Displacing power from the dance floor: A postcolonial gendered reading of Mark 6:14-29

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Abstract

The study rereads the narrative of Mark 6:14-29 from Homi Bhabha's postcolonial theory of mimicry and ambivalence. Unlike other interpretations that focus on the death of John the Baptist by Herod, the focal point of this study is the daughter who danced during Herod's banquet. By taking account of the female body that is culturally represented as the inferior gender, and the use of status to determine power, the text is interpreted through the lenses of gender theory and the social-scientific model of honour and shame. By observing the unequal power structures and the suppression of female bodies, the study indicates that the daughter, through her dance, gained agency, reconstructed her identity, and displaced power on a dance floor. Instead of being a sexual male gaze, she became a negotiator to Herod.

Keywords: Ambivalence, Agency, Power, Herod, Gender, Mimicry, Dance, Honour and shame, Social-scientific criticism

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1   INTRODUCTION

The narrative of Mark 6:14-29 gives details of how the death of John the Baptist by Herod came about. Scholars such as Guelich (1989), Lane (1974), Stein (2008), and Williamson (1983) have interpreted this passage as a story that foreshadows the death of Jesus. They further point out similarities between Jesus and John the Baptist to clear out the confusion of Jesus' identity which is associated with John the Baptist, Elijah, and the prophet of old. John the Baptist has been described by Jesus as 'the one having come in the spirit and power of Elijah' in Mark 9:11-13 and Luke 1:17. The association of Jesus with Elijah reveals the Judaism belief is proclaimed in 2 Kings 2:11 that Elijah will return at the end of time. Referring to the prophet of old reflects the claim in Deuteronomy 18:15,18 of a new prophet like Moses. However, from Peter's confessions in Caesarea Philippi Jesus is proclaimed as Christ, the Messiah of God (Mark 8:27-30).

Mark and the contemporaries of Herod refer to Herod as a king. However, Herod Antipas was a tetrarch of Galilee and Perea, working under the Roman Empire as an administrator. Although Herod was not a Jew, John the Baptist proclaimed his marriage to Herodias as unlawful as stated in the moral law of God. Because of this denunciation, Herodias developed a grudge against John the Baptist and Herod put him into prison. Herod then host a birthday banquet where the three wealthy and prominent Galileans are invited. During his banquet, Herodias' daughter danced. Even though Herodias' daughter remains nameless in the narrative, according to the Jewish historian Josephus, Herodias' daughter is named Salome.

In what seemed to be a figure of speech or a parade of authority, Herod promised the daughter with an oath half of his kingdom. Salome interpreted Herod's promise literally and asked for the head of John the Baptist on a platter as per Herodias' wish. Herod's public oath puts his authority and reputation at stake since it was made in the presence of his dignitaries. To protect his reputation, Herod ordered the executioner to bring the head of John, which the daughter passed to Herodias. The

narrative ends with Herodias fulfilling her wish of getting John killed and Herod living with regret and fear.

Many scholarly interpretations of Mark 6:14-29 focus on the death of John. Scholars such as Juel (1990) and Lane (1974) have done historical and narrative discourse analysis of the text. In their interpretations, the ministry of Jesus, the sending out of the Twelve and the puzzling relationship between Jesus and John the Baptist receives much attention. The social-scientific reading provided by Karayanni (2004) observes the social and political dynamics of the Salome's dance. He views Salome as a sexual object and further questions the quality of her dance.

Feminist scholarship often critique the viewing of the dance as erotic since Mark does not give any details regarding the nature of the dance. Dewey (2006) and Anderson & Moore (1992) explore the patriarchal system that devalues and suppress women. They are against the negative portrayal of female sexuality.

1.2   AIM AND OBJECTIVE

- To reread the text of Mark 6:14-29, specifically the daughter's dance from a postcolonial theory of mimicry and ambivalence.
- To address the social dynamics of a dancing body that offers entertainment to the Greco-Roman banqueters.
- To address the hidden intentions of Greco-Roman banquet dancers that benefits their personal desires.
- To revisit the colonial power structures and the enforcement of power using gender.
- To address the representation of female bodies in ancient Mediterranean.

1.3   HYPOTHESIS

By making use of Homi Bhabha's theory of mimicry and ambivalence, I hypothesise that the daughter through her dance was assessing the patriarchal spaces by challenging Herod's masculinity. Through her dance performance, she made Herod and his guests' slaves to her body, redefined the dance floor by gaining her self-identity and self-esteem. I argue that she is not to be viewed as a sexual object that is present to feed male sexual desire but as a dancer using her dance performance as a vehicle to deconstruct issues of power and masculinity.

1.4   METHODOLOGY

The thesis is structured as follows:

Chapter 2 consists of the existing plausible interpretations on Mark 6:14-29. Scholars have approached this narrative from different hermeneutical approaches which supports their proposed speculations. The narrative of Mark 6:14-29 has been approached from historical criticism, narrative discourse analysis, social-scientific criticism, and feminist criticism. The literature review includes among others the works of Lane (1974). Nineham (1963), Guelich (1989), Focant (2012), Moloney (2002), Anderson and Moore (1992), Iverson and Skinner (2011), and Malina and Rohrbaugh (2003). The literature review assists in finding the research gap.

Chapter 3 proposes the postcolonial theory of mimicry and ambivalence, social-scientific model of honor and shame and gender theory as plausible theoretical perspectives to address the identified hypothesis. These theories seek to address the use of gender to administer the uneven power structures and the displacement of power.

Chapter 4 applies the plausible theoretical approaches mentioned in chapter 3. The dancing daughter is read from a postcolonial gendered approach. The agency that the daughter attained after her dance performance is discovered. The social, cultural, and political practices of the Greco-Roman world assist in the understanding of the masculine and feminine attributes and give further insights on the procession of a banquet. Moreover, Herod's power and masculinity are observed, and the Greco-Roman view of female bodies is explored.

Chapter 5 is a contextual reading of the Tswana dance from a postcolonial perspective. The Chapter aims to further demonstrate the ambivalence of a dance performance. It also explains that a female dancing body is not only an object present to feed the sexual desires of men. Through a dance performance, a dancer an enhance their identity and status.

Chapter 6 is a concluding chapter which summaries the previous chapters. It gives an outline of how the hypothesis is addressed and theoretical approaches that gives a plausible reading to the mentioned issue.

1.5   CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study is not to disregard the existing approaches used to interpret the narrative of Mark 6:14-29. However, the aim is to contribute to the interpretation of Mark 6:14-29 by offering a feasible alternative approach to the dancing daughter. It is to provide an insight that is not centred on the female as a sexual object that feeds male desires. Instead, it observes how power can be displaced by means of a dance performance and the acquired sociological agency of the dancer. To identify the research gap, the following chapter provides the present interpretations of Mark 6:14-29.

Chapter 2

Literature review

2.1   INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to methodically assess existing interpretations of Mark 6:14-29. Numerous scholars have given different plausible interpretations which best fit their context and approach to the text. In reviewing the previous and current debates, the study will first grant the nature and background of Mark 6:14-29 using the historical-critical approach. To enhance the understanding, the relationship between the characters will be provided. It will then provide interpretations done by various scholars from different exegetical approaches. The exploration of previous and current interpretations will assist in identifying a possible research gap.

2.2   HISTORICAL-CRITICAL APPROACH

This exegetical understanding is attained through the reconstruction of matters that appear in the text by giving them a historical meaning. It has been reported that the narrative in Mark 6:14-29 is based on the mission activities of Jesus and the Twelve which took place in Galilee. This story can be divided into two parts, the first being different sentiments of who Jesus is and the second being the story regarding the death of John the Baptist.

This story revolves around the Herodian family; therefore, it is important to understand the characters and their relationship which will be introduced below:

Herod Antipas

In the New Testament, there are three encounters of Herod; that is Herod the Great, Herod Antipas and Herod Agrippa (Antiquities 18.5.3:136). The narrative in Mark 6:14-29 refers to Herod Antipas. Mark refers to him as a king, a title which was authorised by the Roman legislative body. This title however had no historical appearance. Herod was a tetrarch of Galilee and Perea and he ruled from 4 BCE when he was sixteen years of age until 39 CE. He was born in 20 AD and was the seventh son of a Samaritan Malthace and Herod the Great. His rule was an inheritance from his father, it came to an end when Emperor Caligula banished him

for his desire to be king. Before Herodias, Herod was married to a Nabatean princess who was the daughter of king Aretas IV.

Herodias

This is the feminine form of the word derived from the masculine name Herod. She was the daughter of Aristobulus and Bernice, a granddaughter to Herod the Great and a niece to Herod Antipas. She was first married to Phillip, who according to the story was the half-brother of Antipas. She later left her first husband to get married to her uncle Herod Antipas.

Herodias' daughter

There are different Greek manuscripts which give different identities regarding the daughter whom we read about in Mark 6:22. The first manuscript appears as follows: καὶ εἰσελθούσης τῆς θυγατρὸς αὐτης τῆς Ἡρῳδιάδος and it is directly translated as "the daughter of Herodias herself". This translation gives the assumption that Herod was the stepfather to this daughter whom Herodias got from her first marriage with Phillip. The second manuscript is as follows: καὶ εἰσελθούσης τῆς θυγατρὸς αὐτοῦ Ἡρῳδιάδος and the direct translation is "when his daughter Herodias came in". It suggests that Herod is the father to the daughter and like her mother, her name is Herodias. Although this daughter remained nameless in the New Testament, a Jewish historian Josephus called her Salome (Antiquities 18.5.3 136**)**

According to historians, Salome was a teenager during the time of Herod's banquet. Since her identity is uncertain, her year of birth is also assumed to be between 10 AD and 14 AD. As young as she was, she got married to her uncle Phillip who was a tetrarch of Iturea and Tranchonitis. When he died in 34 AD, she then got married to Herodias' brother Aristobulus of Armenia Minor.

John the Baptist

A character not of the Herodian family is John the Baptist. He was the righteous and holy prophet who according to Mark 6:14-29 was killed by Herod after denunciating Herod's marriage to Herodias as unlawful.

Admittedly, 'the royal title has been denied to Antipas by Augustus. Goaded by the ambitious Herodias, it was Antipas' request for the title "king" which officially led to

his dismissal and exile in A.D. 39' (Lane 1974:211). Since Mark refers to him as "King Herod" it was more of a 'popular designation than an official title' (Guelich 1989:329). That is why there is no historical appearance of a King preceding Herod in Mark's Gospel. The reference of the king according to 'St Mark may well reflect local custom' (Nineham 1963:174).

As his actions attests, Herod had lack of courtesy towards the Jewish laws. This is evident from the type of marriage he got himself into when he married Herodias, the wife of his brother Phillip while he was still alive. It is historically believed that choosing 'an ancient cemetery to be the site for his capital, Tiberias was insensitive in the Jewish law as it excluded Jewish settlers' (Lane 1974:211). According to the Mosaic laws it therefore meant that his actions are equivalent to committing adultery. As it is recorded in the narrative, this is what John the Baptist was against when he declared their marriage unrighteous.

Elucidating the beginning of the narrative, it is the people who were informed about the time of the coming of Jesus that is yet to come, however, they were all sceptical about his identity. Importantly, this is the only story of Mark that does not make any reference to Jesus. However, the Twelve formed part of Jesus ministry and were there to spread Jesus' fame, that is how Herod heard of Jesus. The narrative, however, gives the impression that the nature of the Twelve is not being given enough recognition as they were representing Jesus in his absence.

From John's denunciation, the association of Jesus with Elijah means 'the coming one' (Mark 1:7). Hence, we see three well-known figures being associated with Jesus, that is John the Baptist, Elijah and one of the prophets of old. This confusion was perhaps associated with a prophecy from Malachi 3:1 about the coming of Elijah in the last days. In addition, the Jews believed that the direct contact that the prophets had with God had ended, therefore, 'the assurance, originality, and authoritative tone of Jesus may have suggested its fresh, and possibly final emergence' (Nineham 1963:174). As indicated in the text, when Herod was informed about this, he immediately believed that it was John the Baptist whom he beheaded. These confusions of Jesus' identity have dual implications:

> [T]he very fact that they were being made shows that Jesus contemporaries could not help seeing in him someone supernatural and divinely inspired; while

the fact that, stupendous though they were, they were not stupendous enough, serves to emphasize the unique status that in fact belonged to Jesus.

(Nineham 1963:172)

Notably, the mention of three popular figures gives the conviction that these people had no acquaintance with Jesus and John. It is therefore conceivable to make the presupposition that if it was in their knowledge that Jesus was baptised by John, the two could have not been identified as one (that is referring to Jesus as the resurrected John). Since Jesus' ministry in Galilee took place only after John was imprisoned, 'the people had a distinct impression of succession rather than of contemporaneity' (Lane 1974:212). The people's confusion about Jesus identity was brought by the absence of John's miracles throughout the progression of his ministry.

Significantly, 'the identification of Jesus with John, through whom the ancient gift of prophecy had been affirmed after so long a silence, appears to interpret Jesus as the promised eschatological Prophet whose word would herald the last days' (Lane 1974:212). In their understanding, this prophet who was not named could have returned with the aim to continue his ministry. In fact, 'the Baptist came as a forerunner of Jesus in his preaching and in his passion since Jesus begins his ministry "after John had been handed over".' (Guelich 1989:328). In this context as Lane (1974:213) stated, the possible prophet could have been 'Elijah, Moses, Enoch or Jeremiah'. In addition to that, Jesus and John had several similarities which most probably form part of the confusion of their identity:

[B]oth were the same age; both were popular itinerant preachers not associated with any established religious group; both preached an eschatological message of repentance and the arrival of the kingdom of God; both were extremely popular; and, both worked powers.'

(Stein 2008:301)

Moreover, the story of John the Baptist is also like that of Jesus in terms of the following: 'arrest, death plot, fear, innocent man executed under pressure and burial' (Guelich 1989:328).

Following the confusion of Jesus' identity comes Herod's declaration that it is John the Baptist whom he had beheaded. In so doing, he was afraid that John had come back with more magical powers and this to him was soul-stirring. As fearful as he was, he was also acknowledging his involvement in the death of John. Resurrection in the Jewish context presupposes the coming of judgement.

The narrative of Mark, however, slightly differs with that of Josephus, a Jewish historian whose interest was in the political causes of the war in terms of the following:

The reason for John's imprisonment:

- As we read in Mark's narrative from Josephus' point of view, John had declared Herod's marriage as unlawful. In so doing, Herod as Josephus would say felt threatened by this man as he had too much political influence. Before John could provoke sedition, he was put into prison. Moreover, Herod's marriage to Herodias required his former wife to be renounced and this too was unrighteous in the Jewish law.

- Mark on the other hand put more emphasis on the works of Herodias as a woman and the power she had towards her weak husband. Mark mentions that Herodias had a grudge on John because of her marriage being proclaimed as unlawful. In this regard, John's imprisonment was protecting him from Herodias but also to silence his declaration regarding their marriage. The basis of this imprisonment as we read is either personal or political.

The place where John was imprisoned and executed:

- Admittedly, Mark does not mention the place where John was imprisoned. Nevertheless, he makes mention of the first men of Galilee being present at the banquet and that the puzzling of Herod was brought by the presence of Jesus in Galilee. Therefore, it is possible to assume that Tiberias, a capital city where Herod was a tetrarch was in Galilee. In view of this, the narrative depends on Josephus' writing which was done sixty years after the Roman public's occurrence of the Roman patriot. Fundamentally, 'Josephus states that Herod sent John to Machaerus, the southern tip of Perea tangent to the northeast corner of the Dead Sea' (Lane 1974:217). Josephus' suppositions places John's imprisonment in Machaerus.

The actual name of Herodias first husband:

- In this case, the naming misperception is brought by the fact that it was a cultural practice in the ancient times to inherit the name of the family, hence we come across names such as Herod the Great, Herod Antipas, Herod Archelaus and Herod Agrippa. According to Josephus there is also a great possibility that Phillip too (Herodias' first husband) could have been Herod Phillip.

Following Herodias' wish to get John killed, Herod had a birthday banquet where he invited the leading men of Galilee, his courtiers, and his military commanders. This as Mark mentions was 'an opportune moment' (Mark 6:21). It is believed that Herodias intentionally sent her daughter to dance at the banquet with the aim and knowledge that if Herod is aroused, he will reward her desire. Referring to Oriental customs and Oriental solo dance, the daughter's dance could not have been considered as an acceptable one. Instead, dancing in front of half-intoxicated men would degrade her status. Although Mark does not give the name of this daughter, Josephus recognizes her as Salome.

The basis of this occasion is coming from the oath that Herod made to the daughter after her dance performance. Herod was known to be a man who would not give even half of his villages. Offering this daughter anything up to half of the kingdom was culturally unthinkable, since women in the first century era could not inherit anything. This indeed was a strange offer which became Herod's demise. In honouring the oath and Herodias' request of John's head, Herod had conflicting feelings which first made him reluctant to fulfil the request and finally did to protect his image and retain the respect he had from his guests. This is how the death of John the Baptist came about. When John's disciples heard about his death, they came to collect his body and laid it in a tomb.

2.3   INTERPRETATIONS OF MARK 6:14-29

As mentioned above, the aim of this chapter is to review the previous and current exegetical understanding of Mark 6:14-29 by different scholars. Below are the interpretations of different prominent scholars who take various approaches to interpret and understand Mark 6:14-29.

