this section to a close, we note that Paul, Silvanus and Timothy exhibit an array of roles in their rhetorically constructed identity. While the roles are multiple, each drawing attention to an aspect of their relationship to the Thessalonians, they also come together as an expression of a particular construal of ecclesial identity. If Paul, Silvanus and Timothy are νήπιοι, τροφός, and πατήρ to the Thessalonians, the Thessalonians in turn are shaped by these metaphors and are thereby rhetorically constructed in a particular way. I turn to exploring this rhetorical construction of the Thessalonians in the next section (§ 6.2.2.2).

6.2.2.2   The Rhetorical Construction of the Thessalonians

The identity of the Thessalonians can be addressed in two ways. First, one can gather data about the city, its history and people which can be used to reconstruct a likely audience. Second, one can turn to the text of 1 Thessalonians, and perhaps wider, such as the Acts of the Apostles[44] with its references to the apostle's missionary travels, to glean some information from which to develop a sense of the identity of the Thessalonians. While these approaches are not mutually exclusive, both infer a bias or expose an agenda of one kind or another.

In the first instance, historical data are not without bias. The 'facts' of history are considered facts from the perspective of the historiographer whose role it is to bring the (selected) pieces together into a (coherent) narrative. The historical data are framed in particular ways and depending on who is constructing the story, certain aspects of the data will come more clearly into view and others will remain obscured.

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[44] Johnson-DeBaufre (2010: 98) notes "Acts narrates the origins of the Thessalonian ἐκκλησία singularly and spatially: it emerges from the synagogue to Jason's house. Of course, a close reading of 1 Thessalonians complicates this picture. However, reading 1 Thessalonians alongside or over and against one space (synagogue, house, workshop), or one set of discourses (pagan, religion, imperial propaganda) has a similar effect of bringing some details into focus and pressing others into the background." Johnson-DeBaufre moves away from a singularity in terms of her reading strategy for 1 Thessalonians and in so doing is imaginatively able to read the absence of women back into 1 Thessalonians. It is important to note that engagement with the text demands a fair amount of imagination. That imagination is not uninformed and fantastical. It is imagination shaped by what is available to us in the interpretational task.

What constitutes the narrative of history, is in the imaginary of the historiographer. The narrative is being controlled by an individual or school of thought, or political/religious affiliation (or, more likely, a complex intersection of multiple forces). It is never innocent and as a consequence, both Johnson-DeBaufre (2010, 2016, 2012) and Fatum (2002) are, critically, able to draw attention to, for example, the absence of women in the text of 1 Thessalonians. While 1 Thessalonians is not positioned as a piece of historiography, it nonetheless represents a historical datum.

The text of 1 Thessalonians, in the second instance, is a rhetorical-political act. Consequently, the identity of the Thessalonians is a product of the authors. The authors exercise a certain power over the Thessalonians whose identity is in their hands. Paul and his co-authors reveal what they want to reveal about the Thessalonians and in so doing also shape or influence how the Thessalonians, themselves, understand their identity in the hearing of the letter. In other words, like the authors of 1 Thessalonians whose identity is bound to the literary-rhetorical representation over which they have control, the Thessalonians embody a literary-rhetorical identity over which they have little, or no control. The text, therefore, does not just reflect the identity of the Thessalonian community, it constructs it.

As we have already noted in earlier chapters, it is not just the text that constructs a certain identity. The concrete historical setting of life in the Empire through the language of image (sculptures, coins, architecture, etc.) plays an active role in the construction of self. Given the place of Thessalonikē in the Empire, it is important to ask what kind of Thessalonian identity was created within the imperial visual matrix and how this intersects with the identity being constructed by the Thessalonian letter. In her analysis of the Statue of Augustus of Prima Porta, Lopez (2012: 106-108) notes, "that this portrait incorporates a series a visual elements that, together, participate in the construction of reality and vision of social relations which, given its constancy, ancient viewers would have confronted on a daily basis."

As we have noted earlier in this chapter (§ 6.2.1.2), the Thessalonians had erected a statue of Augustus somewhere between the reign of Galerius and Claudius. This was not an uncommon practice since many subject cities, in response to Augustus' accession to power and long after his reign, "lavished numerous honours in multiple forms on the Roman emperors. In the form of decrees, coin issues, temples, statues, and public festivals, the emperors were honoured." This was an act of the subject cities' own volition and was a concrete recognition that Rome had established its sovereign presence (Smith, 2004: 55). Thessalonikē was no different. In order to maintain the *Pax Romana*, "aristocratic rulers in

Thessalonica … cultivated Roman favour and beneficence. … the Thessalonians were actively cultivating the patronage of the emperor and the imperial figures in seeking political leverage" (Smith, 2004: 57). We may imagine, therefore, that the citizenry of Thessalonikē occupied a strongly pro-Roman stance and that breakaways of the kind that characterised the Thessalonian assembly were to be regarded as anti-Roman.

Thus, for the Thessalonians to align themselves to a counter-polis, an alternative political assembly, the ἐκκλησία, with Jesus as κυριός and σωτήρ, such action would certainly have been perceived as a threat to the very fabric of society; a radical departure from the norm; an anti-imperial stance. Thessalonikē worked hard to maintain its standing in the eyes of the Empire and there can be little doubt that the citizenry would have responded in very negative ways, using social ostracism as a mechanism for quelling or at least discouraging any anti-Roman sentiment. If this is a likely scenario, it also goes some way to explaining the apocalyptic tenor of the letter, but it also explains the authors' move to exhort the Thessalonians to live quietly.

First Thessalonians develops the rhetorical texture of the ἐκκλησία in the following ways:
- (1) ἐκκλησίᾳ … ἐν θεῷ πατρὶ καὶ κυρίῳ Ἰησοῦ Χριστῷ: assembly … in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ (1.1).
- (2) ἀδελφοὶ ἠγαπημένοι ὑπὸ θεοῦ: brothers beloved by God. (1.4)
- (3) ὑμεῖς μιμηταὶ ἡμῶν ἐγενήθητε καὶ τοῦ κυρίου: you became imitators of us and of the Lord (1.6)
- (4) ὑμᾶς τύπον πᾶσιν τοῖς πιστεύουσιν: you became an example to all believers (1.7)
- (5) καὶ πῶς ἐπεστρέψατε πρὸς τὸν θεὸν ἀπὸ τῶν εἰδώλων δουλεύειν θεῷ ζῶντι καὶ ἀληθινῷ: and how you turned to God from the idols, to serve/slave God, living and true.
- (6) ἀγαπητοὶ ἡμῖν ἐγενήθητε: you have become our beloved (2.8)
- (7) ὑμεῖς μάρτυρες: you are witnesses (together with God) (2.9)
- (8) τέκνα: children (of Paul, Silvanus and Timothy) (2.11)
- (9) In response to God's word, the Thessalonians are depicted as receiving (παραλαβόντες) and accepting (ἐδέξασθε) that word (2.13)
- (10) πιστεύουσιν: believers (2.13)
- (11) ὑμεῖς γὰρ μιμηταὶ ἐγενήθητε, ἀδελφοί, τῶν ἐκκλησιῶν τοῦ θεοῦ τῶν οὐσῶν ἐν τῇ Ἰουδαίᾳ ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ: for you, brothers, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea (2.14)
- (12) ὑμεῖς γάρ ἐστε ἡ δόξα ἡμῶν καὶ ἡ χαρά: for you are our glory and our joy (2.20)

(13)   We infer from 3.2-3 that the Thessalonians are in need of strengthening and are being shaken by persecutions ("εἰς τὸ στηρίξαι ὑμᾶς καὶ παρακαλέσαι ὑπὲρ τῆς πίστεως ὑμῶν τὸ μηδένα σαίνεσθαι ἐν ταῖς θλίψεσιν ταύταις" in order to strengthen and encourage you for the sake of your faith, so that no one would be disturbed/shaken by these persecutions/afflictions)

(14)   The Thessalonians are (re)presented as taking a special interest in the authors; "καὶ ὅτι ἔχετε μνείαν ἡμῶν ἀγαθὴν πάντοτε ἐπιποθοῦντες ἡμᾶς ἰδεῖν καθάπερ καὶ ἡμεῖς ὑμᾶς" (and that you always remember us kindly and long to see us–just as we long to see you) (3.6).