2.3.1 C. Focant

Focant in his interpretation first highlights the strangeness of the absence of Jesus, his disciples and the Jewish religious authorities who are the principal leading characters. The narrator instead narrates the measures that led to the death of John the Baptist. Mark 6:14-29 introduces Herod through his opinion which contradicted that of the population. Unlike the population that compared Jesus with Elijah or one of the prophets, Herod was quick to identity Jesus as John the Baptist whom he had beheaded. In view of this, the narrator's way of introducing Herod to the story makes the 'reader unaware of the death of the latter' (Focant 2012:240).

Through the mission of the Twelve, Jesus' name became well-known and that is how Herod knew about Jesus. From the reader's point of view, the wrongness of Jesus' identity is typical. The only difference according to Focant (2012) is the characters Jesus is being compared to this time which the reader can easily observe. Having the knowledge that Jesus and John the Baptist were living at the same time makes it impossible for Jesus to be identified as the resurrected John the Baptist. Instead of Jesus, John would have been a suitable character to be identified with Elijah since Mark 1:6 compares their clothing. Fortunately, in Mark 6:4 Jesus indirectly refers to himself as a prophet. Although this is the only reference of Jesus that is more suitable, 'the reader will soon learn the insufficiency of such an identification in Mark 8:27-30' (Focant 2012:241).

Although Herod in the story holds the title of a king, his actions are not possessing characteristics of a profound king. Focant (2012:241) further contends that 'the guilt of having caused the beheading of John the Baptist seems to plunge him into a fantastic world to the point of imagining Jesus as the one who had come back'. Admittedly, the portrayal of John the Baptist in the beginning of the plot (Mark 6:16-18) gives the reader the allusion that he is the main character, however, he is only used by other people as an object to fulfil their intentions. The main characters are the ones whose actions developed the whole drama that we read about in the central part of the narrative; that is Herod and above all John the Baptist.

With the murderous intentions, Herodias becomes the central character whose lack of power restricts her to be active in fulfilling her wish to get John killed. Given her lack of influence, she plays a conclusive role in the background using her husband

Herod and her daughter. This therefore denotes that Herod as powerful as he was, was controlled by Herodias, which is why he can never be regarded as the influential character in the narrative.

Noticeably, the text reveals the 'contradictory desires in which Herod is trapped in' (Focant 2012:242). Even after John the Baptist recalled Herod's marriage as unlawful according to the Jewish law, he wanted to protect the prophet so that he continues to listen to his word and keep his brother's wife Herodias. As perplexed as he was, it was unfortunate that Herod could not keep both Herodias and John the Baptist safe.

Mark 6:21 mentions a favourable day. Since Herodias was manipulating the situation from the background, this became an opportune day for her to satisfy her intentions. On Herod's birthday banquet, 'his leading citizens, the officers and the first men of Galilee' (Mark 6:21) were invited. Mark 6:22-25 outlines the dramatic nature of the story. This opportune moment begins with Herodias' daughter entering the banquet premises to offer a dance performance, followed by the offer with an oath from Herod of anything up to half of the kingdom. It then ends with the daughter leaving to enquire with her mother what she should ask for.

In addition, the daughter's request of the head of John the Baptist as advised by her mother leaves Herod with conflicting feelings. First, having to kill John the Baptist whom he was protecting from his wife saddened him. Second, making a promise to the daughter with an oath in front of his dinner guests was his demise. As Focant (2012:242) puts it: 'it is no more than a consequence of his defeat and not a sovereign act'.

Although no in-depth details regarding the dance of the daughter are mentioned, this dance pleased Herod and his guests. It was after this dance that the king made a promise to the daughter in front of his guests. 'By its very enormity and its disproportion, the king's offer is hardly of a nature to help the child specify what she wants' (Focant 2012:243). Since the daughter had no specific personal requests, she became an object used to achieve her mother's wish. As it has been Herodias' wish to get John killed, she metaphorically requests for John's life. However, the daughter interprets her mother's desires precisely by asking for the head of John the Baptist on a platter (Mark 6:25). Unfortunately for Herod, the role of his guests at that

moment was to witness the king fulfilling his oath. Regardless of his sorrow, Herod ordered the execution to maintain his high status.

Focant (2012:241) maintained that 'there is no need to project onto the text of Mark the topographical indicators furthered by Josephus'. The narrator of Mark 6:14-29 does not seem to show much interest on the historical background of the text. This is clearly indicated by the absence of the name of the place where the whole drama took place, there are no details regarding John's place of arrest, the period of his detention, the date of his execution and lastly the daughter's name is not mentioned.

Mark 6:14-29 discloses how the acts of violence can downside the righteous ones. The realization of the lack of power led Herodias to manoeuvre her desires through her daughter's dance. It all took place during '"a moment in which the party that is an obstacle is blinded, if only for a moment"' (Focant 2012:243). The results of Herod's offer leave a remarkable point that for Herod, protecting his image before his dinner guests was more important than saving the innocent prophet. At the end of the drama, 'the disciples of John the Baptist came and took his corpse and deposited it in a tomb' (Mark6:29). It is of great importance to note the change in the way all characters are addressed in the last part of the narrative. From being called with their names, the author now refers to them by using their roles i.e. the king, the mother, and the girl. However, John is an exception.

The way the death of John the Baptist is narrated foreshadows that of Jesus. It all happens without the disciples being present. When narrating the death of John the Baptist and that of Jesus, Mark makes use of certain unique words: εὐκαίρου ("favourable" 6:21), εὐκαίρως ("at a favourable time" 14:11), περίλυπος ("become sad" 6:26; 14:34?), πτῶμα ("corpse" 6:29). Both passions point out the issue of the arrest, the execution, and the death. Interestingly, there is a meal preceding these opportune moments, Herod's birthday banquet for Herodias and Jesus' last Passover meal for Judas. Moreover, both Jesus and John the Baptist were put in a tomb after their death.

The murderous scene of John the Baptist prefigures that of Jesus. In the case of John the Baptist, Herodias wished to get John killed because of the hatred she had towards him. Because of her powerlessness, she wanted to use Herod who feared John the Baptist and listened to him gladly. In the case of Jesus, it is the high priests

and scribes who were envious of Jesus. The fear was of the crowd that listened to Jesus eagerly. As a result, Focant (2012:245) contends that 'this parallelism calls for a reflection on the role of the political authorities.

Moreover, it is appropriate to take note of the title of king that Mark uses to refer to Herod. This reference is historically inaccurate, only Jesus held the king title during the time of his Roman trial and execution. Significantly, Mark 6:14-29 points out the misuse of power by political authorities which results in the death of the innocent. Markedly, John's head was silenced by the mother who had an agreement with her daughter, she accomplished her mission by instilling her desires in her daughter's desire.

Distinctly, Mark 6:14-29 is a traditional narrative that had no typical Christian features and its historical background is difficult to formulate. This story stands out to be the only one with an ancient parallel narrative in the gospel of Mark.

2.3.2 F. J. Moloney

Mark 6:14-29 features the reaction of Herod towards the rumours about the identity of Jesus as well as the death of John the Baptist. Comparing the two themes seems to not provide any logical connection. Nonetheless, the death of John the Baptist which prefigures that of Jesus is the sandwich in the narrative. With it one can make sense of the sending out and return of the twelve. Seemingly, Mark 6:14-16 provides Herod's concerns regarding Jesus. Herod's assessment is entangled with the figure John the Baptist. Notably, Jesus was made more famous by associating Him as the resurrected John the Baptist. Moloney (2002:125) further denotes that this supposition 'may point to an expected eschatological prophet, and Jesus, John the Baptist *redivivus,* would thus be the prophet of the end time, possessing great powers.' Although different opinions are expressed regarding who Jesus is, Herod maintains that 'Jesus is the John the Baptist whom he had beheaded' (Mark 6:16). Herod's supposition therefore allows Mark to narrate the tale of the death of John as expressed in Mark 6:17-29.

To see the Markan theological focal point, it is of great importance to first understand Josephus' writing. According to Josephus, John the Baptist's death was a result of Herod's fear of the people who considered John to be a 'just and holy man' (Mark 6:20). On the other hand, Mark denotes that John was killed by an authoritative

figure who gave in to public pressure. Significantly, 'the Christological issues raised in vv. 14-16 lie hidden underneath the folkloric narrative of vv.17-29' (Moloney 2002:127). Unlike Herod, John the Baptist was not easily influenced by the public pressure, he fulfilled his task of preaching repentance and forgiveness of sins.

Interestingly, this narrative turns out to foreshadow the death of Jesus, yet it has no Christological features. Like John the Baptist, Jesus also does not give in to public pressure, not even to safe his own life. The two parallel narratives of John the Baptist and Jesus only differ at the end where John after his death was buried by his disciples. Jesus on the contrary was buried by a member of his council, Joseph of Arimathea and abandoned by his own disciples. Clearly, 'as followers of Jesus, the disciples are called to share in the destiny of Jesus, proleptically acted out in the martyrdom of John the Baptist. John's martyrdom further prefigures the death of anyone who would come after him' (Moloney 2002:128).

2.3.3 J. C. Anderson and S. D. Moore

These scholars make use of the feminist ideologies and principles when critically engaging with the language of the text and how other scholars have interpreted a text. Their exegetical approach entails revisiting the portrayal of women as opposed to male domination, patriarchal power structures and rediscovering the purpose of a woman in a society. In their feminist interpretation, they are of the idea that 'this story of a dancing daughter embodies a male construction of female gender' (Anderson & Moore 1992:115). Some scholars view these women as figures who using their bodies can cause death of someone and even refer to them as sex providers. The role of the daughter is often understood differently; some would give a negative depiction of her while others would interpret her as an innocent girl who was used by her mother.

Besides, they also critique the claims that have been made about the dance of the daughter that it was an erotic dance. Firstly, the text itself does not say much about the daughter's intention when she was performing this dance, secondly the Greek word used for pleasure in the New Testament context suggests that it means to accommodate or make someone happy. It might have been a cultural possibility for a royal daughter to perform a praiseworthy dance during the King's banquet without the intention of sexually tantalizing the King and the rest of the audience.

Most scholars have constructed the dance of the daughter as Vincent Taylor puts it: '"It (the dance of Salome) is nevertheless not wholly incredible, however outrageous, to those who know anything of the morals of Oriental courts, or of Herod's family in particular"' (Anderson & Moore 1992:130).

They further their discussion regarding the patriarchal customs that degrades the value of women and continuously keep an eye on the unpretentiousness and chastity of daughters. Males and females are defined in terms of sexual desires, which imply male honour and shame for females. The postcolonial western view of Oriental woman supported this claim in that woman were discussed as exotic beings which also recalls the concept of Otherness. In fact, when it comes of the Orient 'there is a presumption of the depravity of wealthy royals, the corruption of wealth and power' (Anderson & Moore 1992:124). Reading this narrative from Herod's perspective which is based on what he heard and what he did gives the assumption that Herodias was an evil mother, that the daughter's dance was erotic and regards John the Baptist as denouncer of immoral behaviour but also a victim.

The most important point they make in their feminist interpretation is that if 'there is no Other, there can be no Self. Men fear and label as dangerous and mysterious female powers they lack and need' (Anderson & Moore 1992:134). The intriguing part is that Mark's general outlook of women is positive, but this text is an exception (Dewey 2006:24). Citing Dewey (2006:24), in her criticism of the language used in Mark 6:14-29 and the analysis of the symbolism of women, she furthers goes to mention that 'this is the only instance in Mark of a narrative with sexual overtones, but it is not a negative portrayal of female sexuality'.

While this text serves to emphasize John being the prototype of Jesus and flashback to the era in which the mission of John and Jesus took place, it seems to have the same intentions with Mark 15:6-15 where the death of Jesus is blamed on the Jewish crowd instead of Pilate (the Roman governor himself). Likewise, this text does the same by shifting the blame of the death of John from Herod Antipas the tetrarch to the women. The idea of Herodias taking full responsibility of the death of John contract the notion that 'even queens cannot order executions independently' (Anderson & Moore 1992:120).

Mark 6:14-29 clearly highlights the different symbolic meanings regarding male and female gender and how it is used to define a person's status. It also includes a patriarchal perspective of what woman power is, which as many scholars' state is the ability to please men.

2.3.4   J. R. Donahue and D. J. Harrington

Donahue and Harrington address the incorrect title of king that Mark used to refer to Herod. It is ironic that his desire for the king title led to his downfall as Josephus reports. Nevertheless, Matthew (14:9) and Luke (9:7) rightly calls him 'tetrarch'. Mark 6:14-29 seems to contain a lot of the explanatory γὰρ which purpose is to offer explanation. This 'indicates that Mark was adapting an early legend that was unfamiliar to his readers' (Donahue & Harrington 2002:196). Undoubtedly, the concept of an individual being resurrected was strange to the Jewish community at that time.

In view of this, the idea of 'miraculous powers being at work in him' (Mark 6:14) were characterized by the miracles performed by Jesus. Henceforth, Herod confuses Jesus with John the Baptist when he heard these speculations of who has been raised from the dead. In trying to figure out his identity, 'some said He is Elijah' (Mark 6:15). As presented in 1 Kings 17-19, 21 and 2 Kings 1-2, Elijah was a prophet who was came into conflict with oppressive royal authority. He was known to be the one who will return for the preparation of the day of the Lord, hence the New Testament introduces Him as the forerunner of the Messiah. With the complex traditions of Elijah in the New Testament, Elijah at times is announced to be the forerunner of Jesus (Malachi 4:5-6) and at other times it is John the Baptist who is introduced as the precursor of Jesus (Mark 1:2).

Moreover, others give the assumption that 'He is a prophet like one of the prophets' (Mark 6:15). The general identification of the prophet according to Donahue & Harrington (2002: 196) denotes that 'the Hebrew prophets were not primarily miracle workers; therefore, this latter opinion may refer to a general hope for the return of a prophet like Moses'. Mark speaks of Herod as the one responsible for John's death.

Mark as compared to other ancient sources including Josephus' writing has a slightly different version of the whole narrative. This includes the place where John was imprisoned and executed. While Josephus pronounces that John was imprisoned in

Machaerus on the north-east corner of the Dead Sea, Mark 6:14-29 suggests that it was in Galilee. Further, John is introduced as a just and holy man, Herod is announced as the one who was afraid and protected John, perplexed and listened to him gladly' (Mark 6:20). Herodias on the other hand hold the characteristics of an influential and vengeful woman. The relationship between Herod and Herodias holds resemblance to that of Jezebel and Elijah.

Herod's birthday banquet became an opportune moment for Herodias. Important to take note of is the meaning of the term γενεσίοις. This term in classical Greek refers to the remembrance of the birthday of the deceased person while γενέθλιος ἡμέρα referred to the actual birthday celebration. The Hellenistic Greek, however, makes use of the same term γενεσίοις to refer to both events. Significantly, 'the overtones of the term tell Mark's readers that Herod's "birthday" will always be commemorated as the day in which John died' (Donahue & Harrington 2012:198). The list of the banquet guests in Mark 6:21 signifies the upper class of the Hellenistic world. It also 'heightens the contrast between world power and John the prophet' (Donahue & Harrington 2012:198).

Expressively, Mark 6:22 uses the term κορασίῳ to refer to the dancing daughter. The same word appears in Mark 5:42 for a twelve-year-old girl. It is therefore conceivable to regard the daughter as a young girl who offered 'a child performance rather than the sensuous and seductive dance of later art and literature' (Donahue & Harrington 2012:199). Even the term ἀρεσάσης used to describe the daughter's dance means to please or accommodate. Notably, there is no scriptural evidence that suggests any sexual nuances in the daughter's dance performance.

Ironically, Donahue and Harrington (2012:199) notes that Herod was 'a client king of Rome and had no power to subdivide his kingdom' yet he made a 'promise with an oath of anything up to half of his kingdom' (Mark 6:23). Religiously, taking of oaths was crucial in Judaism and early Christianity. Contrary to Herod's joy of listening to John the Baptist in Mark 6:20, the request of the head of John leaves him sorrowful. Unlike the slow-moving introduction of the narrative, Mark concludes quickly with the executioner bringing the head of John the Baptist to the girl which she gave it to her mother. According to Donahue and Harrington (2012:200), 'since proper burial was a sign of honour and of divine favour John is honoured in death'.

2.3.5 K. R. Iverson and C. W. Skinner

Iverson and Skinner in their work used a narrative critical approach to interpret Mark 6:14-29. They put much emphasis on the unity of the final text. Mark's account of the death of John the Baptist 'is something of an anomaly in the Gospel and fits only loosely in its context' (Iverson & Skinner 2011:146). Mark's cultured style of writing has its unique features that are only found in this narrative. The indirect mention of the activities of Jesus which only appear in Mark 6:14-29 give the assumption that Mark might have accustomed the story from another written form that existed before his writings.

Mark 6:14-29 is read as an interlude for disciples to complete their mission. The gap is being filled by Herod's reaction towards the speculations about Jesus and by reporting the events that led to John the Baptist's death. By using Cranfield's insight, it is observed that 'though not directly concerned with Jesus, it is yet relevant to the history of Jesus, the passion of the Forerunner being a pointer to the subsequent passion of the Messiah' (Iverson & Skinner 2011:148; see also Cranfield 1959:208).

Interestingly, not only does the death of John the Baptist become a harbinger to Jesus' death, Herodias' actions are analogous to those of Jezebel. As observed,

> both "incite their husbands to do evil", the portrayal of the two contain "overtones of sexual promiscuity and misconduct," and "both figures engage in a life and death struggle with a messenger of God who confronts their sinful ways."

> (Iverson & Skinner 2011:150; see also Hoffeditz & Yates 2005:200)

In addition, Iverson and Skinner (2011:153) quotes: "'read through the lens of gender analysis, John's beheading is a horrible example of the extent to which an oppressive gender system collaborates to remove those persons who rise up in protest against it'" (Parsons 1996:98). Although Herod was confused in the beginning of the narrative, his identification of Jesus as John had logic. The mention of the 'powers that are at work in him' (Mark 6:14) is indicative to the reader that John the Baptist performed miracles. Moreover, according to Or Iverson & Skinner (2011) Jesus ministry was introduced through miracles and like John, Jesus was raised from the dead. Again, Herod gives the assumption that Jesus ministry started only after the death of John the Baptist. His misunderstanding was brought by the

lack of knowledge regarding the relationship between John and Jesus and the origin of the miraculous powers (Iverson & Skinner 2011: 153).

Iverson and Skinner in their work notes Mark's other misperception regarding the identity of the daughter of Herodias. According to the Nestle-Aland 27th edition, Mark 6:22 refers to the girl who danced at the banquet as Herod's own daughter. However, Matthew 14:6 and Josephus' writing refer to the girl as the daughter of Herodias by Herod Phillip. Although Mark does not mention the age of the daughter, it has been suggested that she might have been between twelve and fourteen during the banquet. This presupposition was derived from the period in which she married Phillip the Tetrarch who died in 34 CE and later to Aristobulus. Since Mark does not mention the name of the daughter, we learn from Josephus' writings that the daughter's name was Salome.

With reference to the dance of the daughter, Mark 6:22 makes use of the word ἤρεσεν (pleased) which can have an innocent meaning. However, Iverson and Skinner (2011:157) contends that 'it is also used in the context where it means to arouse sexual interest, which is suggested by the setting of a Herodian feast, the male audience, and the girl's dancing'. Describing the daughter's dance as lascivious or not has been a fascinating subject to modern scholarship. Some scholars describe the dance as '"graceful and argue that as a κορασίῳ the young girl would have been the virginal tool of her overbearing mother"' (Iverson & Skinner 2011:157).

Noticeably, Herod's promise to the daughter is formulated with emphasis. First, Herod makes 'a promise with an oath of anything up to half of the kingdom' (Mark 6:23). Second, this oath is made in front of his guests. Morally, he is obliged to fulfil his promise. Politically, is also compelled to fulfil his promise in order not to give his guests any doubt concerning the reliability of his promises during his rule. Herodias' through her daughter's dance fulfils her mission to get John killed. It is suggested that Herodias had not instigated her intentions to the daughter before her dance.

The narrative ends with Herod honouring Herodias' request of the head of John the Baptist. When the daughter received John's head on a platter, she passed it to her mother. 'When John's disciples heard of his death, they came, took the body, and laid it in a tomb' (Mark 6:29).

2.3.6 B. J. Malina and R. L. Rohrbaugh

In their work, Malina and Rohrbaugh makes use of a social-scientific approach when interpreting Mark 6:14-29. It was the duty of the disciples of Jesus to make Him well-known. As recorded in the beginning of the narrative, there were confusions regarding Jesus identity. When they heard of the resurrected figure, 'some were saying it is John the Baptist, others were saying it is Elijah while others were saying it is the prophet, like one of the prophets of old' (Mark 6:14-16).

Malina and Rohrbaugh (2003:170) maintained that 'the question being posed is not one of "identity" as it would be in the modern world. It is rather one of honor or status'. Although Mark does not have the entire kingship episode correctly, the story is narrated through the account of antagonistic characters. Herod's fear of John represents his weakness as well as John's highly acquired public honor.

With regards to the daughter's dance, there is no textual description of this dance. Particularly, the dance performances that were often offered during weddings were quite erotic, nonetheless, Mark 6:14-29 accounts for a different event with different audience or guests. Granted that the leafing men of Galilee were present at the banquet, 'honourable males would not allow a female family member to perform such a display; their failure to prevent her from doing so pegs them as shameless' (Malina & Rohrbaugh 2003:171). It was also shameless for a man to give in to public pressure at the instigation of a woman.

It is surprising that Herod offered half of his kingdom to a woman during the era where a woman's value was half of a man's worth. From Herodias actions, it is conceivable that she noticed the growth of John's public honor more than Herod did, hence she wanted to get John killed. To ensure that John's honor does not overpower that of Herod, emancipated the situation by working behind the scene.

2.4 CONCLUSION AND RESEARCH GAP

The interpretative approaches used by scholars are mostly directed towards the link between death of John the Baptist, the mission of the Twelve who announced the coming back of Jesus, and John's disciples who came to take his body and lay it in a tomb. Instead of focusing on Jesus, the main characters in the story are Herod, Herodias, the daughter, and John the Baptist. Parsons (1996:98) argues that 'read through the lens of gender analysis, John's beheading is a horrible example of the

extent to which an oppressive gender system collaborates to remove those persons who rise up in protest against it'. The unique feature displayed in this narrative is Mark's unsympathetic portrayal of women. With the little that has been said regarding the daughter's dance, most scholars regard the dance as erotic. Some scholars still emphasize that the daughter was innocent, but she was pressurized by her vengeful mother Herodias.

This narrative 'has no Christian features' (Guelich 1989: 327). From the above, the research gap lies in the absence of an interpretation of this text from a dance perspective, which in this study will be the focus. Using Homi Bhabha's theory of mimicry and ambivalence, the hypothesis of this study is that Herodias' daughter, through her dance, was deconstructing the issues of power on a dance floor and reclaiming her femininity in a patriarchal space. Through her dance performance, she was regaining her self-identity by making Herod and the guests' slaves to her body, shifting attention from the important setting of the banquet to the dance floor.

Chapter 3

Theoretical perspective

3.1   INTRODUCTION

In the previous Chapter the research gap in terms of theory in the study of the dancing Herodias' daughter in Mark 6:14-29 was identified. This Chapter proposes and applies Homi Bhabha's post-colonial mimicry and ambivalence theory, the social-scientific model of honour and shame and gender theory as plausible theoretical approaches to address the identified issue. The historical-, narrative-, social-scientific-, and feminist approaches to Mark 6:14-29 shall be supporting perspectives in this study. One of the dominant remarks from feminist scholars is that the dance was erotic; a clandestine use of one's body to fulfil one's desire.

I take the perspective that the story in Mark 6:14-29 about the dancing of Herodias' daughter should be approached as a narrative situated within an agonistic honour and shame culture where power was always contested. Given this, the story deconstructs power and space. The use of post-colonial theory inspired by ideas of Homi Bhabha and others makes it possible to reason that the female body is culturally known to be inferior to its opposite gender. Could the patriarchal gaze be regarded as fetishizing of her body? Did the daughter, through her dance, substitute her inferior honour to that of an equal patron to Herod in a patriarchal society?

Homi Bhabha's postcolonial mimicry and ambivalence theory deals with social interactions within asymmetric power structures. It acknowledges the uneven relationship between the powerful and the powerless, and the use of gender to exert power (the male) on the inferior gender (female), usually referred to as the Other. While the postcolonial theory is the main perspective, this study supplements using postcolonial theory with gender-, narrative-, and form-critical methods.

2.3   THE EMERGENCE OF POSTCOLONIALISM

For the purpose of this study it is worth mentioning the difference between post-colonialism and postcolonialism without a hyphen. Post-colonialism refers to the historical era, a period after colonialism. Postcolonialism, on the other hand refers to modes of representation, of thought, a method of studying practices, values, and

attitudes (McLeod 2010:6). This Chapter specifically refers to postcolonialism without a hyphen. Postcolonialism is a discourse that critiques and explores asymmetric or imbalanced relations in any context, looking at discourses of othering and strategies of response by the oppressed. It should be distinguished from post-colonialism which is the study of the historical period after colonialism. Postcolonialism, as discourse, can be applied to a colonial context but it is not limited to such historical contexts only. Within colonial discourse postcolonialism is interested in exploring strategies of dominance and control and how the oppressed or subjects strategically responded to oppression.

Sharma explains postcolonialism by stating that 'postcolonialism involves strategies of negotiation, resistance, assertion of cultures, and rewriting of histories with newer forms of narrative' (Sharma 2016:51). The term was first used in the late 1970s to refer to the cultural interactions within former colonial states of Europe and came into full use in the mid-1980s. By the mid-1990s, the terms post-colonial and postcolonialism became popular in the academic discourse. Postcolonialism critiques the Western categorization of unequal power relations based on binary oppositions (e.g., self/other, black/white, powerful/powerless).

Given that postcolonial studies critique the nature of power relations, it is approached from a different perspective such as 'deconstruction criticism, feminist theories, psychoanalysis, cultural studies and minority discourse' (Said 2000:112). With these approaches, issues experienced by colonized non-European countries such as racial and cultural discrimination, gender inequalities and immigration can be addressed.

One of the challenges that scholars face when using postcolonialism as a method includes the ability to keep the definition of postcolonialism intact. One such issue that makes its definition difficult is the continuous changing forms of social, economic, political, and academic matters. In addition, its contextual agenda, that is associated with racial discrimination, gender inequality and cultural diversity, also makes it difficult to set a fixed definition (Rukundwa & Van Aarde 2007:1173). For Rukundwa and Van Aarde (2007:1174), postcolonialism provides the colonized with power and space to negotiate with the oppressor for equality and justice. The subjects can 'threaten privilege and power' (Young 2003:7).

3.3   MAIN VOICES IN POSTCOLONIALISM

Scholars who are of great influence in postcolonial studies include Homi K. Bhabha (influenced by Louis Althusser and Jacques Lacan), Gayatri C. Spivak (influenced by Jacques Derrida) and Edwards Said (influenced by Michel Foucault). To develop a plausible methodological approach, the work of these scholars is therefore used in this study. The following is summaries of their respective ideas.

3.3.1 Homi K. Bhabha

Influenced by Edward Said, Homi Bhabha makes use of the sociocultural and linguistic analysis when addressing postcolonial theories. Bhabha's work is focused on the colonial subject and he theorizes concerning the nature of colonial discourse and authority. Though influenced by Said, he differs with him in that he regards Said's work about Orientalism as 'a static system of synchronic essentialism threatened by diachronic forms of history and narrative, signs of instability' (Said 2000:119). Contrary to Said, Bhabha thinks that colonial and postcolonial discourse is heterogenous. He develops the concepts of mimicry, ambivalence, and hybridity to analyse the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized, the master and the Other.

3.3.1.1   Mimicry and ambivalence

Mimicry results from the imitation and adaptation of the culture of the colonizer by the colonized. The act of mimicry, however, does not signify an entire blend in with the background but rather a disguise to blend in with the cultural background. Homi Bhabha explains:

> The sign of double articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation, and discipline, which "appropriates" the Other as it visualizes power. It is the sign of the inappropriate, however, a difference or recalcitrance which coheres the dominant strategic function of colonial power, intensifies surveillance, and poses an imminent threat to both "normalized" knowledges and disciplinary powers.

> (Bhabha 2011:126)

One of the problematic issues in colonial subjugation is observed when the white man's self-esteem is consequent of the oppression of a black man. Developed from ambivalence, mimicry requires the recognizable Other to act in accordance with the culture of the colonizer but not the same. In terms of civilization, the act of mimicry

only advances the maturity of the colonized subject. The tradition of mimicry tends to embody the ironic conciliation in a case where one seeks identity which has contradictory elements due to the continuous changes and differences that appear through history. Homi Bhabha explains saying that the colonized will forever remain 'almost the same but not quite, not white' (Bhabha 1994:130).

The small noticeable differences and slippages between the two cultures are essential as they are what keeps the discourse of mimicry functional. Significantly, in its reflection of double articulations, it can appear as an overpowering tool to the colonial discourse authority and sometimes as a distraction. Therefore, this denotes that in normalizing the colonial subject, the postmodern era is required to develop its own language that fits into its norms, bringing about new knowledge. In addition, the native cultures that are Westernized are categorized as mimicry. The reason behind this notion is that the native cultures, without being fully aware of their cultural destruction, are imitating the Western culture and ideology.

Remarkably, for the colonized to partake in this act, it therefore gives the conception that the colonized is engaging in the nuances of mockery of the culture of the colonizer who is the superior subject. While displacing authority, mimicry also serves to discipline its desires. Within it are elements of suppressions and objection. According to Bhabha (1994:130), mimicry has become a colonial discourse that is uttered *inter dicta*, that is, an individual's actions should be carefully represented, taking into consideration what is known and allowed to be portrayed and that which is known but should be hidden. Because of the strategic objectives in a discourse, it is therefore significant for the Other to sheer between the lines. It is in fact a discourse which complies with the rules but at the same time being against them. Consequently, this discourse leads to the questioning and challenging the authority between the colonizer and the colonized which Bhabha (1994:130) calls 'metonymy of presence'.

Further, through the metonymies of presence, traditional cultural norms are used to enforce inequitable identities and stereotypical tendencies. These aspects change over time as they are being reiterated. Colonial discourse makes use of the metonymy of presence to represent the strategies of desire. It is through this alliance that the representation of identity and meaning of mimicry finds its new presence.

Viewed metonymically, mimicry 'comes from the prodigious and strategic production of conflictual, fantastic, discriminatory "identity effects" in the play of a power that is elusive because it hides no essence, no "itself"' (Bhabha 1994:131). It challenges the colonial discourse authority through its unpredictable and unconventional nature. This culture in its colonial status 'is both present and mummified, it testified against its members. It defines them in fact without appeal' (Fanon 1967:44).

Notably, a form of desire is expressed by the colonized when authoritative measures are taking their course with the aim to deauthorize the colonizers. The colonial discourse in its double articulations differs from what Bhabha (1994:130) refers to as 'thinking the unthought'. This concept in the nineteenth-century Europe implied the breaking off of the concept of the Other, of difference by reuniting with the intrinsic nature of man. Bhabha (1994:132) further states that 'the unthought is the metonymy of the substitutive chain of ethical and cultural discourse'. The emergence of mimicry therefore, results from the split between colonial discourse, where one follows the reality while the other rejects it but restore desire by means of iteration of reality.

The realisation of the contrasting insights and dimensions that exist within different cultures is what brought into being the ambivalent theory. To the colonized other, this act required them to maintain their own cultural identity but at the same time incorporate that of the colonizer. As a result, the colonized become products of cultural hybridity. Hence, the distinctive nature of the colonial power is its belatedness. A point that is often overlooked is the certainty that the colonized other can never hold his or her own original image nor an image that is identical to that of the colonizer. On the one hand, the recurrence of the colonizer's identity simply means that the image that is being portrayed by the colonized is not in its original nature. On the other hand, the cultural differences, and different authoritative levels between the two characters results in an unidentical image. Besides complying with the colonial authority and obligation, the colonized mirroring the coloniser brings about neither difference nor identity.

According to Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin (2000:125), 'mimicry locates a crack in the certainty of colonial dominance, an uncertainty in its control of the behaviour of the colonized'. It has been an explicit goal in imperial discourse. The process by which the colonized subject mimics the culture, behaviour, morals, and values of the

colonizer consist of mockery, resemblance and to some extent it can appear as a threat. Even though mimicry can at once be a threat, it is significant to note that its camouflage agenda 'comes from its double vision which in disclosing the ambivalence of colonial discourse also disrupts its authority' (Ashcroft *et al*. 2000:125). Moreover, it is brought by 'the success of colonial appropriation which depends on a production of inappropriate objects that ensure its strategic failure' (Bhabha 1994:86). The process by which the colonial subject mimics the coloniser subverts colonial discourse. By so doing, cultural and political uncertainty are brought into existence and they therefore disturbs the structure of imperial supremacy.

According to Cesaire (1972:21), mimicry is the 'colonization-thingification behind which there stands the essence of *presence Africaine*' (Bhabha 1994:88). Because of its double vision, mimicry does not hide identity behind its mask. Instead, its basis becomes a preferential portrayal of the desires of the colonial object. In addition, Bhabha points out that this desire 'reverses 'in part' the colonial appropriation by now producing a partial vision of the colonizer's presence; a gaze of otherness, that shares the acuity of the genealogical gaze, which liberates marginal elements and shatters the unity of man's being through which he extends his sovereignty' (Bhabha 1994:88-89).

The process by which the gaze of the disciplined are being displaced requires surveillance of the observer by the observed. It is through this process that the concept of identity is being rephrased by partial representation and separated from basic nature. The asymmetric power dynamics between the master and the slaves brings about questions of concerns when dealing with the social interactions between the two beings. The powerful beings tend to overuse their power by practicing acts of banditry and subjection to silence the powerless ones.

The theory of ambivalence, therefore, aims to express the ideas of double agendas or hidden intentions, which entails the attractive and repellent behaviours which are meant to benefit the so-called Other. Regardless of the uneven power structures, the colonized have an elusive strategic way to tolerate the supremacy received from the colonizers and that is through the acts of ambivalence and mimicry.

3.3.1.2 Hybridity

The concept of hybridity arises from Bhabha's realisation that colonialism is not just a topic discussed as cultural history. Instead, it interferes with the present in that the understanding of cross-cultural relations should be transformed. It has been a vital concept in cultural criticism where multiculturism accommodates the emergence of new cultural forms arising from colonialism. Formulated by Bhabha, the concept of hybridity is to be understood metaphorically as a term that suggests an integration of cultural practices of both the colonizer and the colonized. According to Bhabha (1994), the mixedness of cultures results in the impurity of culture. This concept aims to challenge the discourse of imperialism that is not influenced by anything else besides itself.