The emerging rhetorical portrait of the brothers[45] of the Thessalonian assembly has them located, theologically (ideologically?), "in God the Father" (1.1) and they are "beloved by God" (1.4). The authors remind the assembly that their identity is, first and foremost, a theological one. Certainly, they are citizens of Thessalonikē, but as Paul so often does in the opening of his letters,[46] the assembly is an *assembly of God* in a particular geographical location. In his letter to the Philippians, Paul pushes this even further by reminding the assembly that they are citizens of heaven (3.20) and that the purpose of their existence, therefore, is to be a political outpost of heaven in the city of Philippi; a definite anti-imperial position.

By extension, the Thessalonian's are God's children, but they are also the children of Paul, Silvanus and Timothy. As children—particularly in antiquity where the principle of reciprocity

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[45] Gender inclusive translations of the bible are an important contribution to contemporary gender discourse. Their use in the church context serves, at least, to draw attention the presence of women in the contemporary church, and their assumed presence in the early church (of course, their presence is noted in a few of Paul's letters, e.g., 1 Cor. 1.11 or Rom. 16.1, 3, 6, 7, 12, 15). However, problematically, gender inclusive English translations end up obscuring the patriarchal structures that sire the biblical text in the first instance. The question is whether we are over- or under-reading the text with the inclusion or exclusion of a collective noun for the composition of the church and as a consequence, of the ostensible audience to whom the text is addressed. I have therefore chosen to translate ἀδελφός with 'brother' instead of 'brothers and sisters.'

[46] Paul uses a range of phrases in his openings, but all convey the central idea that the assembly is God's and that they are located in a specific geographical area. Take for example, 1 Cor. 1.2, "τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ τοῦ θεοῦ, ἡγιασμένοις ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ, τῇ οὔσῃ ἐν Κορίνθῳ" (to the assembly [belonging to] of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus). The beauty of this verse is that it answers two essential questions: Whose church/assembly is it? And, where is it [the church/assembly]? For the Corinthians, this is particularly important. They are reminded that they are God's church in Corinth and they are to live their lives as an expression of that reality.

is fundamental to the parent-child relationship—the Thessalonians could be expected to assume the following responsibilities, here delineated by Burke (2003: 55 ff.) and summarised in the form of the following diagram:
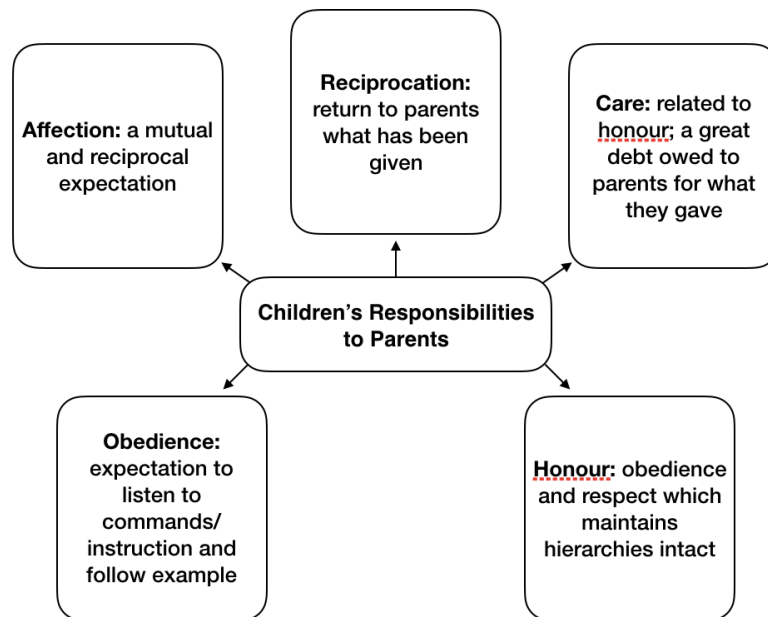

Figure 6-2 Children's Responsibilities to Parents

By employing 'family' as the organising metaphor for the authors' correspondence with the Thessalonian assembly, they are reinforcing the necessary alignment that maintains hierarchical relationships and keeps good order. The letter makes clear that this assembly is not out of alignment. In fact, based on the rhetorical depiction of the assembly, sketched out briefly above, it is easy to conclude that this community is compliant; that they are setting a fine example of a well-ordered community whose life together is exemplary for all.

Since Paul, Silvanus and Timothy represent themselves using the three metaphors with which we dealt in § 6.2.2.1, above, namely, νήπιοι, τροφός, and πατὴρ, we can expect that the rhetorical construction of the Thessalonians will give expression to the relational opposites implied by the three metaphors. We note that the authors do refer to the Thessalonians as children (2.11), which at least corresponds to the τροφός and πατὴρ roles assumed by the authors. Both these roles also imply that they, the Thessalonians, have note quite reached a level of maturity that gives them some form of independence.[47] The authors appear quite

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[47] Here we need to tread carefully. It is easy to fall into anachronistic readings that employ the lens of Western individualism back onto the text, assuming that maturity is expressed as independence. Mediterranean culture did not conceive of independence as an aspect of identity; it was group oriented. Therefore, what I mean to draw attention to is that the use of τρὸφος especially, highlights the fact that

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anxious to return to the Thessalonians. Their anxiety may be explained by a concern that the Thessalonians are at some risk because it is still early days in their formation as Christ-followers. Malherbe (1987: 94, emphasis mine) captures the pastoral dimension well,

> First Thessalonians reveals how the nurture of the community continued in Paul's absence. Timothy was sent to establish the Thessalonians in the faith and to ascertain *whether they still looked to Paul for the pattern of their lives*. Upon learning that they did, Paul writes a paraenetic letter that serves a pastoral purpose. The letter continues the style of ministry in which Paul had engaged when he was with them.

Paul and his co-workers turn in the latter part of the letter to a sustained piece of *paraclesis* (literally, journeying alongside) that takes us from 4.1 to 5.24. The letter serves the function of representing Paul's presence, pastorally, as Malherbe suggests, and we have noted, too, the sending of Timothy in Paul's absence. This paraenetic section is suggestive of how Paul and his co-authors view the Thessalonians and their role in relation to them.

As beloved by Paul, Silvanus and Timothy, the Thessalonians' welfare is uppermost and has the authors using the letter to mobilise a steadfastness in a faith, hope and love that regulates the behaviour of this community in concrete, practical ways.

The concreteness and practicality of how the paraenetic section of the letter works, brings clearly into view the bodily manifestation of a life aligned to the gospel. In other words, the authors exhort the Thessalonians to conduct themselves, that is, their bodies, in a manner "worthy of God" (2.12), which they unpack in 4.1–5.24.

The structure of this pericope centres around recalling teaching with which the Thessalonians are already familiar and reinforcing behaviour already in evidence with the caveat that they increase/amplify what they are already doing. Analysed in this way, the text yields the following pattern (note the following: underlined text demonstrates that the Thessalonians are already in possession of the teaching/learning; **bold text** notes the practical application of the learning which his already evident in the lives of the Thessalonians; and, *italicised text* represents a

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the Thessalonians were still in the early stages of their formation. This is supported by 3.10. The Thessalonians still need Paul and his co-workers.

call on behalf of the authors to the Thessalonians to increase or do more of what they are doing already):

4.1: <u>brothers we exhort (παρακαλοῦμεν) you</u>

    <u>just as (καθὼς) received/learned (παρελάβετε)</u>[48]

        <u>how to walk/live (περιπατεῖν) and to please God</u>

            just as (καθὼς) you are already walking/living (περιπατεῖτε)

            that you do so all the more (ἵνα περισσεύητε μᾶλλον).

4.2: <u>you know (οἴδατε) what instructions (παραγγελίας) we gave (ἐδώκαμεν) to you</u>

      <u>through the Lord Jesus [διὰ τοῦ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ]</u>

    …

4.6: <u>just as (καθὼς) we have already told you beforehand (προείπαμεν)</u>

      <u>and solemnly warned (διεμαρτυράμεθα)</u>

    …

4.9-10: <u>you do not need to have anyone write to you (οὐ χρείαν ἔχετε γράφειν ὑμῖν)</u>

      <u>for you yourselves have been taught by God (γὰρ ὑμεῖς θεοδίδακτοί ἐστε)</u>

        and indeed you do (ποιεῖτε) …

    but we urge (<u>παρακαλοῦμεν</u>) you, beloved,

      to do so more and more (περισσεύειν μᾶλλον)

    …

5.1: <u>you do not need to have anything written (γράφεσθαι) to you</u>

5.2: <u>for you know (ἀκριβῶς οἴδατε) very well</u>

    …

5.11: **as indeed you are doing (καθὼς καὶ ποιεῖτε)**

Given this structure, the pedagogic framework is clearly in place and the Thessalonians are not only aware of it, they are diligent in walking in accordance with it. After all, they are an example for all throughout Macedonia and Achaia (1.7). Between the lines of obedience to the teaching they received, Paul and his co-authors insert a number of moral exhortations to which we must give some attention.

The instructional/didactic locus issues in a clear articulation of God's will (θέλημα) for the Thessalonians, namely their sanctification (ἁγιασμὸς). Louw and Nida (1988) note that while

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[48] According to Louw and Nida (1988), παρελάβετε means "to acquire information from someone, implying the type of information passed on by tradition."

"ἁγιασμὸς" in certain contexts "suggest(s) resulting moral behaviour, the emphasis is not upon a manner of life but upon religious activity and observances which reflect one's dedication or consecration to God." In 1.9, the Thessalonians are described as the ones who "turned to God from idols, to serve (δουλεύειν) God, living and true."

The authors supply a thorough unpacking of ἁγιασμὸς with a series of infinitives that follow it. According to Malherbe (2000: 225) ἁγιασμὸς is a "noun describing action (cf. 2 Thess 2.13; Heb 12.14; 1 Pet 1.2), not a state or a condition, which is usually described by *hagiōsynē* (cf. 3.13; 2 Cor 7.1)." The infinitives provide the answer to the implied question of how to please God:

> 4.3: abstain (ἀπέχεσθαι)[49] from fornication (πορνείας)
>
> 4.4: know (εἰδέναι)[50] how to control (κτᾶσθαι) your own body (σκεῦος)[51]
>
> 4.6: no one transgress (ὑπερβαίνειν)[52] and exploit (πλεονεκτεῖν)[53] a brother (in this matter)

This series of infinitives foregrounds the bodily implications, though often overlooked, of the transforming work of the gospel. It also highlights the authors' expectation that to have one's life rooted in the apocalyptic-eschatological good news is to live bodily, materially, different from the surrounding culture. This line of interpretation is a fairly common one in the evangelical church and reflects a deep commitment to pushing for a kind of moralism that is obsessed with sexual purity.

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[49] Verb, present, middle, infinitive of ἀπέχω, to abstain, refrain from.

[50] Verb, perfect, active, infinitive of ὅιδα, to know how.

[51] This translation, NRSV, tries to maintain gender-inclusivity so that men and women are implicated in the control of their bodies. Translating σκεῦος κτᾶσθαι is notoriously difficult. The ESV, NIV, TNIV, NLT, NRSV, NJB all agree and translate with "control your own body." The KJV, NKJV, NAS and Tyndale's NT translate with "possess his own vessel." The NAB translates with "acquire his own wife." Without rehearsing the scholarly arguments for the three options, the two most likely translates could be either, "vessel" = body or, "vessel" = penis (a euphemistic use of σκεῦος). It would appear that on balance, the latter option makes better sense of the context (see, for example, Fee (2009); Wanamaker (1990)).

[52] Verb, present, active, infinitive of ὑπερβαίνω, to transgress or sin.

[53] Verb, present, active, infinitive of πλεονεκτέω, to defraud or exploit.

A reading such as this presupposes a Pauline orientation. That is, it does not draw attention to the Thessalonian's reception of the exhortation. It simply assumes, as we assume in our use of this text in our preaching, that the instructions Paul and his co-author's deliver are (to be) accepted. This also means that the bodies of the Thessalonians fade into the background. They become disembodied since the authors seek to regulate them to such a degree that they no longer stand a chance of becoming an obstacle (4.11). And this means that their bodies become nothing more than sites for the reinscription of a normative code of conduct ("behave properly towards outsiders" (4.12)).

The point of engaging with the question of how the text of 1 Thessalonians rhetorically constructs the audience in Thessalonikē is important, but as Johnson-DeBaufre *et al.* (2011) note, such reconstructive work is always at risk of anchoring the discussion with Paul at the centre, whether negatively or positively. They propose to read Paul and his letters as "embedded in a contested, complex, and shifting context that includes both ancient empire and modern neo-colonialism, thus allowing an engagement with the present to revise our approach to the past and vice versa" (2011: loc. 2702).[54]

The rhetorical identity of the Thessalonians, therefore, cannot just be contingent on the presentation of that identity by Paul, Silvanus and Timothy, however positive and praiseworthy. On this view, Paul and his co-authors represents one voice of many in a contested space. Pushing this notion one step further, the dominant interpretation of Paul and of his letters, especially when gender critical, critical masculinity lenses are being put into the hermeneutical service of establishing the meaning of the text, must foreground the multiplicity and contestational nature of the discursive space.

Importantly, the "*ekklēsia*-focused interpretation" offered by Johnson-DeBaufre and Nasrallah (2011: loc. 2710) challenges the scholarly edifice which continues to give primacy and therefore univocality to learned interpretations in an uncontested space. In other words, the academy, as I have already asserted earlier in this dissertation, exercises control over the text

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[54] In an aside, Gaventa (1998: 53) in her commentary on First and Second Thessalonians, draws attention to the fact that the plea for self-control does not necessarily "reveal" much "about how Jews and Gentiles actually conducted themselves, of course. Pronouncements on sexuality are notoriously unreliable indicators of human behaviour; they tell us what the pronouncers value but not whether anyone listens or conforms." Gaventa's comment comes close to the view expressed by Johnson-DeBaufre and Nasrallah for it draws attention to the "invisible" perspective of those on the receiving end of the plea.

and its interpretation. And while the academy is itself a space for contestation, that contestation is limited to the carefully guarded and circumscribed arena of the academy that does not permit the voice of the marginalised (read, unlearned and un-credentialed) in textual engagement. By the same token, the very same can be argued for ecclesial contexts where interpretation is a safely guarded enterprise of the trained and/or ordained clergy.