Bhabha uses the term hybridity when studying the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized, which is marked by two characteristics; 'firstly, their independence and secondly, the mutual construction of their subjectivities' (Ashcroft *et al*. 2000:108). The construction of different cultures (the colonizer's and the colonized) results in the cross-cultural exchange referred to as the Third Space. This cultural construction takes place in an ambivalent and contradictory space and its emergence becomes a challenge to cultural identity. In order to avoid the 'conceptualization of *inter*national culture that is not based on cultural diversity but on the inscription and articulation of cultural hybridity, it is therefore significant for the Third Space to have colonial origin' (Bhabha 1994:38).

A fundamental aspect of hybridity is the in-betweenness of cultures because it is what gives the concept of hybridity its meaning. To both the colonizer and the colonized, cultural hybridity is attained by masking cultural difference and highlighting mutuality of cultures. Giving emphasis to the mutuality of cultures does not 'suggest that mutuality negates hierarchical nature of the imperial process or that it involves the idea of an equal exchange' (Ashcroft *et al*. 2000:109). Instead, it understates the unequal power relations between the colonizer and the colonized and oppositionality. In postcolonial studies, hybridity serves as a discourse which aims to de-historicize and de-locate cultures from their linguistic and geographical space to an abstract, globalised context (Ashcroft *et al*. 2000:109). Moreover, with its tendency, cultural hybridity neglects the specificities arising from certain cultural settings.

The notion of discourse analysis, according to Young, is to be understood not as a tool that replaces the geographical, historical, and political aspects of cultures. Instead, Young (1995:163) asserts that it functions as a significant framework which provides a common discursive medium for different texts of colonialism. Both Bhabha (1994) and Young (1995) articulate hybridity for its ability to overturn the construction of authoritative structures in a colonial environment. It destabilizes power and subverts binary thinking. Bhabha further states that the opposition of traditional binaries brings a complex understanding of the interrelation and transgression of cultures which reconstruct each other. As much as hybridity can contrast colonial resistance, it can also be a challenging factor to colonial representation.

The process of hybridity, as articulated by Bhabha, corrects the false notions that cultures are monolithic and that their cultural signs and practices, as essential as they are cannot be changed. It involves the political and cultural intercession between the culture of the colonizer and the colonized to produce a hybrid culture. Repetition is another element found within hybridity which is used as a means of resistance in neo-colonialism. Since hybridity is a Western discourse, the continuous repetition of this thought in each space and time results in the discourse losing its Westness. It therefore leads to the emergence of hybrid thoughts.

3.3.2   Gayatri C. Spivak

The other important voice in postcolonial theory studies is Spivak. The work of Spivak is centred around postcolonialism, feminism, deconstruction, and Marxism. Spivak is influenced by the work and translations of Derrida and is interested in matters influencing the construction of truth. She locates her theory between the theories of Said and Bhabha. Said asserts that Spivak 'defends deconstruction since it problematizes the positionality of the subject of investigation' (Said 2000:117). Unlike Said, whose analysis considers the social and political matters, Spivak's analytical perspective entails the radical possibility of deconstruction. When examining colonial discourse, Spivak refers to the epistemic violence of imperialism as a key reference to the construction of colonial subject (Said 2000:124).

Fundamental to her study, is Spivak's use of the term 'Subaltern', a military term which means 'lower rank' (Ambesange 2016:48). Women, the Orient, the Third

World, and ethnic people can all be regarded as subaltern groups. In an article *Can the Subaltern speak*, Spivak mentions that the voice of the colonized cannot be heard because there is no platform that exists that is made available from which she can speak. This means that actions of resistances cannot be fully expressed without being associated with the dominant discourse. Imperial power and discourse restrict the colonized to function as independent groups, and promptly position them as secondary or inferior beings.

Spivak aims to restore the identity of non-European and Third World women who have been silenced by male supremacy. In addition, she challenges the biased worldview of the Western civilization and critiques the construction of the Western knowledge system used to control the non-Europeans. She is against the idea of recovering the precolonial past and declares that it can never be recovered because precolonial past has been changed by colonialism, therefore it can never be pure (Ambesange 2016:49).

3.3.3   Edward Said

Said's work critiques the representation of the Orient within Western literature and films. Since the field of postcolonialism encompasses different analysis to texts, his theoretical approach makes his work distinctive. Unlike Bhabha and Spivak, whose theories are centred around psychoanalysis and deconstruction, Said's reliance is on empiricism and historicism. Because of their common interest in the colonial history and current colonial matters, Said's work can be linked to that of Homi Bhabha and Gayatri Spivak.

Said's book *Orientalism* focuses on the literature of the empire, and the process and importance of theorizing travel writing. Said believes that there are certain political forces and events which gave rise to Orientalism. He defines Orientalism as 'a manner of regularized writing, vision, and study, dominated by imperatives, perspectives and ideological biases supposedly suited to the Orient' (Said 1978:202). The Orient (the East) in orientalism is the one that is discovered, observed, and described by the system of representation formulated by the Europe and Western Empire, the Occident (Ambesange 2016:47). In literary terms, it functions on the discourse by the West, where the literary and sociological fields together form a textual universe. Moreover, orientalism, according to Said, functions

from three different contexts. First, it can be academical; it involves studies engaging the Orient. Second, it relates to the informal context where the Orient is in opposition to the Occident. Third, it can be defined from the historical context where the emphasis is given on the Western authority which overpowers the Orient and restructure it as they wish.

For philologists, philosophers and political scholars, orientalism has turned to be an institution which allows them to rule over the Orient. As a result, Said asserts that 'the knowledge about the "orient" produced and circulated in Europe was an ideological accompaniment of colonial power' (Ambesange 2016:48). Orientalism thus allows for studies regarding the unequal power dynamics as observed in the predominance of certain cultures over others. Said, therefore, claims that 'the study of the orient was ultimately a political vision of reality; whose structure promoted a binary opposition between the familiar (Europe) and the strange (orient)' (Ambesange 2016:48).

In addition, Said discusses the influence brought by the British, French and Americans to imperialism in the nineteenth and twentieth century. He makes use of anthropological methodology when giving an analysis of the impact of Orientalism both in history and in the modern-day society. The imperial travel writing has also been of great influence on the postcolonial study of Orientalism. They give attention to women's travel writing which have been undermined by the patriarchal culture. Notably, it was through the travel writings that the west in the Middle Ages developed interest in the East. The discussions regarding gender, political and historical issues continued to be fundamental aspects of Orientalism while the methodological and hypothetical discrepancies proved to be less significant in orientalism (Said 2000:145). In the field of Orientalism, the Orient is viewed as a subject of study and the authority of the Western colonial rule over the East is being validated.

Said addresses problematic issues arising from postcolonial thoughts and theories. One of the issues he addresses is that, though the global domination of Western capital is still operating, the era whereby the Western domination took place and exploitation of non-Western countries has passed (Said 2000:112). He further mentions that it is important to take note of the difference between the historical background of settler colonies such as South Africa, Canada, Australia and New

Zealand and non-settler colonies since their experience of imperial and colonial domination and the manner in which they gained their political independence are not the same and thus not comparable.

When Said engages in discussions which critique Orientalism as a postcolonial discourse, he bases his arguments on a humanist perspective. This approach implies that a profound analysis of the issues arising from Orientalism requires one to take note that fields of research cannot exist or function independently from one another. Instead, Said argues that to gain a deeper historical understanding, 'one must consider injustices and suffering through a broader historical, cultural and socio-economic reality' (Said 1978:13). In order to understanding the systematic power relations between the East and the West, it is therefore essential to view Orientalism as a discourse- that is the analysis of a common subject through the use of comparable methodological approaches and power relations between the occident and its subject.

The occidental theory of Orientalism is socially constructed by the Western perception of the Orient (its oriental counterpart). Cultural domination and power imbalances between the East and West are entirely incorporated in the Orientalist discourse. Significantly, 'the discourse of power within Orientalism makes use of knowledge to construct supremacy, which is later translated into cultural relationship, the underlying importance of power being at the core of all social fields of study' (Donzé-Magnier 2017:3).

3.4 SOCIAL-SCIENTIFIC CRITICISM

Since this study deals with a text in Mark that is rooted in a particular social and cultural realm, social-scientific criticism compliments this study's use of postcolonial theory. Social-scientific interpretation makes use of theories in established fields of sociology and anthropology to imagine the dynamics of the social world behind biblical texts. Since the world of the Bible is culturally, linguistically, geographically, and historically far from our current world, it uses models which come in two forms: the direct models and indirect models. These models include honour and shame, labelling and deviance theories, individualism and dyadism, and subsistent cultures. Further, social-scientific criticism focuses on the cultural and social context that proximate the world behind the text. This hermeneutical approach assists to

associate the text's semantics with the theological, social, cultural, and literary components of the era in which the text was written. This theoretical approach is therefore a constructive mechanism to social interactions.

The importance and relevance of the use of theories and concepts of social sciences to biblical exegesis emerged in the 1970s. It was only then that exegetes in a focused manner explored the theoretical and methodological dimensions of the social sciences to social-scientifically study the Bible contextually. It was brought by biblical scholars, ancient historians and sociologists who were interested in the social values and context of the biblical texts. Before this approach was put into practice, biblical interpreters were only focusing on the literary-, theological-, and ideological features they could identify in biblical texts without paying much attention on the text's social dimensions. Those who were accustomed with the social sciences were afraid to minimize theological and religious matters to social circumstances and thus overlooked the principally theological content and character in their writings (Elliott 1993:18). As Berger (1969) mentioned, social sciences make use of 'human knowledge and culture which is socially constructed and refers to it as methodological atheism' (Horrell 1999:11). Elliott also presupposes that 'knowledge is socially condition and perspectival in nature – without which no communication would have occurred' (Dvorak 2007:257).

As much as social-scientific criticism as a sub-discipline of exegesis was designed to analyse certain aspects in biblical texts, it functions together with other exegetical approaches, namely historical criticism, textual criticism, literary criticism, narrative criticism, form criticism, redaction criticism, theological criticism, and rhetorical criticism. Each of these exegetical approaches have their own aim and focus when doing biblical analysis. However, they were not always providing a satisfying societal understanding of early Christianity. The outcomes of all these exegetical methods combined gives a more relevant and coherent interpretation of biblical texts. Social-scientific criticism is thus structured by and responsive to the social and cultural circumstances through which, from which and by which the text was produced.

Remarkably, the origin of exegetical methods has been shaped by the notion that the goal of biblical interpretation is to proclaim the original meaning as influenced by the original context of the text through a thorough observation of textual elements and

factors that give possible meaning of the text (Elliott 1993:9). New Testament texts are texts which, according to anthropological scholars, are written in a 'high context society' (Elliott 1993:10). That is to say, the communicators in their writing assume a knowledge and experience that is shared broadly when addressing matters of the social context.

This deduction unfortunately expects the reader to read in between the lines. It becomes an unfortunate event when a reader in the contemporary society is not knowledgeable about the social values of the ancient society in which the text was composed. With the lack of knowledge, a reader cannot comprehend the intended meaning and message of ancient texts and that brings out the importance of the existence of social-scientific criticism. In addition, this exegetical approach, as Elliott (1993:11) asserts, assists in avoiding the 'anachronistic and ethnocentric reading of ancient Mediterranean texts.'

As mentioned above, the social-scientific approach to biblical texts as a sub-discipline of exegesis complements other exegetical methods. Even though this is true, it is worth mentioning that these exegetical methods sometimes overlap. Notably, in the twentieth century, there was a major curiosity on the social setting, also referred to as the *Sitz-im-Leben*, of traditional elements which are reconstructed based on the continuous change of social circumstances. This profound interest was brought by the development of form criticism, tradition criticism and source criticism. Elliott states that 'the consideration of these circumstances seldom advanced beyond random hunches to a comprehensive analysis of the interrelations of texts and social contexts' (Elliott 1993:12).

During the late twentieth century, the New Testament scholarship was driven by an idealist tradition which is of the view that all the determinants and conflicting issues of the historical processes are functioning based on an idealist misconception. Following this approach consequently underestimate the need to consult the historical social constructions. Likewise, it brings about confusions where theological issues are mistaken for historical realities and using the social and cultural aspects to demonstrate the historical background (Elliott 1993:12).

As a sub-discipline, social-scientific criticism intends to answer questions regarding the values, principles and expectations of a society as influenced by its social and

cultural environment. It includes the strategies used to ensure functional communications and shared meaning which is affected by the continuous change of situations. The general overview of this approach is to come to an understanding of how the text, social realities, ideologies, cultural structures, belief systems, political authority, and economic stance correlate. Although social-scientific methodology does not put emphasis on the ideological, historical, and literary aspects, it functions as a minimal component of the initiative of historical-criticism. Biblical scholars have come to the realisation that historical-critical method offers an insufficient interpretation of the Bible, hence the use of social sciences of significant. It improves its adequacy as a form of interpretation.

Sociological exegesis allows for theories, models and outcomes arising from social science research to provide a meaningful analysis which will enhance the understanding of biblical interpretation. In view of this, it is significant to study social relations amongst individuals and organizations, patterns of social behaviours, social systems composed of societal expectations and beliefs, and how the general social phenomena shape the society. The social-scientific study stretches from the micro-level analysis where the focus is on the social statuses, social roles of individual within a given group or organization to the macro-level analysis where attention is given to the society in relation to the political, cultural, social and economic sectors. The study can also branch into either a diachronic or synchronic reading of the text, depending on the intended objective.

As indicated above, social-scientific criticism integrates other disciplines, models and theories including semiotics, history, economics, sociology, archaeology, anthropology, and theology. The use of other disciplines is not to manufacture new information but rather to gather all the accessible data to give an extensive theoretical agenda. As Elliott (1993:15) puts it, 'it serves as a "heuristic" function, that is, it aids discovery and thereby the stimulation of imagination and the expanding of conceptual horizons'.

The discipline of sociology is a very diverse and broad field, which makes it necessary to distinguish and specify the approach used in research to avoid uncertainties regarding the intentions of study. It is therefore necessary to differentiate between the social chronicles which have no intentions to explain or

give an interpretation at a social-scientific level and the social-scientific study composed of theories and models in the task of exegesis. In this study honour and shame as a model of social-scientific criticism is used to further explore the world behind biblical texts. Honour and shame have been the most significant model documented as the foundational value of the Mediterranean world.

3.4.1 Honour and shame

The pivotal values in the first-century Mediterranean world were honour and shame. As Malina (1981:27) has explained, honour is described 'as socially proper attitudes and behaviour in the area where the three lines of power, sexual status, and religion intersect'. Honour has to do with the recognition of one's own value and the desire for your social surrounding to acknowledge your worth. Social recognition therefore enhances one's reputation in the society. Malina (1981:29) further notes that honour can either be 'ascribed or acquired'. Ascribed honour results from being born into wealthy family, it happens passively and does not required any effort for one to be socially acknowledged. It is the general honour brought by family membership. Acquired honour on the other hand requires an individual to take effort to prove themselves and their wealth to the society which in turn gives them power. It is determined by the virtuous conducts of an individual and their economic class. Hence, the honoured belong to the upper-class category.

One must fit in within the socially defined rules to gain this honour and this social pattern is referred to as the challenge and response pattern. Being a challenge meant that an individual acquired their honour on the account of another person losing their honour, whether it becomes a temporary or permanent situation, what mattered was for one to obtain public recognition. Since honour has become a public matter, it is therefore required for an honoured individual to preserve the social status given to him by the society and sustain a good behaviour. Van Eck asserts that

> challenges always take place in the public, and consist of three phases: 1) The challenge itself in terms of some actions, word or both; 2) the perception of this challenge by both the one who is being challenged and the public at large (or present); and 3) the reaction of the receiving individual and the evaluation of the reaction on the part of the public.

Family ties in the first-century Mediterranean were highly valued to the extent that the honour of the head of the family extended to his family members (which is what brings about the ascribed honour). The line between personal identity and family identity faded because the first-century Mediterranean was not an individualistic society. It also meant that if the head of the family is dishonoured, so is his extended family members. Honour also depends on the sexual status of an individual, if viewed 'as an exclusive prerogative of one of the sexes, honour is always male, and shame is always female' (Van Eck 1995:167). Bechtel further mentions that 'shame functioned in terms of the following: 1) As social control to repress aggressive and undesirable behaviour; 2) as a pressure to preserve social cohesion; and 3) as an important means to dominate others' (Bechtel 1991:53).

The competition for social recognition and family honour does not end in the Mediterranean society, one must always be prepared to defend themselves and their family. This challenge is 'most often verbally, but also with symbolic gestures, and even with the use of physical force' (Moxnes 1993:20). Two individuals who recognise each other's honour, be it equal or almost equal honour challenge each other based on the traditionally set societal rules. Competing for honour, however, has certain dynamics. Accepting to challenge another honourable person shows signs of respect, which is why challenging the inferior humiliates the honoured and brings about shame to them as opponents. For that reason, 'challenge and riposte are played like a game with a set of rules' (Moxnes 1993:21).

Clearly, honour and shame played a crucial role in the public life of the Mediterranean society, both in the past and present. This model is efficient in social settings; therefore, the religious, social, and economic context at large should be considered. The kinship system of the Mediterranean world comes with the understanding that family honour has implications towards public relations. Within the honour system there are gender lines which distinguishes between the private and public space based on the roles each gender is expected to perform. Moreover, not only does family lineage give understanding to honour and shame but also group affiliations gave an individual some sense of belonging and identity.

The model of honour and shame makes visible unequal power structures brought by gender inequality. In the Mediterranean society, only men could hold public positions, denoting that the public discourse of honour and shame was male governed. Women, on the other hand, dominated the private and domestic spaces. For men, the honour and shame model were designed for them to sustain their masculinity amongst themselves. The ability of a man to secure the purity of women during his rule resulted in him maintaining his honour. For women to lose their chastity, it would mean that the man failed to protect them and will therefore results in shame for the whole family. In view of this, Moxnes (1993:21) claims that 'women were therefore looked upon as potential sources of shame.'

As for shame, it can be portrayed positively when viewed as 'sensitivity for one's own reputation, sensitivity to the opinions of others' (Malina 1981:44). Besides the negativity brought by shame, it can in some sense be regarded as 'modesty, shyness, or defence' (Moxnes 1993:21). These virtues expected a woman to maintain her chastity and become obedient to the head of the family (male head). While these were interpreted as feminine, the ability to protect the family and women's chastity was construed as masculine. Unlike honour, a shameless person does not need to adhere to the socially defined rules to have a social interaction. In fact, shame does not give individuals the freedom to experience the acceptable moral life based on the socially constructed norms as they wish, and it limits their social relations. Since there is no acknowledgement of social boundaries by the shameless, they do not receive any courtesy from the honoured. For that reason, the honourable believe that showing respect to the shameless will make them look foolish. In addition, one loses their social position when being shamed (Bechtel 1991:50).

Julian Pitt-Rivers, a social anthropologist, has done an extensive work on the social interactions of the Mediterranean life in the 1960s and the values that administered social relations. Pierre Bourdieu worked on the patterns of challenge and riposte in the Mediterranean society. Together with other scholars, they identify the concepts arising from the social sciences which were previously not given attention and developed them 'as united by pervasive and relatively uniform value system based on complementary codes of honour and shame' (Gilmore 1987b:2). The

development of the model of honour and shame was brought by the realisation of the unity within the social and cultural practices of the first-century Mediterranean.

Significantly, while engaging in the widely known anthropological concepts, Pitt-Rivers (1966, 1968) asked: 'what is the relation between honour as status and privilege on the one hand, and honour as moral virtue on the other hand?' (Moxnes 1993:25). In criticising him, scholars have argued that the presence and the importance of other moral values such as honesty and hospitality in most of the Mediterranean cultures make it impossible for these moral values to be regarded as competitors of honour but rather as corresponding aspects. Because of such, honour in the Mediterranean can therefore not be regarded as a discrete area. Nevertheless, there is one strange aspect of honour and shame that makes the Mediterranean society distinctive and that is 'its strong association with sexual roles and gender divisions' (Moxnes 1993:25).

When engaging in the anthropological concepts, it is of great importance to 'speak of culture rather than a society' since culture 'is understood as a moral or symbolic system that unites people into communities with shared values' (Moxnes 1993:25). In a larger context, the model of honour and shame can be placed within theories arising from social sciences, gender perspectives, sexuality issues, and lastly under the history of political organizations. This allows one to see the diversity of honour and shame, its correlativeness to other social anthropological aspects, and the role it plays in the ruling of the society.

After the discovery of honour and shame in the 1960s, there have been much discussions regarding the relationship between this model and other social realisms such as gender issues and power structures visible between the patron and the client. More female scholars have shown interest in the questions of gender in relation to honour and shame. It is important to take note that the issues of honour and shame are not static, and they vary according to cultures, sex, location, social and economic status. Because of the influence they have on the culture of the society, honour and shame also has an impact on the ruling of the society, which normally brings about conflicts on who has more power than the other to rule.

The unequal power structures within societies brings about the continual redefinition of the concept of honour and shame. Baroja (1966, 1992) mentions that honour and

shame and society have a '"dialectical relationship"' (Moxnes 1993:26). Baroja's notion regarding the impact honour has towards social matters and conflicts has implications in the New Testament context. For example, 1 Corinthians 1:18-31, Paul's praise of shame of the cross gives a new insight on what is to be honoured. In doing so, Paul is 'in defiance of the dominant social elites of the Greco-Roman world and their values' (Moxnes 1993:27). Another instance is found in Romans 12 when Paul was condemning the Christians for being in search for honour. Noteworthy, seeking for honour in the Greco-Roman elite was acceptable, therefore, his criticism can be understood as a distinct identity for Christians.

3.4.1.1 Honour and shame displayed in family and lineages

In the Mediterranean world, social structures were built from family ties, that is members of the families, clans, and lineages. With that being said, the primary moral principles were group oriented. Contrary to the Mediterranean society, the modern and postmodern societies from the Western region adapt their social structures depending on who is willing to be part of their circles. Their family ties do not restrict them to be part of their own family group. For that reason, they function on universal principles, which are meant to equally benefit every member of a certain group. Their system of values and morals is not meant to discriminate the other based on their position in the family or the family they belong to when judged from a larger societal context. Likewise, the Mediterranean region function on the notion of collective honour, which is derived from the common kinship system of descendants through the male line.

In societies where honour and shame play a crucial role, Moxnes (1993:28) declares that the following elements are common in such societies:

- Social organizations are family based. Since it is not an individualistic society, every member of the group is responsible for the group honour and protected by it (ascribed honour).
- Honour values are exclusive and particularistic and stand in sharp contrast to universal and inclusive values of the West.
- In the agonistic character of honour societies, family plays a central role. The family honour must be protected in the game of challenge and riposte.

- Although family members attain a common respect in the society because of the family honour which they inherit, there may be conflicts within a group which makes other members more honourable while other become clients to their own wealthy family members.

All these elements are present in the New Testament. Matthew 1:1-17 and Luke 3:23-38, for example, emphasise Jesus' status which was brought by the importance of His genealogy. Also, the first group of Christians emphasised family ties regardless of the conflicts they experienced within their Christian group. In Romans 2:17, 24, 3:5 Paul points out the importance of status and his mention of the descendants of Abraham in Romans 4 and Galatians 3 highlights the importance of the identity of believers. While doing this, he still maintains a Jewish kinship system.

3.4.1.2 Masculinity and honour

It has always been an expectation for men to defend their masculinity by competing amongst themselves. This justification was brought by men's uncertainty regarding their duties as men and the eager to prove to each other that one is stronger than the other. Research has shown that the age of a man has an impact on his masculinity and recognition of honour. This is because for old men, the Mediterranean society generally expects honesty and responsibility from them while the young men are striving for acquired honour, which is attained by being in opposition to their competitor (other men). Also, men were judged based on their ability to fulfil their sexual responsibilities towards their wives and the ability to handle the economic needs of their family.

3.4.1.3 Honour and shame from women's viewpoint

Since most of the ancient writings are done by males from a male perspective, female scholars have criticized the model of honour and shame while at the same time bringing into place new methodological approaches. Having an insight that is influenced by women's experiences and understanding of this model has been a great addition to social anthropology. In the analysis of honour based on gender, separating male and female experiences has been a great addition. From previous research, it has been found that the association of female purity, shame to female and expectation for females to be submissive towards males as Moxnes states was brought by 'men competing for scarce resources among kinship groups' (Moxnes

1993:32). Viewed cosmologically, females are strongly associated to shame while males are strongly associated to honour. In the Mediterranean culture, it was morally acceptable to associate female chastity to either women's honour or shame as it operated to their own benefit.

The model of honour and shame cannot be complete without reference to the issues of gender, masculinity, and sexuality. For further exploration and broader understanding, gender theory will subsequently be discussed in the next section.

3.5   GENDER THEORY

While postcolonialism and social-scientific criticism assist in revealing cultural dynamics and representations, women and gender theory compliment in discussing culturally imbedded ideas about women relating to the story. Within philosophical, historical, literature, sociological, biblical, and cultural studies, the understanding of feminine, masculine, and queer customary codes in a society or a specific context is crucial. While engaging in this study, it is important to be mindful of the difference between sex- that is the biological make-up of a human body and gender- that is the social construct based on roles. Both theoretical and empirical research have shown the significance and universality of gender in relation to contemporary society. As theorists speak and write about the centrality of equality amongst men and women, it remains a concept which we desire, a thought that will bring the society to new modernity if practiced. It is unfortunate that we live 'neither in a post-feminist world nor a feminist Utopia' (Bradley 2007:180).

The predetermined biological causal factors arising from history led to the criticism of the social and cultural construction of masculinity and femininity of men and women. The centrality of the analysis of gender studies is expressed by the representation of gender and gender identity, which is normally intersected with the issues of sexuality. Radical feminists theorise gender as a 'structural base of inequality while the postmodernists analyse it as a social category of difference' (Bradley 2007:181-182). These theories can be instantaneously used for gender analysis. Since gender aspects were known to be historically fixed, viewing it as a social dynamic in the contemporary society gives it an element of flexibility which provides space for change. As far as we know, the society makes use of the two established biological differences to assign acceptable patterns of behaviour, social roles, and expected

cultural duties. These dynamics are what brings about the cultural definitions of masculinity and femininity.

Additionally, these dynamics are what enables individuals to identify themselves within a set of social and cultural aspects. They promote a collective society which gives one a sense of belonging. It is believed that because of postmodernity, gender analysis has now shifted its focus from addressing the issues of gender inequality to exploring its discourses. Although postmodern feminism has had a positive impact in our society, it is worth mentioning that most of its work is hypothetical and speculative. Remarkably, postmodern shift now addresses issues such as 'the stress on the body, sexuality, selves and subjectivities' (Bradley 2007:184). Also, it unpacks the complexities of power in relation to gender, of which are revolving around ethnicity, class, gender, and the like. Markedly, these forms of difference have a huge impact on the political power, social and cultural stand of an individual.

The issues of power in relation to gender remain controversial issues which were brought by the so-called postmodern turn. Power and gender relations are frequently conceptualized in a political context and have been validated in feminism. One of the questions asked in the field of gender and power is: 'do we have to develop a feminist theory of power and gender, or can we resort to existing social theory to explain the gendered consequences of power?' (Davis, Leijenaar & Oldersma 1991:42). One of the approaches to femininity discussions is the discourse perspective. This viewpoint suggests that sexuality, gender, femininity, sex, and masculinity are matters that cannot be given a fixed meaning. The location and mechanisms used to exercise power are one of the factors affecting the definition of these groupings.

A feminist discourse analysis in the modern society has shifted its focus to attempt to understand and answer how gender is constructed and how its constructions enables discussions of gender inequality since it has been emphasized that the above-mentioned categories have no fixed meaning. The discursive construction plays a role in the understanding of the social phenomenon, hence 'power is assumed to be omnipresent and omnipotent' (Davis *et al.* 1991:47). Consequently, these terms lose their theoretical significance. As Davis *et al.* (1991:47) mentioned, 'the idea of a socially constructed gender and of 'women' as an underprivileged

social category runs the risk of being swallowed up in the bottomless swamp of permanently shifting meanings and ambivalent discursive constructions'.

Nancy Hartsock, a feminist scholar, developed a feminist theory that comprehend the universal notions of power, gender and social status. In her theory, she mentions how gender relations are influenced by power and Eros (desire). Gender has been used as a tool where asymmetric power relations between men and women are constructed. Although the society has constructed a system of domination, power to some extent can be linked to agency. In terms of what an individual can do or could have done in each situation, power refers to the ability of an individual's actions to be ascribed to the freedom of choice in an authoritative space (Giddens 1976:11). By taking the point that power is agency makes it possible to assume that although an individual might comply with the oppressor, their result is not entirely influenced by the social forces.

Women have been subjected to male supremacy because of the automatic association of power to forms of authority. The complex and subtle nature of power allows the viewpoint that power can be exercised between genders without structured inequities having to take control (Davis et al. 1991:83). It is important to take note that in the sociological field, there is no single theory which can account to how power is gendered. Instead, there are theories which become of great help when analysing the relationship between uneven power structures and gender in specific social practices and contexts.

3.6   CONCLUSION

In the next chapter, the narrative in Mark 6:14-29 is read from a postcolonial gendered perspective. Postcolonial theory is an epistemology that seeks to address the issues of identity, race, gender, and ethnicity. While doing so, it is facing a challenging task of developing a universal identity, and to analyse how the colonized people understand the relationship between the powerful and the powerless. Taking postcolonial theory as a plausible approach to re-interpret Mark 6:14-29, it is possible to assume that the daughter through her dance routine deconstructed power, turning what is mostly interpreted as an erotic dance into a routine which allows her body to feed the gaze of men. The social-scientific model of honor and shame enables the sociological exegesis where one can explore the social and

cultural aspects of the biblical texts. Gender theory entails the use of the cultural and social construction of masculinity and femininity to enforce gender identity and rule. It takes note of the use of power by the so-called superior gender (male) to rule the inferior gender (female). With the social-scientific and gender theory, the daughter's dance can be interpreted as an event where the daughter challenged masculinity by becoming a negotiator to Herod, a vocal subaltern substituting the offer of half of the Kingdom into a request to kill John the Baptist.

Chapter 4

Reading the dancing daughter from mimicry, ambivalence and gender theory

4.1   INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter the study identified plausible theoretical approaches to the identified issue in Mark 6:14-29. In this Chapter, the narrative of the dancing daughter is read from a postcolonial-gendered approach. Given the social and cultural context of the Greco-Roman world, this section addresses issues of power and masculinity during the rule of Herod. It also addresses gender issues, with the focus on the representation of female bodies and the socially constructed attributes associated with males within the Greco-Roman world.

Noticeable in the ancient Greco-Roman culture the use of gender to categorize unequal power structures. The use of the biological make-up of an individual to determine the political and social influence one has is very common practice in the Greco-Roman society. Although gender is one of the power determinants, status plays a more significant role in influencing the position one occupies in the power structure hierarchy.

The focal point in this Chapter is the dance performance during Herod's banquet. The Greco-Roman culture enjoyed watching people dancing while enjoying wine during their banquets. The banqueters drew pleasure from erotizing the female body that dances. Since the status of dancers in ancient Mediterranean is of low-class, dancers experienced subjectivity and their bodies were viewed as sexual objects that feeds the male eye. Through bodily movements the society not only learn to read the non-verbal message conveyed, but also learn to fit into their cultural and socio-economic practices. The Chapter will further reread the dancing of Herodias' daughter using Homi Bhabha's theory of mimicry and ambivalence and gender theory as plausible hermeneutical approaches. The social-scientific model of honor and shame is further explored when discussing the asymmetrical power structures based on the masculine and feminine attributes.

4.2   THE GRECO-ROMAN BANQUET AND DANCE AS ENTERTAINMENT

4.2.1   The Greco-Roman banquet

The written sources, contemporary art pieces, archaeological evidence and literary narratives provide significant information regarding the Greco-Roman banquet. As indicated in the above-mentioned sources, the sharing of a meal in the first-century Mediterranean had a significant social function. A birthday that is celebrated with a banquet in ancient Mediterranean was often associated the offering of a sacrificial meal (Baert 2014:11). But a banquet that is hosted in the court as in Herod's banquet indeed signifies a special occasion. The shared meals were not only offered to feed people, but also to enhance social and political relationships.

The act of feasting was based on various principles which includes political associations, gender, ethnicity, lineage, age, and social status (Donahue 2003:425). Different types of meals were open to certain groups of the elite. Hence Herod's birthday banquet was only open to 'the leading men of Galilee, high officials and military commanders' (Mk 6:21). These attendees received their invitation based on their political stance in the society. Therefore, it can be deduced that Herod's intention was to extend the notion of inclusion and share the feeling of fellowship with his associates.

In classical and Hellenistic Greece, women (especially those who were married and reputable in the community) were not allowed to be part of male convivium. It was only during special occasions such as funerals and weddings that women were accommodated although their participation is limited. In such events where the family banquets together, men and women were not allowed to share the same room and table. Moreover, men were served with double the portion of food as compared to females and slaves present. The socialist practice was greatly exercised during the Roman feasts. Females who were present at a male banquet were seen either as slaves who serve the guests or those who entertained them.

Although it is true that Roman feasts were bringing exclusive associates together, social differences among the banqueters were emphasized. The characteristics of Roman banquets such as a segregated social group that dines together outlined the importance of social and political relations in the Roman world. To a selected group of individuals that banquets together, the banquet provided them with an opportunity

to 'gain self-identity, to keep taps on its members, and confirm internal hierarchies' (Donahue 2003:432). Sharing meals had thus maintained communal participation and established social separation (Donahue 2003:438). In a banquet that functioned on a patron-client relationship, it was of great importance for each participant to know his place. The segregative commensality by its very nature remained an occasion that took place among individuals belonging to the high-class. A banquet of this type underlined the importance of the use authoritative power and all sorts of manipulation between the patron and his beneficiaries. An asymmetric relationship between the diners was observed where the dominant host was driven by the wish to make his guests to recognize his superiority and leadership skills. Such kind of act in the ancient world was necessary for the host to maintain his kingship honor.

Notable, a Greco-Roman banquet consisted of three course meals. They are prepared in luxurious table consisting of a variety of food. Their meal included fish, snails, oysters, mussels, birds such as peacocks and flamingos, sausages, different kinds of salads and vegetables and fruits. There was an abundant supply of wine, offering different kinds of wine which is normally diluted before drinking. The cups which are used to serve wine called kylix. They portray the sexually attractive images of female performers. The purpose of having such cups is for the guests to be sexually thrilled just by gazing at the cups. The objectification of female dancers is portrayed at the bottom of the wine cup (the tondo), giving the holder of the cup direct contact with the sexually displayed image of female dancers.