An *ekklēsia*-focused interpretation also opens up possibilities for fresh engagement with Paul's moral exhortation. If we go with the translation of σκεῦος as a euphemistic reference to the penis, engaging in a conversation with a group of men that invites candid wrestling with how Paul and his co-author's exhortation is received could lead to important hermeneutical discoveries about how texts shape us and highlight difficulties that "flesh-and-blood" men experience in relation to the control of their sexual urges. Throw the net wider to include women, or perhaps more appropriately, to focus on women, the silenced in this text, and we might imagine some very difficult forms of truth-telling that painfully express stories where men have not kept their "members" under control.

In her essay "Gazing upon the Invisible," Johnson-DeBaufre draws on the work of Pheme Perkins and Lone Fatum to demonstrate attempts at making visible the women whose existence is simply taken for granted in a text like 1 Thessalonians. This is how she captures Perkins' view,

> Perkins imagines wo/men who work, who face consequences from certain of Paul's proposals, and who struggle with the same kinds of health and financial challenges as their low-status male counterparts—in some cases with more extreme consequences, as in the case of death in childbirth (2010: 81).

In the rhetorical construction of the Thessalonians, interpreters carry an ethical responsibility to ask questions about the power of the authors of this letter to define identity and regulate behaviour. Failure to ask questions like this, I suggest, also results in a failure to ask questions about how the interpretations of texts fulfil a similar authoritative function in defining the identity and regulating the behaviour of those in faith communities. Beyond the church-specific implications, one also needs to contend with the wider social implications (religious texts do not shape specific communities without shaping society as well). Thus, "a disciplined intimacy with ancient texts and contexts provides an ethical and intellectual pattern that can facilitate a similar attentiveness to the politics, conditions, and textures of situations and persons in the present" (Johnson-DeBaufre *et al.*, 2011: loc. 2801-2802).

Turning now to a brief discussion of the relational semiotics of 1 Thessalonians, I draw the various aspects of the relational dynamics present in the letter together.

6.2.2.3   Relational Semiotics in 1 Thessalonians

The important work of Brigitte Kahl and Davina Lopez on the notion of semiotics brings the relational dynamics of 1 Thessalonians into imperial focus, and therefore, postcolonial focus, by demonstrating the oppositional quality of imperial discourse and its import for the construction of masculinity.

Lopez (2008: 20) defines semiotics in terms of its task; namely, "to determine how, and in whose interests, reality is constructed." In her analysis of the Great Altar of Pergamon, Kahl (2010: 103) is able to trace out a series of binaries that reflect how Roman imperial ideology sought to construct the *other*, she notes: "rationality versus stupidity, true manliness and courage versus self-destructive fearlessness and rashness, moderation and self-discipline versus excessive emotion and brainless action, righteousness versus lawlessness, including the lawlessness of blasphemy, which defies the rules of proper religion and reverence towards the gods."

1 Thessalonians gives expression to an impressive range of semiotic relationships; that is, relationships that signify by their interrelatedness a symbolic quality beyond the concrete manifestation of the relationship. Lopez (2008: loc. 476-479) describes semiotics, as a tool for analysis, this way,

> Semiotic analysis is, then, ideological analysis, as "whenever a sign is present, ideology is present." Representation and reality construction occur at sites of (class) struggle, where those who gain control of the codes gain control of ideology. …. The overall task of semiotics is to determine how, and in whose interests, reality is constructed, precisely so it can be denaturalized through the location of contradictions, inconsistencies, and gaps that form the basis of social change.

Thus, to suggest that 1 Thessalonians gives expression to multiple semiotic relationships, is to suggest that the relationships figured in the text serve more than as a commentary on the nature of relationships; instead the relationships stand for something more; they signify something at a deeper ideological level; and they mean to naturalise a certain perception and understanding of the power differential in relationships of one kind or another.

The basic structure of semiotic relationships is based on the work of Algirdas Greimas and is used extensively and to great effect by Davina C. Lopez (2008) (see, also, the work of Elliott (2008)) to demonstrate the relational   differential between the Roman empire and the conquered. The Greimasean Square,[55] as it is known, and applied by Lopez, uncovers "a language of oppositions structuring the reality of the Roman imperial context" (Lopez, 2008: loc. 477) and can be useful to employ as a heuristic tool for analysing the relational differential evident in Paul's letter to the Thessalonians, bringing a postcolonial perspective into sharper relief.

The Greimasean Square draws attention to the fact that there is a position that "represent(s) the top of a power structure, the values," designated as A and B (see below), and there is a non-A and non-B which "represent the bottom anti-values" (Lopez, 2008: loc. 485):
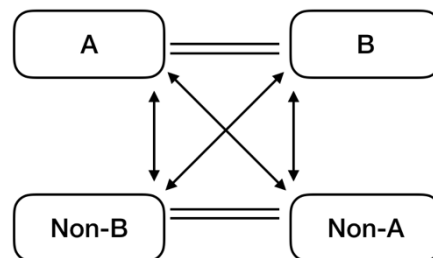
Figure 6-3 Basic Semiotic Relationship

This oppositional quality, perhaps best understood as a negative construal of relationships, functions at the ideological level and thus imprints on the imaginary of all implicated by the symbolic system, just how identities are constructed and normalised.

The collocation of νήπιοι, τροφὸς and πατὴρ is constitutive of a particular semiotic relationality. Expressed as a series of semiotic relationships, look something like the following:

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[55] My use of Greimas is not with reference to a structuralist approach to the semiotic relationships I have identified. Rather, its use is for the purpose of deepening the rhetorical aspects of the text that establish relationships in which the power differential is made clearer through graphical representation.
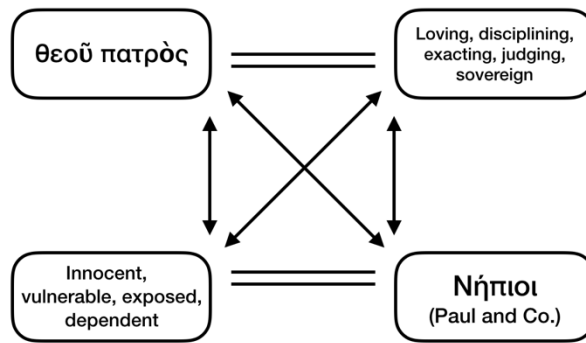
Figure 6-4 Semiotic Relationship: Father to Children

This first diagram depicts the semiotic relationship of νήπιοι to θεοῦ πατρὸς. This is a particularly interesting relationship because it has Paul, Silvanus and Timothy in a clearly submissive relationship. Of course, the challenge of the representation is that the authors actually position themselves as the νήπιοι in relation to the Thessalonians. This would, then, imply that the Thessalonians are in a position of power over the Χριστοῦ ἀπόστολοι. Perhaps that is precisely the point of the metaphor. The Χριστοῦ ἀπόστολοι do not take advantage of their position as such; instead, they use such position as they have and with it the authority and power over the Thessalonians in support of their love and concern for them.