4.2.2 Dance as entertainment

In addition to the emphasis of different social position, guests were offered different kinds of wines depending on the status they hold. The seating arrangement in Greco-Roman banquet was done according to the honour of the guest. To impress the guests, the host would offer a luxurious dinner in a lavishly decorated setting and with different types of entertainments. In the case of Herod, his birthday banquet takes place in a courtyard, and the only sort of entertainment that Mark mentions is that of a dance performance by Herodias' daughter. Rather than having such a luxurious meal with a variety of food, Herod and his banqueters are only served with one option on the table, which is the head of John the Baptist on a platter.

In a banquet occasion, the essential attributes of it include the location at which the banquet is held, the audience present and an individual's status in a society can be deduced based on their dress code. An individual that is seen wearing a distinctive outfit receives attention. Nonetheless, the attire of the low-class can only be identified but it does not receive special attention since it is not unique. For instance, a Roman citizen is identified by a toga (tunic) that has no stripes on it, an equestrian is identified with a tunic that has broad stripes and colored shoes, an emperor is recognized with a laurel wreath on his head and the special robes wrapped over his shoulders and all over the body, a married woman is identified with a stole (a garment that corresponds to the toga) and last, the low class are seen with a tunic that is hitched-up.

In the case where a dancing performance was offered the presented identity and costume of the performer are important. The banquet dancers were barely dressed. Part of their dancing attire was an ornamental dress which barely covers the body. In most cases, breasts would be fully exposed to the audience when dancing. Wearing a short tunic during a dance performance suggests that a dancer would have as part of the routine sustained hip motions with the intention to allow the tunic to flare out. A similar attire is observed from entertainers of ancient Greece who dance to evoke the god Dionysus. Such dancers wear a short leopard skin and leaves the breast fully exposed. Although the dance appears to be 'sexually appealing to male banqueters, it requires female effort and experience' (Olsen 2017:24).

In ancient Greece, dance was often referred to as *orcheisthai*, denoting a series of simple movements where a dancer makes use of any part of their body for as long as the moves are portrayed artistically (Lawler 1947:345). Dance was a human act of behavior that involves intentional moves that carry meaning and convey some sort of message to the audience. It is a combination of non-verbal acts which are observed and interpreted through gestures and bodily movements. These bodily movements are rhythmic, coordinated, and are often accompanied by musical instruments.

In ancient Greek, a complete art of dance is that which is closely connected to poetry. Such kind of dance is called the mimetic dance. It was a practice in ancient Greece to have dance and songs performed together, where the singing is either done by the dancers themselves or a different group of individuals. Further, dance is

performative in nature. As mentioned by Taplin (1999:33), performance is 'an occasion on which appropriate individuals enact events, in accordance with certain recognized conventions, in the sight and hearing of a larger social group, and in some sense for their benefit' (Naerebout 2016:33). Dance performance thus was a special type of entertainment received by the audience during a banquet.

The social and cultural phenomenon of dance during public events were of central importance. Dance performed in public and exclusive occasions had several purposes which it needed to fulfil. First, a dance performance at a banquet served as an indication that an event is not just an ordinary one but a special event. Second, it has within it an element of communicating the importance of the event, setting the mood required from the attendees. Third, dance is also offered with the aim to offer entertainment due to its ability to draw attention from the participants of the banquet. Although there were other forms of entertainment such as singing and poetry offered during Greek banquet, dance is hypothetically known to be an important powerful force that is capable to attracts the banqueters.

In ancient Greece, dance was omnipresent, therefore, most of the members in the society could dance. The presence of dance at banquets confirms that the authoritative figures valued dance and drew pleasure from seeing other people dancing. Moreover, the significant aspect of dance is its communicative component. Bodily movements are expressive and the message they carry is constructively passed on to the observers. However, 'the dance itself is not meaningful other than in the sense that rhythmized movement for biological reasons appeals to human beings' (Naerebout 2016:47).

Since the daughter's dance is the mimesis of Herodias' desires, it can plausibly be assumed that it was *orchesis*. This type of dance is comprised with 'rhythmic movements of the head, eyes, feet, and hands- the whole body is used when dancing' (Georgios, Christina, Aspasia, Maria & Evgenia 2017:161). *Orchesis* is a female solo dance done for entertainment purposes where dancers are compensated after performing. Although there are some hierarchical and practical differences between the *orchesis* and the *hetairai* (dancers hired to please and provide sexual favors to the guests), in each female dance the movements are depicted as physically intimate and attractive (Olsen 2017:21-22). Herod might have

been influenced by the nature of solo dance for him to reward the daughter after her dance.

Notably, the meaning that is conveyed in a dance performance is context based. The construction of meaning depends on a moment taking place at a specific location, with given participants, on the context and purpose of the occasion. A banquet dance is offered to express that which cannot be explained in words. During dance performances, the Greeks developed *cheironomia*—that is 'a whole code of gestures and symbolic movements which to some extent can be baffling and difficult to comprehend but the impacts of it can be persuasive and receive immediate attention' (Lawler 1947:346).

Furthermore, dance provides a dancer with a platform to express her identity before the audience. There is, however, undeniable gender-stereotypes within dance performances done by women. Their bodily movements are often interpreted as sexually appealing. Female dancers during banquets are treated as sexual objects present to feed male desire. It should be noted that dance 'movement is a naturalized primary social text that its symbolic system is almost overlooked- it is multifaceted, meaningful but changes continuously' (Desmond 1994:36). The stereotypes attached to dance resulted in people 'learning to use their bodies inside their own cultural and socio-economic context' (Clark 2009:7).

It is important to note the agency that is brought by the dance gestures which systematize and challenge the cultural scripts. The gestures carry a significant meaning and their intentions are socially and culturally understood. In that regard, the task of embodying the already socialized and culturally acceptable bodily movements with the aim to alter the cultural norms and expectations is a complex one. While the dancing body is a means of communication, it is at the same time 'measuring space, observing pressure, and accommodating shifts of pressure' (Noland 2009:2). For the subject to negotiate with the superior, it is necessary for the dancer to exceed the communicative nature of the dance to gain agency.

The bodily movement and techniques serve as the significant features the society use when expressing their values and perpetuating their culture (Noland 2009:7). A dance performance is encompassed with the acquired gestural moves which are perfected through constant practice and the individual's knowledge of what reaction

their body is capable to evoke from the observers. Attaining agency during dance performance means that the dance has dual intentions. The first is to portray the social and cultural conditions attached to dance and the second is the hidden intent of fitting in the personal desires dancers wants to fulfil.

4.3 AMBIVALENT READING OF THE DANCING HERODIAN DAUGHTER

Mark 6:14-29 is the retelling of the order of events that led to the death of John the Baptist. Mark mentions that the imprisonment of John was due to the denunciation of Herod's marriage to Herodias as unholy as Herod married his brother's wife. This denunciation results in Herodias' wish to have John killed. However, Herod's fear of John resulted in him protecting John from his wife Herodias by means of imprisonment. Herod's behaviour in the beginning of the narrative depicts him as a powerful figure and Herodias as being under the rule of Herod.

During Herod's birthday banquet, the daughter's dance leaves Herod so enchanted that he makes a promise to the daughter with an oath. Upon Herodias' request, the head of John the Baptist is presented to the daughter on a platter and she passes it to Herodias. John is then buried by his disciples. The act of ambivalence is observed when Herodias comply with Herod's rule when Herod protected John the Baptist from being killed. However, in what seems to be an obedient act, Herodias has her own hidden intention of fulfilling her wish to kill John the Baptist. Herod's birthday banquet indeed presented Herodias with a favourable moment which Herod was not expecting.

To attain a position of power, Herodias made use of her daughter by sending her to dance during the banquet. The interpretation of the Greek word κοράσιον (daughter) suggests that the daughter was still young, probably in her teen years. Given the probability of her age, it can be assumed that she had no personal sexual desires when she was dancing. This claim further makes it possible to assume that the mother was the instructor of the dance, with her knowledge of the possible reactions of the banqueters. Moreover, mothers were responsible to transmit their cultural knowledge to their daughters, hence Herodias can be regarded as the instructor. By mimicking the desires of Herodias, the daughter provokes Herod and challenges his credibility as a king through a dance performance. By asking for advice from her

mother after being proposed with an offer, it can be presumed that the daughter was under Herodias' rule, fulfilling her mother's desires on her behalf.

Since Herod's banquet was male dominated, their perception of the dance done by their opposite gender, even if it is innocent is likely to be different. In the ancient culture, a person would inherit their status based on the social, political, and economic stance of their family. This is referred to as acquired honour. By virtue of association with Herod, Herodias' daughter holds an aristocratic status in the society. It was not suitable for a person of high status, or even a princess as in the case of Herodias' daughter to offer such entertainment before a male audience. Having a member of the upper class perform the culturally assigned duties of the low class is culturally baffling.

Mark 6:22 only mentions that the girl dances without giving details of how the dance was and which type it was. However, most scholars have assumed that the dance was erotic. In response to this claim, feminist scholarship has argued against eroticising the dance since the text does not declare anything regarding its appeal. Although Herod's acquaintances are minor characters in the narrative, their silence after the performance suggests that they approve the dance performance, Herod's offer, and the murderous request.

The dance has disrupted the entire proceeding of the banquet. For that reason, this dance performance can be regarded as a result of a banquet failure because its outcome is more than its purpose which is to entertain. Instead of focusing on the dance itself, much attention is given to the male response of the dance. Hence the central point of the narrative of Mark 6:14-29 is based on Herod's reaction to the daughter's dance- that is the promise with an oath of half of the kingdom in the presence of his dignitaries. Since females were not allowed to inherit anything in ancient Mediterranean, it is not clear whether Herod was only showcasing his power, or he literally meant his words when making an offer.

The female as an object is viewed as a male gaze. Although the order of the banquet is disrupted, this becomes a moment for the dancing daughter to gain her confidence given that her performance placed her in a position of influence. Moreover, she benefits from her dance performance by gaining more agency in a male-controlled society. Having been gazed at by Herod and his dinner guests, the daughter takes

control of the situation by capturing the gaze. In so doing, she locates herself in a position of power, becoming to some extent an equal patron to Herod by means of negotiation.

Remarkably, self-control is a crucial aspect of the hegemonic masculinity that needed to be maintained for one not to forfeit their influential power in Mediterranean antiquity. The lack of self-control expressed by Herod and his guests which may be due to erotic movements observed. His loss of self-control allows the daughter to become more masculine, making Herod and his associates subjects to her dance. In this process, the male audience become less masculine in status as they give in to female power. The daughter's ability to interact with power places Herod in a shameful position. Notably, children belonging to the upper class barely participated in banquets. When they are present, they did not receive much attention. The daughter's dance performance however, redefined the banquet spaces, shifting attention from the high tables which is the most significant place within a banquet setting to a less respected space- the dance floor. The dance floor is less valued because it is an area that is reserved for slaves when they offer entertainment.

The observation of gender roles in the Greco-Roman banquet clearly points out that the preparation and serving of food is associated with the feminine class. This Greco-Roman feminine task of serving food is done by the slaves- that is the low and less masculine class. Social relations are clearly expressed between those who prepare and serve food and those who receive the food (banqueters). Moreover, in a banquet like Herod's where invitation is based on one's political, economic, and social status, the females present during the banquet are those who prepare and serve food and the ones reserved for entertainment. The newly attained power which the daughter shares with her mother by asking for guidance reverses and opposes these gender roles. Herodias and her daughter orders Herod to have as part of their meal the head of John the Baptist on a platter. That is requesting for someone's life, which is what Herodias has been longing for.

Considering the continuously emphasized gender roles and gender inequalities in the ancient Mediterranean, it was highly unusual for women to make such a request of killing someone. Although women married to the elite could influence their husbands' decisions related to political matters of the society, their influence was to

some extent limited. Not even queens were able to order executions independently without the will of a superior male (Anderson & Moore 1992: 120). Herod being overpowered by Herodias is put in a difficult position because failure to live up to his oath will be a threat to his kingship honor.

Herodias and her daughter claim the agency that is being given to them by ruling Herod rather than doing what they are instructed and expected to do as females. They are presented with an opportunity to disengage the cultural attributes and roles associated with females. The 'shift in gender performance makes the women to appear as masculine' (Smit 2016:344). Having females with masculine attributes in ancient Mediterranean was a characteristic that terrified males' authoritative power.

Herodias' daughter, through her dance performances, was able to reconstruct her identity. She codified her identity in her performance. The discourse of the dancing body is often associated with biological differences and the sexualized attributes of the body when dancing. During a dance performance, 'the gaze cannot remain passive or complacent in its assumed superiority' (Karayanni 2004:99). Herod's indulgence in the dance and the dancer made him susceptible to feminine rule; his manly honor is feminized. With her ambivalent character, Herodias goes beyond the anticipated conduct of a respectable οἰκοδέσποινα (wife of an honourable man). She expands her responsibilities, moving from being a sexual object that bears children for the family to be an influence on a murderous request.

An ambivalent reading of the dance narrative questions the daughter's willingness to dance, since her status makes her dance unusual, what is she aiming to achieve? It is important to understand the impact her revealing dancing attire has on her confidence as she dances in front of the male audience. Homi Bhabha's ambivalent and mimicry perspective suggests that the subordinate's true intentions are not stated. While the daughter seems to be submissive and obedient to Herodias' request, it can plausibly be assumed that given her social status her intention is to displace the attention of the guests. By so doing, she gains personal joy and enhance her self-esteem.

Further, this assumption is derived from the notion that the banqueters eroticised the female dancing body by continuously praising their breasts and buttocks throughout the performance (Olsen 2017:26). Receiving such appraisals suggests that the

audience validate the dance and are enjoying. This act is what boosts the self-confidence of the performer. The dance performance therefore has binary intents.

It was a practice in the ancient Mediterranean to suppress and silence the subaltern. By making use of the body, the daughter deconstructs the cultural standards attached to the dancing female body. The honour and agency she attained redefined the patriarchal power structures and the cultural restrictions of femininity. Remarkably, her bodily movements were not only to feed male gaze and desire. She denied males with the opportunity to reduce her body to a sexual object, that is, dancing to male tune. The Mediterranean society believes that female sexual behaviour has the potential to turn into a shameful act. Nonetheless, the daughter through her erotic dance moves contrasts with this cultural notion. She acquires honor and agency in a patriarchal society while Herod's status is reduced to shame.

Dance in ancient Greece is valued because it allows the dancer to express their beauty and flexibility (Georgios *et al.* 2017:161). According to Noland (2009:2), the performative agency of dance is a vehicle to the representation and assessment of cultural conditioning. She further argues that its bodily gestures help to recondition the concepts of construction, resistance, interpellation, and identity (Noland 2009:2). Dance movement and gestures produce more than what meets the male eye. It provides a platform for individuals to express their identity, feelings, emotions, and other intended meanings. Dance performance can therefore be regarded as a personal and communal source of pleasure.

4.4   CHALLENGING HEROD'S POWER AND MASCULINITY

The construction of masculinity is one of the common themes that constantly appear in New Testament texts. Masculinity is not defined anatomically but by perception. It is defined by the social and political dominance of an individual, suggesting that not all males can be of one defined masculinity. Masculinity is embedded on the practices that are attained in a social setting where the framework differs due to the social observation of different gender relations. The position of an individual's power is driven by observable matters within particular social and political spaces; therefore, it needs to be constantly maintained. The maintenance of the masculine identity required frequent negotiation with both the private and public, social, and political arenas. One's behavior and performance in the society has a huge impact

on their masculinity. Being an active negotiator and being able to take control of the situation, therefore, is a valuable aspect that helps to keep and enhance masculinity.

The masculine characteristics included being powerful, heroic, rational and having the ability to control oneself. Important to note is the hierarchical gender system of the Greco-Roman society. In terms of male masculinity, the hierarchy took more than the human level; it was considered divine. Men who occupied the top of the gender hierarchy are those who possess characteristics such as being part of the elite, sovereignty, and being a male adult. The bottom part of the hierarchy consists of everyone who is classified as unmanly. It includes women, slaves, and young males (boys). Another important factor of the masculine hierarchy is age. The masculinity of young and old males was believed to be lacking, therefore those with strong masculine characteristics are the ones in their prime. For that reason, an individual can through time become more or less masculine, no one has a stable position in the hierarchy of masculinity.

In Mark 6, there are two meal occasions where masculinity is contrasted and displayed during table fellowship. The construction of masculinity as displayed in Herod's banquet is 'intersectional in character' (Smit 2016:335). It displays aspects of dominance over others, the economic status which allows Herod to provide, and the extent to which Herod can control himself. In the first century, it was believed that a man who has self-control of his emotions and desires is capable of being in control over others. As a result, Herod's offer to the daughter which is assumed to be driven by his desires is a jeopardizing move towards his ruling capability.

The setting of the banquet is important as it displays power and leadership to the society. In the event of Herod's banquet, Mark uses ὁ βασιλεὺς Ἡρῴδης when referring to Herod the tetrarch. The use of the title King enhances and showcases his socio-political status to the attendees of the banquet. It seeks to demonstrate how much power he possesses. Remarkably, this banquet is not only meant for private matters but also allows males only to participate - 'τοῖς μεγιστᾶσιν αὐτοῦ καὶ τοῖς χιλιάρχοις καὶ τοῖς πρώτοις τῆς Γαλιλαίας' (Mk 6:21). The outline of the banquet places Herod at the top of the hierarchy, as a king who possess power over his banquet guests and subjects (Smit 2016:336).

Given the layout of events as observed in Mark 6:21-28, the credibility of Herod's masculinity is challenged. It brings about concerns which questions whether Herod is in a capable position to negotiate the struggle between the daughter's reward and a firmly held view of a king. Having made a promise to the daughter with an oath, as a king he is obliged to deliver his promise. Failure to do so would be a threat to his political and social position. However, fulfilling the promise questions his masculinity since the request is made by a female in a patriarchal society. The credible masculine image that is associated with Herod clearly breaks apart soon after Herodias' daughter delivers her dance performance.

The order of the banquet is disturbed when Herod's lack of self-control goes beyond the expected behaviour and character of a king after the daughter's dance. Since the banquet was encompassed with the acts of wining and dining, it can be assumed that Herod too was intoxicated when making an offer with an oath to the daughter. His reaction to the dance performance suggests that he is possessing too much desire, going against the cultural scripts attached to the procession of the banquet. His oath turns to be his own downfall as the daughter together with Herodias takes the powerful position of making demands and being in control of the banquet situation.

The fulfilment of an oath by the king is a sign of great leadership, hence the daughter's request places Herod in a compromising and powerless situation. Regardless of the powerful figure that Mark portrays Herod to be in the beginning of the narrative of Mark 6:14-29, Herod loses his power and control to the unmasculine woman of his court who ought to have no significance in banquet (Smit 2016:337). Moreover, being defeated by a female figure was a sign of disgrace in the Greco-Roman society.

In addition to his defeat, Herod failed to provide a luxurious banquet to his guests. Serving John the Baptist's head on a platter instead of the lavish food that the guests were expecting is considered a banquet failure. The banquet became a degrading and shameful event when the desired mood was delivered. This reveals Herod's extended supremacy that was associated with him when referred to as a King (of which he was a tetrarch). It deprives him the chance to showcase his male role and strength.

From the observation of Herod's power, it is apparent that he was in a well-endowed stance and had all the necessary resources required for a deliverance of a successful banquet. However, his failure to resist temptation after the daughter's dance results in him and his associates following Herodias' order. From this act, Herod appears to be an incompetent, incredible king not fit to be a leader. Herod's behaviour during his banquet put his masculinity at stake because in the Greco-Roman culture, 'meals are more than just meals; they are microcosmic representations of social orders' (Smit 2016:341). Given Mark's portrayal of Herod as a king who associates himself with the Roman military and colonial rule, 'his authority which consists of a power over life and death, is thus trumped by a power to make alive and sustain life' (Smit 2016:341).

4.5 REPRESENTATION OF FEMALES IN GRECO-ROMAN WORLD

The Greco-Roman world was a male-dominated society that emphasized gender inequalities. The females were viewed as subordinate creatures to men and associated with negativity. It is worth mentioning that being female in the ancient world was not the opposite of being male, instead, a female was regarded as the impaired version of the male. Women were regarded as weak, spiteful, and pleasure-seeking beings. The Greco-Roman culture is by nature androcentric. While depicting males as the only individuals with universal human qualities, females were referred to as the Other. Being represented as beings that are irrational and illogical further denotes that women are subject to lose self-control due to their ascribed emotional and insecure traits. As a result, women are always under the controlled and strictly guided by the male figure.

The patriarchal Greco-Roman society further referred to females as 'beings who desires sex and who is a temptation to males, and a male as the one who is susceptible to female sexuality and who must protect the females of his family in order to preserve male honour' (Anderson & Moore 1992: 122). Because of their limited participation in societal matters, women had a desire to be in power and were portrayed as ambitious. The cultural practice of this era limited a women's public life. Women are not allowed to engage in public and political responsibilities in a society.

It is important to note that the construction of female identity is drawn from the male perception. The representation of females done from a women's point of view is

lacking, making males important sources who pass on the oral history into written documents. It is possible that the male-authored historical texts are providing reflections which may not be fully applicable in women's reality. However, this claim does not suggest that all reflections done on women are incorrect and subjective. They thus create the feminine and masculine stereotypical characteristics which are essential part of the Greco-Roman culture. They provided a somewhat behavioral manual which men and women are to adhere to.

However, there were women who sometimes portrayed masculine qualities and men who were referred to as effeminate due to their inability to meet the required or adequate masculine standards. Culturally, a woman's integrity is to obey and that of a man is to rule. A woman's morality in this era included 'female inferiority towards males, modesty, and suffering' (Kun 2005:21). Men's masculinity is often intimidated by women who poses the masculine virtues. Certainly, power is determined by status more than it is by gender. For that reason, a woman who is of high status has more power than a man of low status and in a case where a man and woman have the same status, a woman is still a subordinate (Osiek 2008:333-334).

While men are given the opportunity to explore the possibilities in different aspects of life such as the social, economic, and political spaces, women's lives are full of restrictions. Because of socially constructed patriarchal boundaries women ought to live under the marginalized and submissive positions as they rely on men's authority and rule. These patriarchal boundaries which are set by male authorities are inflexible in nature. Noticeably, Herodias is the only female name that is mentioned in the narrative. The recording of names in the ancient world was of great importance to the social status of individuals. As a result, the name Herodias 'reflects her status of subordination to the male head of the family (Herod) within the patriarchal culture' (Miller 2002:100).

The Mediterranean society believes that women are not capable to directly participate in matters that could enhance the society, instead, women are associated with the vices. The only revelation of the importance of women was their traditional role which is situated within a domestic setting. Further, a woman's individuality is non-existent, her identity is defined by her relationship with her husband and or male authorities (Kun 2005:22). Going beyond the fixed gender roles and disobeying the

specified social placements results in the social exploitation of women. Female subordination continued to be a vital cultural practice in the Mediterranean society.

When discussing women in general, specific aspects that give women power and agency in different situations might be obscured. The leading significant factor that gives an individual power in each context is the social position. As a result, it is important to point out different identities that women can possess. In the narrative of Mark 6:14-29, different social identities are observed where Herodias is both a wife and a mother, and Salome (according to Josephus) is a daughter. A woman in this instance can claim more than one identity or use them interchangeably depending on the context (Barkman 2016:34). A brief overview of the above-mentioned identities of women in Mark 6:14-29 shall be given. The aim is to better the understanding of the participation of women in the narrative and their agency.

4.5.1 Herodias as a wife

Being married was a status desired by many women. Herodias was involved in an endogamous marriage. This type of marriage is often organized by their fathers and chosen husbands. It requires individuals to marry within their family clan to preserve the family name. Her social participation depends on her social identity of the family-she is married in the royal family. Women married to families of high status can influence public matters of the society through their husbands. However, the final decision still lies in the hands of the men. As observed in Mark 6:17-20, Herodias tries to influence Herod to have John the Baptist killed but her request is rejected. Instead of killing John the Baptist, Herod protects him from Herodias. On the contrary, women married to low class families are only limited to their domestic duties of managing the household needs.

Women who appear in public with their husbands are obliged to reflect the character of their husbands. This, however, is an aspect that is absent in Mark's narrative. There is no mention of Herodias and Herod being together in public. 'For the upper class, marriage was a political mechanism with a great deal of public power and influence' (Barkman 2016:36). Although married women are sometimes exposed to the public sphere, they are still compelled to fulfil their household and private obligations. It should be noted that it is not only the wife's power that is limited within

the private realm. The power of the husband in the public domain is within the boundaries of the colonial rule, the social and economic status.

4.5.2 Herodias as a mother

The dominant identity of a mother is found within the private domain. The power women accumulate in the private space allows them to have agency which implications are seen in the public space. The only measures of independence women could exercise are under the private law. The identity of the mother is also reliant on the social reputation of the family. A significant aspect of the ancient marriage was the ability to procreate. Even though marriage uplifts the status of a woman, being a mother in the Mediterranean society is a socially respectable value which is a sign of a successful marriage.

The agency of mothers is less recognized in the public space. However, the recognition of the power of mothers in private realms allows her to gain influence over her children such as inheritance, education, negotiating marriages through social convention (Barkman 2016:41). Being a mother of high status suggests that your children could submit to you. This act is clearly illustrated first when Herodias' daughter agrees to dance as per Herodias' order and when she asks for advice from her mother when she is presented with an offer after dancing.

Culturally, 'a mother is expected to oversee the supervision of a daughter's training in traditionally female areas, both moral and practical' (Barkman 2016:41). This notion makes possible the assumption that Herodias is the instructor of the daughter's dance moves. The relationship between the mother and child is a significant element that outlines the way each must act towards one another. Herodias daughter is portrayed as an obedient child, permitting Herodias to give her commands.

4.5.3 Salome as a daughter

The identity of the daughter is reliant on her counter-identities of her parents. The virtues associated with her parents are reflected in her status and she should live by the expected social behavioral norms. In addition, daughters can 'hold back the kind of socially visible obedience that was crucial and desired by men while exercising a measure of agency through resistance' (Barkman 2016:43). This act is witnessed when the daughter performed a dance as per Herodias command. Adhering and

fulfilling the wishes of the parents brought a great deal of self-honor and contentment for the daughter. It can thus be presumed that the daughter's dance which was initiated and directed by Herodias enhances the daughter's self-esteem and self-identity.

In addition, the daughter's dance is unusual because her social status puts her in a high position which does not permit her to perform dance as part of the banquet entertainment. Dance performance is a profession not for the high-class but for slaves. It is a norm that is reflected in the ancient vase paintings where the low class is compelled to serve the guests.

Regardless of the restrictions, Herodias and her daughter go beyond the dominant pattern of normal behavior of women in a patriarchal society. This act places Herod the authoritative figure in an unpleasant position. The concept of honor and shame in Mediterranean antiquity correlates with the societal factors. Since these concepts are coded within gender roles, honor is ascribed to men and shame to women. However, the honor of the family is influenced by women's behaviour which gives them social power. Men's honor is determined by the social conduct of women. Although not directly exercised, women have great influence in the society.

In the narrative of Mark 6:14-29, Herod's authority, as Roger (1975) suggests, is 'institutionalized' and Herodias' power is displayed in 'many indirect and unauthorized conducts' (Osiek 2008:327). In order to avoid power imbalance, culture has socialized women to think that men are the most influential beings. Osiek (2008) agrees with Dubisch (1995) that the model of honor and shame is not comprised with a 'set of rigid rules that dictates the behaviour of men and women. Instead, it is a framework of discourse and negotiation, worked out in the dynamic context of social life' (Dubisch 1995:204).

4.6   SUMMARY

This Chapter provided a mimicry and ambivalent reading of Mark 6:14-29. With the focus on the dancing daughter, the social and cultural characteristics of Greco-Roman were explored. By making use of the gender theory, the masculine and feminine features used to integrate power were explored. As interpreted by many scholars, the beheading of John the Baptist foreshadows the story of the death of Jesus. Although this may be true, reading the narrative from an ambivalence

perspective, suggests the shifting of power in a male-dominated society. In ancient Mediterranean, the male body was ruling, and the female body was oppressed and silenced. Male power was paraded in the public spaces, and the female power was domesticated. Females and slaves succumbed to shame, while the elite males acquired honor.

Through her dance performance, the daughter was able to negotiate half of the kingdom with Herod. This event took place during a time when slaves and women were not allowed to inherit anything from men. By means of negotiation, the daughter gained the masculinity that was equal to that of the superior class by acquiring the power to kill the opponent. She made use of her hidden strategies to displace power by making Herod to fulfil her request of killing John.

This, according to Homi Bhabha, was an act of mimicry. The ambivalence of the story was heightened when the daughter mimicked the desires of Herodias by agreeing to dance. In what seemed to be the fulfilment of Herodias' command, the daughter reexamined her gender and class identity through her desirable body. She articulated her own sentiments and desires in her performance.

The context in which Herod's banquet took place revealed the patriarchal and hegemonic nature of the Greco-Roman society. The social, economic, and political status was highly valued as it is a weapon that was used to attain power. Herod controlled the society with the power that has been handed to him. The daughter, however, used her body as a vehicle to acquire honor and power by making Herod and the guests' slaves to her body.

The imperial authority is displaced by a female dance only. The daughter's performative gestures result in a 'double process of active displacement' (Noland 2009:15). Her performance generated new cultural meaning and purpose of dance at a Greco-Roman banquet. She deconstructed the culturally well-known image of a dancer that was portrayed as a silent object that had no agency and subjectivity. Noland (2009:2) agrees with this notion and further explored how the performative agency and discursive tactics operate upon the dancing body possess.

Chapter 5

A contextual reading of the Tswana dance from a postcolonial perspective

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous Chapter the dancing daughter in the narrative of Mark 6:14-29 was read from a postcolonial gendered perspective. To further demonstrate the given hypothesis, a contextual reading of the Tswana dance is given, also from a postcolonial perspective. This Chapter aims to emphasise that the intention of a female body dancing is not to sexually please the male audience. It also serves to demonstrate the ambivalent aspect of the Tswana dance which benefits both the dancer and the audience.

Dancing in the Tswana culture is done for different reasons. It is mostly done for entertainment purposes in celebratory, thanksgiving and religious events. During healing ceremonies, dance performance serves as an integral feature in which the participants communicate with their ancestors and other spirits. Tswana dance is also performed with the aim to preserve the tradition and pass important teachings to every coming generation. The elders in the Tswana community regard dance as an essential task which helps to keep the young community members away from the streets. Besides cultural purposes, Tswana dance performance has become a commodity. Tswana dancers partake in competitive events, some of which are in exchange for money.

In this Chapter, the Setapa dance performed during Dikgafela ceremony will be explored. A brief background of the Tswana culture will be given. A detailed explanation of Dikgafela ceremony will be given to provide a deeper understanding and context of the event. Setapa dance will then be interpreted from a postcolonial ambivalence perspective.

5.2 BACKGROUND OF THE TSWANA CULTURE

The south-western part of Botswana, parts of the current North-West province and Northern Cape province (formerly known as Bophuthatswana) of South Africa are populated by the Bantu-speaking ethnic group called the Tswana people (plural-

Batswana). In terms of 'linguistics and origin, the Batswana are a subgroup of the Sotho people. However, their 'location and cultural practices makes them different' (Alverson 1978:46). The Tswana tribe dates to the eighteenth century and is under the rule of a Dominant Chief (referred to as *Kgosikgolo*). Batswana families are more inclined towards patriarchal practices, and matters of kinship play a crucial role on the political, religious, cultural, and economic aspects of the society. As such, an individual's lineage together with gender and age determined their societal roles, status, and communal relationships. A male adult in the Batswana community is more superior, and the young males and females are inferior.

The Batswana value patrilineage, and believe that an individual's identity lies within the ethnicity of the biological father. The Tswana culture is also inspired by the ideology of totems (referred to as *seano* or *sereto*). A totem is a symbolic object, mostly a wild animal which the family identifies with and have as a reminder of their ancestral origin. They normally mimic the wild animal when dancing or performing healing rituals. For instance, Borankana dance, a popular dance in Botswana includes the raising of arms while dancing which signifies a form of praise to cattle (Denbow & Thebe 2006:211).

As ethnic group the Batswana is known for its unique characteristics which includes among others their traditional dance, food, and dress code. In order to promote and preserve their culture, the Tswana people have cultural festivals where they showcase their talents, celebrate the arts, perform healing ceremonies, and celebrate special occasions such as weddings, initiations, and feast gatherings.

Different events in the Tswana culture require different forms of dance. There are dances which require male-only dancers, female-only dancers and both male and female dancers. In this Chapter, the focus will be on the Setapa dance performed for entertainment purposes during Dikgafela celebration.

5.3   DIKGAFELA TSWANA CEREMONY

Dikgafela is a Tswana ceremony where different groups referred to as *makgotlana* gather at the tribal administration (*kgotla*) to celebrate the harvest season. It takes place annually during the autumn season, normally around March. The purpose of the ceremony is to thank God and the ancestors for giving them rain during the ploughing season which begins every year around September. A successful

ploughing season makes the harvest season possible, an accomplishment worth celebrating. On the day of the ceremony, in making their way to the Chief's tribal court, the village men lead the senior village women dressed in their traditional regalia of shawls over their shoulders. They bring along part of their harvest (usually sorghum carried on their heads) to the village chief and traditional beer. The aim of bringing their harvest is to enable the Chief to provide for villagers whose fields could not produce food because of lack of equipment, those who have no fields to plant, and the poor villagers. It is also a practice that confirms that the community will not experience hunger.

The *kgotla* is decorated with potteries, local paintings, sculptures, and drawings. Different types of traditional food such as sorghum (*mabele*), beans (*dinawa*), pumpkin, wild spinach (*morogo*), and traditional beer are prepared for the participants to feast together. The village men slaughter a cow at the *kgotla,* and identify the designated part of the meat which should be eaten by the Chief. The seating arrangement is of great significance. There is a special place reserved for the Chief and the special guests. Officials from Ministry of Agricultural Development and Food Security are always invited. Their purpose is to enhance the community's knowledge about farming and advise them on what to plant, how, when, and the farming technologies available for use. The officials from the Department of Meteorology are also invited to present to the farmers what to expect during the next rainy season.

There is a moment during the celebration when the participants pray for rain. The Chief's duty in this moment is to give people hope that they will receive rain. Botswana is a deserted country which hardly receive rain. Without rain, the land will be dry, and it will be impossible for the harvest season to take place. For that reason, prayer for rain is significant among the Tswana community. It enables them to be independent from the government and neighbouring countries for food. The Tswana people take pride in their ability to produce their own food from their own fields.