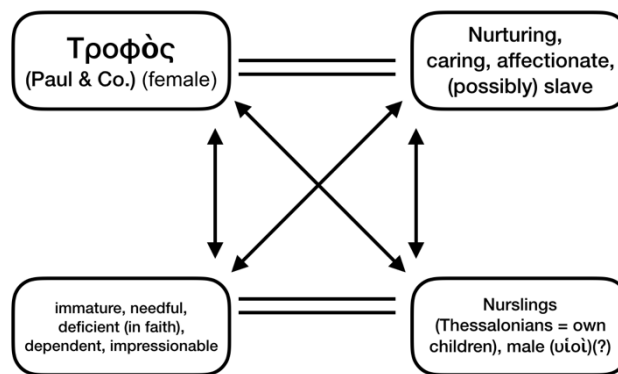In the second semiotic relationship, the authors assume a feminine role.

Figure 6-5 Semiotic Relationship: Nurse to Nurslings

Here, Paul, Silvanus and Timothy take on an exclusively feminine role and in so doing position themselves vis-à-vis the Roman imperial ideology as compromised; their masculine integrity is at stake. This is a striking move for the authors to be making. Does this suggest a margin for exploring "compromised" forms of masculinity in the shadow of hegemonic and toxic masculinities? Does the ambiguity of how the authors represent themselves open up possibilities beyond the narrowness of binary formulations that try to regulate and maintain men and women in their "rightful," "natural," place? I think metaphors like these show just how porous is the text.

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In the third semiotic diagram, the ambivalence of imperial identity comes to the fore. In this diagram, Paul, Silvanus, and Timothy occupy the position of father in relation to the Thessalonians:
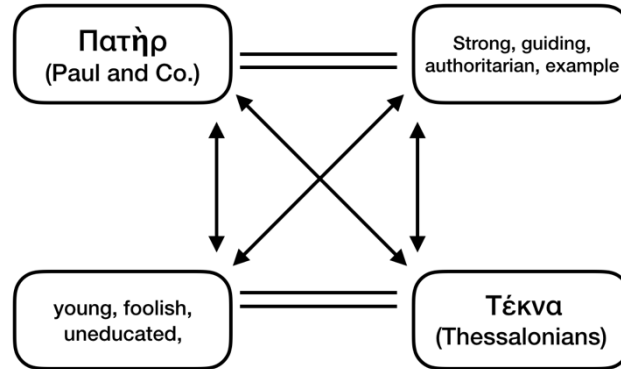

Figure 6-6 Semiotic Relationship: Father to Children (Apostles to Thessalonians

Does this semiotic relationship reinscribe Roman imperial ideology, a mimetic parroting of the *patria potestas*? Or, does the apocalyptic-eschatological framework for understanding 1 Thessalonians come into play as a *alternative* recasting of the relationship between father and child? Does the letter to the Thessalonians provide enough to resolve the tensions within these semiotic relationships so construed? In our penultimate section for this chapter, we turn to the bifocal of gender critical and postcolonial criticism as an attempt to address this question.

6.3   Intersections in Gender and Postcolonial (Biblical) Criticism

The bifocular lens of gender and postcolonial criticism which I have developed in an accretive manner over the course of this dissertation and which I have employed in my treatment of 1 Thessalonians has guided and structured my engagement with the discursive-rhetorical aspects of the text.

The challenge of a section like this is that it means to bring two distinct lenses together, and runs the risk of obscuring rather than clarifying what is in the text. Such a challenge concerns the degree of convergence and divergence between these two approaches. And, since I am constructing a new lens, a bifocal lens, it is important to note that the lens is neither one or the other, it is a different lens, a hybrid lens, if you will, that means to bring masculinity and power in the biblical text into sharper focus.

To achieve a bifocular reading of 1 Thessalonians, I propose to use the rhetorical base developed in § 6.2.2 and allow the lens to bring into view matters related to critical masculinity and postcolonial biblical criticism. Since the aforementioned section was deliberate in focusing

on the rhetoricity of 1 Thessalonians, the work of drawing attention to some of the key aspects of postcolonial biblical criticism, namely, (1) the careful attention to the importance of empire and its role in framing the biblical text, socially, culturally and politically (Sugirtharajah, 2012: 46); and, (2) engaging in a hermeneutics of retrieval,[56] has already begun. The point, then, is the elucidation of a thickly textured gendered identity.

6.3.1   Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Paul and Empire

Paul, Silvanus and Timothy are products of the Empire. They are caught in the intricate web of imperial ideology and their engagement with the Thessalonians is entangled in aspects of that ideology. To be sure, the apocalyptic-eschatological framework for their theologising does represent a significant attempt on their part to break free from their entanglement and while history sometimes judges those efforts harshly, the struggle to present, not just a challenge to the Empire, but a viable alternative, must not be ignored.

The construction of identity in an imperial-colonial context was negotiated, not just *in* the first century context, but also, *with* the Empire. In other words, negotiating the Empire is not just a matter of making it through another day, it is also about engaging the Empire in order to get ahead. Perhaps the easiest way to explain this paradigm is to consider the words of one of U2's songs, off their album, *All That You Can't Leave Behind*, *Peace on Earth* (2000):

> Heaven on earth
> We need it now
> I'm sick of all of this
> Hanging around
> Sick of sorrow
> Sick of pain
> Sick of hearing again and again
> That there's gonna be
> Peace on earth
>
> Where I grew up
> There weren't many trees
> Where there was we'd tear them down

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[56] Evident in the attempt to reclaim the "sidelined, silenced, written-out" (2012: 47) voices in the text, whether of the co-authors, or of the Thessalonians themselves

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> And use them on our enemies
> *They say that what you mock*
> *Will surely overtake you*
> *And you become a monster*
> *So the monster will not break you*

The last four lines of the second stanza, italicised, articulates perfectly the risk Paul, Silvanus and Timothy took in engaging and negotiating with the Empire. Of course, their engagement was perhaps less as head-on as the lyrics for the U2 song suggest, opting for a subtler literature of resistance (apocalyptic), but it was no less risky. Punt reminds us that "the ability of a postcolonial subject to resist imperialism is shrouded in ambiguity, since the very act of resistance entails intervention in the conditions that constructed that subjectivity in the first place" (Punt, 2011b: loc. 919). Paul, Silvanus and Timothy, therefore, are at risk of "becoming a monster, so the monster (read, Roman Empire) will not break you (them)."

Notwithstanding the attendant challenges and risks of engaging the Empire, we cannot shy away from a rigorous assessment of what emerges from the Thessalonian correspondence when viewed postcolonially. Knust (2004: 157) writes, "when he [Paul] adopted sexual virtue and vice as his anti-imperial code language, he reconfirmed a gendered hierarchy that assumes woman is derived from man and identifies desire with 'slavishness.'"

Paul and his co-authors do draw attention to sexual virtue when in the paraenetic section of the letter, they urge the Thessalonians to "abstain from fornication," "control their (male members) in holiness and honour," and to refrain from "defrauding and exploiting a brother" (4.3-6). This followed by a reminder that God had called the Thessalonians (together with Paul, Silvanus and Timothy) into holiness. Striking here, is that the Thessalonians are exhorted to work out their sanctification (4.3), but that God also plays a role in calling the Thessalonians into holiness (4.7).

Control over one's body, moderation of sexual appetite, and concord are all concepts to be found in the moral reforms of Octavian Augustus who instituted a legal framework which became the vehicle through which to regulate both the body politic and the literal bodies of the empire.

The legal system of the Romans reflects the intersection of social coding (honour/shame, belonging, status, etc.) and legislation. Established by the social elite, it was not just about drafting laws. It was a system that both reflected the attempt of the elite to prop up a particular

social hierarchy, and through social coding, maintain and exercise control (Knapp, 2013: 34). Thus, at both the implicit and explicit level, the Roman legal system was not simply a matter of regulating through legal prescription/sanction. Because of the intersection with social codes, the system reflected a more complex notion of social conditioning (Jervis, 2010: 632).