Agricultural practices are the main reason why Dikgafela ceremony is in existence. Not only does this ceremony give people an opportunity to share and discuss constructive ideas on how to improve the community's farming practices, it also encourages unity and peace in the society and instil the spirit of togetherness. It is

through this ceremony that the African values of an individual, household and society are reasserted.

During Dikgafela celebrations various forms of entertainment are offered. They include singing traditional songs, performing traditional dances, poetry, and the playing of different instruments.

5.4 SETAPA DANCE AS ENTERTAINMENT

Setapa traditional dance is one of the main tribe dances performed during Tswana festivals. The name of the dance is obtained from the meaning of the Tswana word *Go tapa-tapa*, which means continuous tapping of feet to the ground when dancing. It originates from the *Bangwaketse* tribe populating the Kanye village and nearby areas in Botswana. It is often done for entertainment purposes by both men and women of different ages. Characteristics of the Setapa dances includes the rhythmic hand clapping and ululations from the audience. The ululations and mouth whistling suggest that the audience is approving and enjoying the high-spirited dance performance. The dance is comprised of the creative movement of the hand, arms, torso, and legs. For women, much emphasis is given to the waist and hip motion. The dancers continuously change their facial expressions with the aim to engage and draw attention from the audience while expressing their feelings of happiness.

An integral aspect of the Tswana dance is the traditional dancing attire. Female dancers wear *diphaeyana*, a traditional skirt which is made from animal skin such as that of a duiker. The ladies' sandals, *dikhube* are made from the head skin of an oxen. The 'headpieces are made of beads, porcupine quills, animal tails and tortoise shell' (Denbow & Thebe 2006:210). Male dancers wear loin-skin (*tshega*) made from animal skin and their shoes (*mpheetshane*) are made of thin layers of tyres. Both male and female dancers tie rattles (*matlhowa*) around their ankles. These dance rattles are made from 'dried cocoons of two species of wild silkworm which are only found on mopane and some species of acacia tree' (Denbow & Thebe 2006:198). The use of rattles is to give rhythm which synchronises with the drum and the clapping of hands. The forward and sideways legs movement is complemented by the drum, clapping of hands, rattles, whistle blowing, and the song. This combination 'makes the dance a harmonized and polished organic experience for both the dancer and audience' (Phibion 2012:17)

The Tswana people can identify the social status, age, and gender of an individual by means of their attire which is made from animal skin. For instance, an individual belonging to the lower class is identified by the few pieces of garments made from the skin of an antelope. Those of high status are easily recognised by the garments with furs of animals such as jackals and wild cats. Even though ladies wear cross beads to smarten themselves, the best dancer is identified with long beads called *leratsha*.

The social interactions observed in a dance performance establish a social relationship among groups and individuals of different gender, age, and status. Gender stereotypes are greatly emphasised in a dance performance. A female dancer is likely to be reduced to an object where male derive their sexual drive. However, there is no sexual attraction attached to male dancers whose attire is also revealing. When male dancers are dancing, attention is given to their ability to incorporate masculine attributes on their dance movements. The Tswana dance creates a symbolic framework which demonstrates the unity of the group and the way individuals comply with the set cultural norms and behaviours.

5.5   READING SETAPA DANCE FROM A POSTCOLONIAL PERSPECTIVE

The African community believes that an individual finds his or her identity by means of communal relationships, associating oneself with a larger group that shares common values and customs. African dance, by its nature cherishes the idea of collective relationship. A dance performance in Botswana and North West province is therefore a fundamental aspect of their cultural customs. It develops an essence of belonging and togetherness while at the same providing a platform through which an individual can express their feelings and emotions of joy and sorrow (Denbow & Thebe 2006:192).

The movement patterns and styles of dance encourages a social interaction between individuals and groups. Dance has the power to become the instrument of change in both the social and political contexts. According to Langer (1979), 'the power of dance which is reflected in its artistic features, is situated in its ecstatic function that has the ability to take away the dancer from his or her normal everyday life (their comfort zone) to a virtual world of time and space' (see Van Wyk 2012:51).

Moreover, the power of dance performance is instilled in both the dancer and the audience's ability to present and receive the message communicated which effectively conveys the social expectations of the community. As the theory of culture suggests, dance has the socio-communicative significance. Tswana dance has within it a multifaceted cultural aspect. It incorporates all aspects of dance as coherent and powerful characteristics of culture. Eisenhart and Borko (1993) further asserts that Tswana dance performance 'validates commitment to certain values and subsistence patterns' (Van Wyk 2012:51).

The indigeneity of the Tswana dance gives the performer a sense of identity. An individual can through dance relate with a certain ethnic group according to a common set values, norms, interests, and practices- that is group identity. Dance can also be used as a tool to 'express the relationship between personal identity and social control' (Giurchescu 2001: 114). Dance provides a platform for individuals to showcase their creativity, and it emphasize the impact it has on the community. Ululations and applause from the audience gives the dancer more confidence and encourages them to dance with pride. The mouth whistling done by the male audience can suggest that they are sexually attracted to the dancer.

Although the main purpose of Setapa dance during Dikgafela celebration is to entertain the audience, it has double intentions. Culturally, girls below the age of 14 years dance with their breasts uncovered and those of 15 years and above cover their breasts with a band of cloth. In a routine that is performed by both male and female dancers, the male dancer constantly holds the ladies' shoulders, hands, and makes eye contact with the girl. This part of the routine creates a moment of intimacy between the dancers. An act of ambivalence is observed when the girl puts emphasis on the hip motion and flexible waist which seems to be a seductive move but at the same time crossing her arms around her chest to prevent the male dancer from touching her breasts.

The dancer's revealing attire can be a source of male sexual pleasure. From the energetic and lively performance, the audience's sexual excitement is aroused by the exposed body parts of the dancer such as breasts and thighs and the analysis of the shape and size of the dancer's body. While making use of almost every part of the body and other gestures, the dance 'creates an exciting and titillating rhythmic

pattern' (Nhlekisana & Kezilahabi 1998:175). The dance routine is beautified by the neatness, simple and stylish movement of the body. The rhythmic and coordinated dance moves blow the audience's minds, leaving them with an element of suspense. The dancer can therefore be viewed as an attractive object feeding male sexual desire and at the same time as an object providing entertainment.

For the dancer, however, attention is not given to who is looking at the exposed body parts and who is sexually aroused. Young girls are expected by the village elders dance during Dikgafela celebrations. For the dancer, the main aim is to express joy, to gain self-esteem, celebrate their culture and identity. A highly confident dancer gets approval from the audience. Even though the dance moves can be intimate, the dancer aims leave the audience thrilled with the knowledge that there is a possibility of receiving money. Although the dancer is aware that ululations and mouth whistling are an indication of the enjoyment of the dance, receiving money is a token of appreciation given to the best dancer. This has a great impact of the dancer's self-confidence.

The dancer comes to the dance floor as an entertainer without announcing her own personal intentions of acquiring honour. It is of great importance for the dance routine to meet its social and cultural expectations. For that reason, the dancer's desire to express his or her own artistic personality is not announced as it might conflict with the primary purpose of the dance. By applying an act of ambivalence, the dancer mimics the expectations of the society and at the same time creatively integrate his or her personal wishes.

For the male audience, the dance becomes a sexually exciting performance. By making use of the performative agency, the female dancer captures the gaze, receives a token of appreciation, gains honor and applause from the villagers. The dancer's status is therefore enhanced. The dancer delivers the social and cultural expectations while fulfilling her non-erotic personal desires. Moreover, a best dancer can attain a leadership position. It is a common practice to have a well-experienced dancer to be a dance leader for his or her age group. A dance leader is a position that is aspired by many, therefore, being chosen to be a leader is a great achievement.

The most comprehensive feature of dance is its social component which if its social context is not observed is still implied in its physical features. The 'social, historical and environmental factors influencing dance interlink with the physical, psychological and mental state of the performer' (Giurchescu 1984:35). When tackling questions regarding the significance of dance, it is important to take note of the two perspectives contributing to the structural make up of dance. The first is to approach dance from a syntactic level- that is situating dance as a fundamental part of social events within the living environment. The second one is to approach dance from a paradigmatic level- that is an approach that observes the ideological, economic, social, political, and cultural system that functions in an existing community (Giurchescu 2001:109). The correlation of the two approaches gives a more analytical view of the dance system and its validated components.

The Tswana dance functions as a social networking component during events, as social and cultural norm, and as an integral practice that preserves the cultural beliefs and knowledge. Through a dance performance, a dancer can express feelings, experiences and ideas which are not verbally communicated. Tswana dance functions as a symbolic instrument which that gives a dancer power to control the social events. The dancer has the power to decide how to communicate the message to the spectators to receive a response which will be beneficial to the dancer. The dance performance has the power to provoke the audience to the dancer's personal satisfaction.

For the dance performance to be more meaningful in a continuously changing social event, the dancer incorporates codified gestures in the routine. 'Dance movements sometimes function to support and reinforce other expressive elements that are principle carriers of meaning' (Giurchescu 2001:111).

5.6 CONCLUSION

The Tswana dance is performed in a manner that confirms its socio-cultural background. It needs to fulfil its aesthetic nature and cultural expectations. Not only does the Tswana dancer serve as instrument where male derives their sexual pleasure. It also has different purposes such as reinforcing ethnic identity, social integration, transmit traditional rules of behaviour, demonstrating status and as entertainment.

The Tswana dance performance, when read from a postcolonial perspective, especially indicates that a dance done by a female is more than just a sexual gaze for men. The intention of the dancer is not always communicated, the dancer can mimic the expectations of the society and incorporate their personal wishes. A dancer can gain agency, honour, status, identity, and express emotions through dance.

Chapter 6

Conclusion: Summary and findings

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In the concluding chapter, the summary of the study outline will be given. The study begins with a literature review which its aim is to direct attention to the already existing interpretations on the narrative of Mark 6:14-29. By gaining an understanding of the research techniques and methodologies that have been applied to the narrative, research gap can be identified. Having identified a research need, a persuasive theoretical framework is proposed. The dancing daughter is therefore read from a new exegetical approach, providing different insights regarding her dance. The purpose of the thesis was to read the dancing daughter in Mark 6:14-29 from a postcolonial gendered reading.

6.2 SUMMARY

In Chapter 2, the present theoretical and methodological contributions to Mark 6:14-29 of different scholars are explored. A key aspect of this study is the background of the narrative of Mark 6:14-29. The nature of the narrative is better understood when reading the text from a historical critical approach. Guelich (1989) and Lane (1974) among others have provided extensive research on the historical significance of the narrative. Their interpretations are focused on the death of John the Baptist as a revelation to that of Jesus. There are claims that the narrative refers to Herod Antipas. Even though there is no historical evidence of a king preceding Herod, Mark refers to him as a king. Herod was a tetrarch in Galilee and Perea.

Herod married Herodias, who was the wife to his half-brother Phillip. Marrying the wife of your brother while he was still alive according to the law of Moses was considered adultery. Hence John the Baptist proclaimed Herod's marriage as unlawful even though he was not a Jew. John's denunciation led to the confusion of the identity of Jesus which was associated to John the Baptist, Elijah, and the prophet of old (Mk 6:15-16). When Herod heard of John the Baptist, he was portrayed as fearful figure, a view that is contradicting the image of a king. While Herod feared that John has come back with miraculous powers, Herodias had a wish

to get John killed. To protect the righteous man from being killed, Herod put John into prison.

The order to the death of John unfolds in Herod's birthday banquet where his Galileans associates were present. An opportune moment for Herodias as stated in Mark 6:21 is observed when Herodias sent her daughter to dance. Although Herodias' daughter remains unnamed in the New Testament, Josephus claims that her name is Salome. Mark deprives us of the nature of her dance. However, having a daughter from the royal lineage perform a dance in front of banqueters was culturally strange.

The daughter's dance performance was followed by a reward from Herod of anything up to half of the kingdom (Mk 6:23). Herod's offer was also strange because the first century Mediterranean culture did not allow females to inherit anything. Moreover, Herod was known to be a stingy figure who would not even give away half of his village. Salome took advantage of the offer and asked for the head of John the Baptist on a platter as instructed by Herodias. The narrative ends with Herod's failure to protect John from being killed and he lives with regret.

Having understood the historical background of the narrative, scholars make use of different exegetical methods to provide a different understanding of the text. Focant (2012) and Iverson and Skinner (2011) interpret the text using a narrative discourse analysis. Their focus is on the relationship between the death of John the Baptist and that of Jesus. Focant asserts that the lack of details regarding the places where John's arrest, execution and the daughter's name shows that the historical background is not to be the focal point because of its difficulty to be articulated. Focant further mentions that Mark 6:14-29 has no Christian characteristics. Moloney (2002) critiques Focant (2012) and mentions the importance of the historical background of the text. Moloney notes that Josephus' writing assist in understanding the theology of Mark. Nevertheless, Focant and Moloney both agree that this story is the only one that has a parallel narrative in the Gospel of Mark.

Anderson and Moore (1992) approach the narrative from a feminist point of view. They critique the claim that the daughter's dance was erotic. Their argument is based on the lack of details regarding the dance and the Greek word κορασίῳ which suggest that the daughter was in her teen years. They also critique the negative

depiction of female sexuality and observe the patriarchal system that continues to suppress women. Donahue and Harrington (2012) are of the same opinion with Anderson and Moore (1992) that the dance was not seductive but an innocent child performance. Malina and Rohrbaugh (2003) on the other hand interpret the text from a social-scientific approach. They pay attention to individual behaviours which determine their status in the society. They proclaim it was shameful for Herod to make an offer of the kingdom to Salome and that John the Baptist maintained his honor even in his absence.

The lack of interpretation of the daughter's dance provided the research gap. The study hypothesises that the daughter displaced power structures on a dance floor, gained self-esteem and redefined the power females can possess in a patriarchal culture.

In Chapter 3, the postcolonial theory of mimicry and ambivalence, social-scientific model of honor and shame and gender theory are presented as plausible theoretical perspectives which are used to address the identified research problem. The theory of mimicry and ambivalence suggests that the subaltern is not completely silent. Instead, the subaltern complies with authority while having hidden intentions. The colonial subject imitates the culture of the colonizer while strategically instilling their own desires without their colonizer's knowledge. The act of ambivalence has a double and hidden agenda and can become a threat to authority.

The model of honor and shame complements the postcolonial theory by identifying the use of social and behavioural traits to determine the value and status of an individual in a society. It emphasizes the importance of social recognition and the need to constantly prove to the society the leadership capabilities and sustain good behavioural conducts to maintain honor. Furthermore, honor in the Mediterranean world can be ascribed or acquired. The gender theory gives a further understanding of the unequal power structures which resulted from gender inequality. It pays attention to the social and cultural construction of masculinity and femininity.

The postcolonial and gender theory assists in addressing the issues of identity, the use of patriarchal and uneven power structures to rule over the Other (female- the inferior). The model of honor and shame observes the social and cultural construction of status and power.

6.3 FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

In Chapter 4, the narrative is interpreted from a postcolonial gendered approach, with much attention paid to the daughter's dance. The theory of mimicry and ambivalence is further demonstrated in Chapter 5 through a contextual reading of the Tswana dance. Dance was part of the Greco-Roman banquet entertainment. Banqueters drew pleasure from watching people dancing and eroticized the female body. They went to an extent of portraying the female dancing bodies on the cups which the banqueters were drinking wine from for them to have direct access to the female body. The female dancers were viewed as sexual objects which feed male desires.

Notable in the Greco-Roman culture is the importance of status, the socialist practice was followed during banquets. The male banqueters received invitation based on their social and political status and the females presents were known to be slaves who serve the guests and offer entertainment. By virtue of association with Herod, the daughter held an upper-class status. It was unusual for members of the high-class to dance during banquets. Regardless of her status, the daughter agreed to dance before the male audience. Herodias' ambivalent behaviour is observed when she seemed to comply with Herod's rule of not killing John the Baptist. Without making her strategic intentions known, the sent her daughter to dance, knowing that Herod will be drunk and pleased and offer a reward. Hence the assumption that she was the instructor of the dance.

Although the dance performance by a princess raises an eye, the daughter's dance redefined space. While mimicking the desires of Herodias in her dance, the daughter had her own intentions to fulfil. By gaining the appraisal of Herod and the guests, the daughter attained agency though gestures and bodily movements. She executed the communicative nature of the dance by becoming a negotiator to Herod. While feeding the male gaze, the daughter also captured the gaze and gained a position of power.

Herod's lost his self-control by feeding his desires and being overpowered by females. He further offered the daughter half of his kingdom with an oath, a behaviour which was unusual and highly unexpected from Herod. The daughter took advantage of the opportunity and became an equal patron to Herod. She made

Herod a listener to her requests of the head of John the Baptist. To maintain his honor, Herod is bound to fulfil his oath. Failure to do so will be a threat to his leadership skills and masculinity since his oath was announced in the presence of his dignitaries.

By shifting attention to the dance floor, the daughter became more masculine, making Herod and his guests' slaves to her body. She reconstructs the asymmetric power structures where females were oppressed and under the rule of authoritative male figures. She is now in a position of power. While doing so, she gains self-esteem, self-confidence, and acquires honor in a male-dominated society. Herod's status on the other hand is reduced to shame. The daughter's dance performance derived a new social and cultural purpose and meaning of dance. She challenged Herod's masculinity and the portrayal of females as the silent objects who are inferior to their opposite gender.

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