This is evident in the legislation governing dress and adornment and reinforces the notion that "Roman jurisprudence distinguished between them [respectable married women and high-class prostitutes and others] by means of their appearance which was defined in terms of apparel and adornment" (Winter, 2003: 4). By projecting the ideal imperial family onto society, Augustus (and some who would come after him), for whom appearance was critically important, was engaging in a normativising scripting of the ideal woman, of the ideal family (despite the fact that his family was far from picture perfect: Julia's inappropriate liaisons).

In the Roman legal system, then, we find legal sanction intermingled with social conditioning which, despite its potency, failed on one level to curtail certain behaviours, particularly as it related to gender. On this, Bruce Winter's (2003) study on the emergence of "new women," who resisted the traditional roles assigned to them by actively participating in public life and by pushing the boundaries around sexual propriety is particularly helpful and insightful, especially in the overlap that he traces between the Empire and Paul.[57]

Under Augustus three important pieces of legislation, designed to promote the particular vision of the Empire, come into play: *lex Iulia de maridandis ordinibus* (18 BCE), the *lex Iulia de adulteriis* (18 BCE), and the *lex Papia Poppaea* (9 BCE). Each of these laws reflect the attempt of the powerful to construct identity through legal sanction (and incentive). And while these laws were designed to promote marriage and childbearing, they carried specific gendered implications for Roman women in particular, and likely much wider since as Winter notes, the influence of Roman law and Roman society was not restricted to Roman citizens; "Roman public and private law regulated most aspects of life in antiquity" (Winter, 2003: 2).

Take for example *lex Iulia de adulteriis*. This law granted the *pater* the right to impose "summary justice on a daughter caught in the act of adultery in his son-in-law's house" (Gardner, 1991: 6). And while adultery, in general, was frowned upon, it seems that this piece of legislation was particularly concerned to circumvent women from engaging in such

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[57] One may also note the very helpful book by Judith Evans Grubbs (2002) which provides access to the range of legal sources that relate to women specifically.

behaviour. In other words, the law was directed against women. And while it is evident that during the time of Augustus, women charged with adultery were charged criminally, rather than capitally (Winter, 2003: 20), penetration of women's bodies and not penetrating men becomes the real issue. The sexual act "is not about desire and passion, but about social and economic relations," and thus penetration was understood as a "social act that maps dominant and subordinate relationships in the ancient world" (Vander Stichele *et al.*, 2009: 45).

Paul and his co-authors' moral exhortation to control their male members only reinforces the fact that the system is geared in favour of men, as Knust has observed. But can the authors be expected to do anything more than what is in evidence? Punt (2011b: loc. 995) considers the possibility that however else we may construe the situation of Paul and his co-authors, we are left to face the fact that,

> Paul did not do away with high status; he did not attack hierarchy; he did not urge equality. He did, however, advocate a shift in the power balance from Greco-Roman upper-class ideology to a Jewish-apocalyptic, turning-the-tables ideology, that is, a shift from the Roman Empire to God's empire.

Does a shift of the Jewish-apocalyptic kind change the fate of women and men who are not accommodated by the narrow definitions of what constitutes masculinity or femininity in the face of imperial narrowness? This is an important question to consider. While it is clear, if the witness of the text is to be taken at face value, at least in part, that the originary vision of an alternative assembly did result in some changes, the hybridised identity of the Christ-followers still bore the marks of the Empire. However, it is important to remind ourselves of a key learning from postcolonial theory, particularly as it relates to identity construction. Identities then, as now, are not fixed. Furthermore, while the preponderance of evidence from antiquity provide a view into imperial ideology, we should consider the presence of resistance, evidence of alternative constructions, and certainly a discrepancy between the ideal(ised) vision of the Empire and the on-the-ground experience.

6.3.2   Gender Ambivalence?

From a gender critical perspective, we can note that the text of 1 Thessalonians is decidedly male-oriented and appears to reinforce patriarchal relationships by establishing a strong network of father-son and brother-brother connections. But as I have noted, with the introduction of the two metaphors of infant and nurse, 1 Thessalonians suggests some gender ambivalence as the authors assume both a feminine role (nurse) and a vulnerable role

(infant)[58] in relation to the assembly.

Perhaps this captures Punts notion of turning-the-tables ideology one would expect in Jewish-apocalyptic.

6.4 Summary

Paul, Silvanus and Timothy, father, nurse, infants, brothers. Apostles of the crucified Christ and pastors to the far-flung assemblies of God. 1 Thessalonians is an affectionate letter written to an assembly whose lives have been transformed by the preaching of the good news of Jesus' death and resurrection. An assembly in and of the Empire wrestling with the counterclaims of Jesus Κυριός and eagerly anticipating the παρουσία.

The discursive-rhetorical analysis of 1 Thessalonians represents an important critical reading of the letter, especially with the explicit view to problematise the construction and representation of gender. The fruit of this labour leads to the following suggestive observations:

(1) By employing the metaphors of infant, nurse and father, Paul, Silvanus and Timothy run the risk of losing status in the eyes of the Thessalonians. Even as a rhetorical move, viewed more suspiciously as an attempt to play weak in order to assert greater authority, the authors risk their reputation.

(2) The construction of their own rhetorical identity using these three metaphors opens up possibilities for alternate gender constructions.

(3) The authors challenge conventional gender discourse by employing the metaphors in the way that they do. In this, I suggest, they are redefining the social hierarchies. By assuming weak and vulnerable and innocent positions even as metaphorical constructions, the authors signal a break from the normative discourse of the Empire.

(4) Simultaneously, we must contend with the ambiguity of such positionality, especially in light of the moral exhortation to "behave properly towards outsiders and be dependent on no one" (4.12). The presence of the ambiguity, however, may in fact be construed as a departure from the normative discourse. In other words, that the letter signals a change in trajectory and an ambivalence, suggests that enough movement away from the norm in evidence.

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[58] For further support of the gendered quality of childhood see, as a representative florilegium of texts, Aasgaard (2006, 2007); Bakke (2005); Balla (2015). Subsequent articles/publications will develop this notion in greater detail, particular as a means of exploring transgressive masculinities.

(5) We must also contend with the strongly androcentric language of 1 Thessalonians, but not lose sight of the transgendering inferred from the metaphors.

(6) And, it is also possible to entertain the notion that the apocalyptic-eschatological frame does at least imply a redefinition of power relations. Again, this is signalled by the metaphors and suggests a move towards a kenotic understanding of masculinity (an idea for further investigation).

7 CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Introduction

Attempting to navigate the construction and representation of masculinity in Paul's letter to the Thessalonians is a daunting and complex task that is sometimes made all the more so, by the absence of a guide, some means of surveying the topography, of mapping the study, to say nothing of mapping the actual subject of masculinity, whether in antiquity or contemporary culture.[1]

Tracing out the contours of that vast topography requires careful analysis of the multiple dimensions and discourses at play in an exercise of this kind. I will attempt in this concluding chapter to retrace the terrain, without unnecessary repitition, and draw some conclusions and implications for the study.

The importance of this chapter, then, is that it serves an integrative telos. In an accretive manner, each chapter has been building towards a rereading of 1 Thessalonians from a gender and postcolonial perspective that invites a socio-literary (and playful) exploration of the fluidity of gender constructions and representations in the context of the first century CE. By training the bifocular optic of gender and postcolonial criticism on the text of 1 Thessalonians, as I have done, aspects of the text that are overlooked in favour of more traditional interpretations come more clearly into view. Their presence, a challenge to consider the import of the concrete setting of Roman imperial ideology and its influence in shaping the discourse on gender.

Furthermore, with an even more intensified focus on the representation and construction of masculinity, specifically, in 1 Thessalonians, the contestational setting of the Empire, a setting in which the pursuit of and competition for masculinity always seems front and centre, opens

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[1] A sampling of South African related studies in this area includes the following works: *The Prize and the Price: Shaping Sexualities in South Africa* edited by Melissa Steyn and Mikki van Zyl (2009); *Baba: Men and Fatherhood in South Africa* edited by Linda Richter and Robert Morrell (2006); *Power, Politics and Identity in South African Media: Selected Seminar Papers*, edited by Adrian Hadland, Eric Louw, Simphiwe Sesanti and Herman Wasserman (2008). These works illustrate well the point that gender research is not only critically important, but highly complex. To do justice to the question of gender, its representation and construction, one must pay attention to the concrete and often unique contexts in which gendered identity is being framed.

up possibilities for alternative constructions of masculinity precisely because the letter represents a form of resistance to imperial notions of masculinity.

While many scholarly readings of 1 Thessalonians have noted aspects of gender, these have tended to do so in a narrowly feminist way. That is, the focus has been, rightly in my opinion, on tracing forms of hegemonic masculinity that both textually (that is, in the text itself) and interpretationally (the reception history of the text) silence, side-line and subjugate women. But hegemonic masculinity is not only a threat to women. It is a growing threat to men who embody forms of masculinity that results in ostracism of one kind or another; men who fail to measure up to dominant constructions and representations of masculinity. 1 Thessalonians, as I have shown, is implicated in the imperial gender discourse and perpetuates patriarchal hierarchies, but it also, paradoxically, represents an act of resistance precisely because in it, Paul, Silvanus and Timothy assume transgender roles (infant and nurse) which when understood with in the apocalyptic-eschatological framework of the gospel, invites new possibilities for understanding masculinity, the focus of this dissertation, and of gender in general.

7.2 Constructions and Representations: An Accretive Understanding

Central to understanding Paul's discursive-rhetorical construction and representation of gendered (and masculine) identity is the observation that there are multiple layers to consider in order to engage with any measure of hermeneutical responsibility.

The first layer, I contend, is contextual. In this, I foreground the fact that I seek to locate my scholarship within the concrete realities and challenges of life in a post-apartheid South Africa. This layer, as we discovered, is fairly complex in and of itself. South Africa's complicated history is (em)bodied. The flesh-and-blood bodies of South Africans carry the marks of that history. And, both political and religious ideologies have scripted how our bodies are to perform.

Of particular interest, has been the way in which Paul, as the focus of this study, and the bible, more generally, continue to exercise an authoritative role in communities of faith. My analysis has emerged from within a critical evaluation of the evangelical tradition in South Africa, and even then, more generally, so as to not target a specific denomination or expression of evangelicalism. This represents a second layer. It is, of course, still part of the contextual matrix, but is more hermeneutically targeted. That is, in a context like South Africa where the

bible is at least a recognisable "voice" in much discourse (from politics,[2] to climatology[3]), questions need to be asked about how to interpret the biblical text in ethically responsible ways.

The third layer attends to the importance of developing and appropriating lenses through which to read both contemporary culture and ancient texts, like the bible. Again, the focus has been on Paul and his letter to the Thessalonians, but the fruit of that labour has wider application. The logic is simple enough. The bible still continues to have some currency in South Africa. South Africa has some of the highest incidence of violence against women. To address the problem, we need to ask the meta-cognitive question: why? Why do we have such a violent culture? Why do men perpetrate acts of violence against women and children? There are no easy answers to these questions, but they do signal the necessity to engage in crucial conversations, of the kind that problematise the bible, its interpretation, and the cultural and traditional ideologies that somehow rationalise this situation.[4] This, in the end, is a matter of social justice and human dignity. The interpretation of the bible in a context such as ours is a matter for serious consideration. Moreover, hermeneutically ethical ways of engaging the bible are needed, if not demanded by the situation.

By developing a gender critical and postcolonial optic for reading the letter to Thessalonians, the objective has been to model ethically responsible hermeneutics and in the context of masculinity, break open the narrow ways in which the biblical text has been interpreted and used to shape the "biblical" notion of masculinity (and femininity). I maintain that the polysemy of the biblical text, especially when read through the lens of gender criticism and postcolonial biblical criticism, together with an understanding of the discursive-rhetorical dimensions of the text, invite wider possibilities for identity construction and representation.

Gender, as we have noted "has to do with how bodies are configured and scripted to perform in certain ways. Gender, therefore, is about identity, about identifying with and being identified by a certain bodily configuration or performance" (Stegmann, 2014: 420). In other words, to

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[2] Churches and other community based organisation of civil society participation in protest marches against the fraud and corruption of governmental leadership.

[3] Organised campaigns to pray for rain in the drought-stricken Western Cape is a good illustration of the fact that there is still a strongly religious presence in the country.

[4] While I have not sought to answer these questions specifically, I contend that the approach I have taken in respect of Paul's construction and representation of masculinity in his letter to the Thessalonians is an important piece of lager project in the future.

understand gender and masculinity, it is important to trace the discourses responsible for defining and shaping gendered bodies. Important to note, here, is that there are multiple discourses and, as I have shown, Roman imperial discourse is one such discourse designed to script bodies through a range of media. No doubt Paul, Silvanus and Timothy's individual bodies experienced that scripting and were constantly reminded as they traversed the contours of the Empire proclaiming the good news of an alternative Κυριός, that they were on the underside of the Empire, they were feminised bodies; the subaltern whom the imperial discourse sought to silence.

Their discursively inscribed bodies in turn generated a discourse by which the bodies of the Thessalonians' were inscribed. That inscription, which certainly for Paul bears the marks of Christ, represents a fundamental redefinition of masculinity.

When Paul, Silvanus and Timothy take on feminine roles, they are inverting the imperial norm. In effect, they are emptying the Empire of its power by locating what is definitional in masculinity, not what the Empire holds up, but what is embodied in a crucified and resurrected Κυριός. This is a change to the discourse and represents an area for further exploration and study. It is suggestive of a notion of kenotic masculinity (already hinted at in the dissertation); the kind of masculinity that does not consider the privilege it has accrued (wrongfully) as something to be exploited, but instead uses it, à la Chitando (2010; 2012), as agency for male gender activism.

While I have not delved into Phil. 2.6-7a, it is suggestive of an idea that is much larger and more widely evident in the letters of Paul and which I believe carries the potential to carry the kenotic discourse I have alluded to in my handling of 1 Thessalonians. In the passage, Paul writes concerning Christ, "ὃς ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ ὑπάρχων οὐχ ἁρπαγμὸν ἡγήσατο τὸ εἶναι ἴσα θεῷ, ἀλλὰ ἑαυτὸν ἐκένωσεν" (who being in the form of God, did not consider such equality with God as something to be exploited for his own advantage, but emptied himself). Michael J. Gorman proposes that 2.6 "sets forth a narrative pattern of Christ's status, disposition, and activity" (2007: 153), which he expresses by means of the following formula: although [x], not [y], but [z]. Expressed semantically, the formula reads: although [status], not [disposition (selfish act/selfishness)], but [activity (selfless act/selflessness)].

At the heart of this one line in Phil. 2 is the notion of how we view God and the argument runs as follows: Paul is able to both identify a concessional implication of 2.6 which reads, "*although* being in the form of God," and a causative implication, "*because* being in the form of God." At the surface, the concessive reading, which is most readily accessible to the reader, simply

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affirms what has been affirmed by the Chalcedonian creed (Jesus as fully divine and fully human). The deeper reading, the causative "because," signals a major shift in our understanding of God. It issues a new view of God that fundamentally challenges the very definition of God with reference to the emptying (kenosis). The implication of this redefinition of God such that the status of God is not exploited for his own advantage, but instead is defined with reference to selfless action holds a key to thinking through the notion of a masculinity redefined.

This text and the text of Thessalonians represents, I believe, a significant point of departure in the conversation around how masculinity can be reimagined as a form of resistance against the normative and, too often, hegemonic discourse implicit in our hermeneutical ventures. Of course, it is important to add, the text and its interpretation is complex and while liberative trajectories are discernible, depending on the angle of approach, the text and its interpretation is able to do great violence. That this is the case should not hinder rigorous engagement, especially when such engagement moves intentionally towards making sense of the concrete realities of flesh-and-blood readers.

This has been a consistent theme throughout the dissertation and lies at the very heart of how I personally view my scholarship as caught in the middle of a contradiction. The church and the academy belong together however odd the relationship may appear to be. Perhaps, even here, the notion of kenosis reveals its potential; a potential for selflessness that plays out at a table of fellowship where new relationships can be initiated and forged between scholarly and academic readings.

7.3   Invitation to Commensality

As I draw this chapter to a close, I contend that in as much as Paul, Silvanus and Timothy can be seen to invert the norms of imperial gender construction and representation, the academy and the church can engage in a new space; a space defined by open commensality; a space in which we invoke an alternative metaphor for understanding the academy and academic discourse, not as battle field where there are no winners, but *as an invitation to open table-fellowship*.

The full force of this metaphorical conceptualisation of the discourse will need to be seen in a change in the rules of engagement as we consider the relationship between knowledge production at the centre (gl*bal North) and knowledge production at the periphery (gl*bal

South).[5]

Invoking table-fellowship as a metaphorical construction by which to make new meaning of academic discourse, in general, and of how one might facilitate openness and inclusion, requires at least a different *source domain* for the metaphor.

The practice of table-fellowship can, of course, be exclusionary. While the decision to eat with another was "a mark of acceptance of that other" and the regular eating together intended "to forge and express a special bond of fellowship," it is also clear that to refuse table-fellowship was "to deny the acceptability of the other". Thus, "Table-fellowship functioned as a social boundary, indicating both who was inside the boundary and who was outside" (Dunn, 2003: 602).

Furthermore, the juxtaposition of the exclusionary experience of table-fellowship accounted for in the Gospels by those deemed to be unworthy (generally, the marginalised and unclean of society) and the (radical) practice of Jesus' open table-fellowship underscores the importance of what is invested in the practice; a practice freighted with symbolic meaning beyond the mechanics of sharing a meal.

It is the symbolic meaning attributed to the practice of (radical) open table-fellowship that informs our new metaphorical construction: *academic discourse as an invitation to open table-fellowship.* Using Jesus' practice of open table-fellowship as the *source domain*—framed as it is by the memory of the early Christ-follower communities (Mark 2.15-16; 14.3; Luke 5.29; 7.36; 10.38; 11.37; 13.26; 14.1, 12; 19.5-7)—conceptualises the discourse as being open rather than drawing tighter boundaries.[6] The Gospel accounts make it clear that Jesus "sought to break down these boundaries and to create a fellowship which was essentially open rather than closed. His open table-fellowship, so much both constituting and characterising the

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[5] The metaphor of table fellowship is not without its problems. For instance, one must interrogate such issues as the dynamics of power involved in fellowship around the table by asking: Whose table? Who is host? Who provides? Where is the table? The practice of table fellowship has often been a means of exclusion. What I mean, therefore, is to reconfigure the notion of table fellowship such that it represents an open space, an invitation to all to participate. Perhaps Luke 14.15-24 is at least parabolically analogous.

[6] For a more critical evaluation, see Blomberg (2009). Also, more recent scholarship on the practice of table-fellowship see, Cutler (2016), Furnal (2011), Strout (2011), Thacker (2015), and Wassen (2016).

community which practised it, made the point more clearly than any other aspect of his mission" (Dunn, 2003: 605).

By shifting the source domain from the closed to the open practice of table-fellowship, we construct a new metaphor with the potential of reconfiguring the relationship between North and South, between knowledge producers and knowledge reproducers, between processors of raw material and sources of raw material.[7]

Like all metaphors, the comparison implied by the particular entailments (source domain) that serve as the points of reference for the metaphor, create an alternative view on academic/gender discourse precisely because the metaphor does not call for the dissolution of distinctiveness and difference. In fact, open table-fellowship can only be open, and radical, by acknowledging and foregrounding what is different about the knowledge production of the gl*bal North and of the gl*bal South. To be heard and to hear, to be acknowledged and to acknowledge, to be received and to receive, at this open table does not require one to become like the North in a mimetic, colonial fashion so that we can mirror, faithfully, what has been produced in a context not our own. It invites participation in which North and South tackle together the question of gender and of masculinity without relinquishing the peculiarities that each brings to the table. It is also an acknowledgement that each has something of value to offer and that the offering is not done with either one being the point of reference.

7.4   The Stories that Shape Us

In the final analysis, this dissertation has wrestled with the multiple narratives or discourses that shape gender identity. Their multiplicity captures not just the complexity of masculine gender construction and representation, but reveal a profound beauty. How Paul, Silvanus and Timothy went about constructing and representing (an alternative) masculinity in the context of the dominant imperial discourse is something of a marvel. They were products of their own time with its discourses and in this space the profound experience of Christ crucified

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[7] See, Morrell (2016: 193) who writes concerning Paulin Hountondji's concept of *extraversion*, "Raw data was sourced and then returned to the metropole for analysis and theorisation. Neither local needs nor African sources were addressed." Similarly, Said (2014: 283) puts it this way,

"The Orient and Islam have a kind of extrareal, phenomenologically reduced status that puts them out of reach of everyone except the Western expert. From the beginning of Western speculation about the Orient, the one thing the Orient could not do was to represent itself. Evidence of the Orient was credible only after it had passed through and been made firm by the refining fire of the Orientalist's work."

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and resurrected birthed within them an alternative, not perfect, discourse which they believed could counteract the death narrative of the empire.

The journey reflected in this PhD dissertation has sought to show how a gender critical and postcolonial approach to reading 1 Thessalonians may open up possibilities for understanding masculinity, not as a singular, all-encompassing idea, but rather as being more plastic or malleable. My starting point assumed, or at least hypothesised, that the category of masculinity reflected in Paul's letters, generally, and 1 Thessalonians, specifically, was not as fixed as we have sometimes made out. As I continued to wrestle with the text and with the fruit produced by my approach, I had to at least acknowledge or entertain that, in the end, the dominant interpretations and applications of the text, particularly in reference to a vision of masculinity that is closed and narrow and fixed, is always a conclusion close at hand.

The text is not easy. And, it is not safe. But, it is good.[8]

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[8] Echoing the words of Lewis's, *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, "Aslan is a lion—the Lion, the great Lion." "Ooh" said Susan. "I'd thought he was a man. Is he—quite safe? I shall feel rather nervous about meeting a lion" … "Safe?" said Mr Beaver … "Who said anything about safe? 'Course he isn't safe. But he's good. He's the King, I tell you" (2014: 79). The allusion to Aslan and the association I make to the bible is not, of course, intended to suggest that the bible is God since Aslan is God/Christ character.

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