

**A Womanist dialogue with Black Theology of Liberation in the
Twenty-First Century**

BY

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Submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

Philosophiae Doctor

In the

Faculty of Theology and Religion

University of Pretoria

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May 2018

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DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis, which I hereby submit for the degree *Philosophiae Doctor* at the University of Pretoria, is my own work and has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at another university.



Signed.....

Fundiswa Amanda Kobo

Date: May 2018.....

Place: Pretoria.....

Financial Assistance: Acknowledgement

The financial assistance of the University of South Africa (UNISA), University of Pretoria (UP), Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa (UPCSA) and the FONDATION POUR L'AIDE AU PROTESTANTISME REFORME (FAP) towards this research is hereby acknowledged. The author declares that the opinions expressed in this thesis and the conclusions arrived at are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect UNISA, UP, UPCSA and FAP's position.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

“It takes a village to raise a child” ~ African proverb

I want to begin by thanking God Almighty, whose mercy endures forever! Mine has not been an easy life journey. After I completed my matric, I did not immediately know what career path I wanted to follow. Therefore, I enrolled at a Science College in 2000 to improve my Mathematics and Science. I applied for Information Technology for the following year, but on the day of registration in 2001, I enrolled for a National Diploma in Fashion Design at the then Port Elizabeth Technikon, which was later named Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (NMMU) and consequently Nelson Mandela University (NMU). I mention this because this became a defining moment in my life. I dropped out of this programme because I had sensed a calling into ordained ministry.

Initially, I did not understand what it meant and the phase I was going through, let alone explain it to my family and people who cared enough to ask. Dropping out of university was not received well at home as it reflected badly on their teachings and values but also it shattered their hopes, so they thought. So this work is not just a contribution into the body of knowledge in academia; for my family, it is a resurrection of hope. I have become a beacon of hope to my immediate and extended family, a trailblazer. It is not every day a young Black African woman obtains a PhD. “Each time a woman stands up for herself, without knowing it possibly, without claiming it, she stands up for all women” – Maya Angelou¹

What’s in a name?

My late grandmother, Nolast, gave me a prophetic name, Fundiswa, which means the teachable one. *Funda*, is a verb that means read, study or learn. *Fundisa* is to teach, Mfundisi means a teacher. Mfundisi is a pastor. How could she have known this? It can only be through the gift of African wisdom and spirituality. On the other hand, my grandfather, Wonga, who passed away when I was 2 years old, named me Nompunzi, literally translated a Buck. My mother Nomawonga reveals deep and heartwarming

¹ <http://www.mayaangelouquotes.org>, 15 March 2018

emotions when she narrates how passionate he was when he was explaining his choice of name. “A Buck that strides,” he would say, “they bring warmth to my heart.” Every stride I took in finishing this work is a fulfilment of their ‘prophecies.’ I dedicate this work to them, uZikhali nomamCirha. May they continue to Rest in Peace!

My extended family

I was born, raised, nurtured and educated by the Black community of Nakani Location on the outskirts of King Williams Town in the Eastern Cape. In the village, enlightened families could be counted on one hand; the majority were illiterate, *amaqaba*. The socio-economic conditions and ethical, spiritual, and theological questions posed by *amaqaba* in my childhood and our continued encounters when I visit my family home have had a significant influence on my academic life, especially my PhD research. I will forever be grateful to them. They have waited patiently for this work to be completed so that we can slaughter a cow, brew African beer, *umqombothi*, and celebrate as the village. They own me and affectionately address me as “umntwana wethu”, our child.

Immediate Family

I must express my gratitude to my family, led by two matriarchs, my late grandmother Nolast and mother Nomawonga, for their teachings. I spent the first five years of my life under the care of my widowed grandmother in the rural outskirts of King Williams Town. Three things that defined our family values were prayer, church and education. *Gogo*, as we affectionately called her, woke us up every day between 03h00 and 04h00 to pray. This we never understood, but it became one of the strongest pillars in our home to date. On Sundays, we all had to wake up early and prepare for church, and my siblings who at times had to play football on Sundays were taught that it was only in the afternoons that they could do so. In cases where they had to play in the mornings, they would go without food because our home would literally be locked during church service hours. This was also difficult to understand; nevertheless we got used to it. Lastly, school was non-negotiable. I remember one incident when I was still at crèche, I woke up late and refused to go to crèche because I was afraid of being punished for coming late. My grandmother literally dragged me to crèche and pleaded that the teacher understand and not beat me. I laugh about these things today, but they have made me the person that I am and that I am becoming. When I turned six,

I went to stay with my mother in a township called Zwelitsha, near King Williams Town, where she had bought a house and was employed as a primary school teacher and later became the principal of the school. Being a teacher's child was, interestingly, a class issue in black communities. There were expectations around how a teacher's child should behave. That kind of environment planted a seed of rebellion in me. I felt that I was the author of my life and would deliberately deviate from what was expected of me. There were times I would not do the schoolwork that was given to us to take home, and at that time, my own mother was my class teacher. She would punish me first so that I would refrain from being non-exemplary. My mother was unfortunately affected by the redeployment policy that was later introduced and had to move to Queenstown. This resulted in fragmentations in my home from the year 2001. Up to now, we have never stayed under one roof as a family except when we are all at home for December holidays.

A special word of thanks goes to my siblings, Lindile, Them bani and Ludwelwamadoda, aunts, uncles, cousins, nieces and nephews for their immense support throughout my life. We have had to make many sacrifices as a family, but this thesis is just one of the many things we celebrate collectively.

Beginning of the academic journey

Fort Hare University

In my academic journey, which began in 2004 at the University of Fort Hare, I encountered a number of people who shaped me in more ways than one; these are the Revs Buyeye, Sihlahla, Mvinjelwa, and Mhlomi, my classmates at Fort Hare. They were so protective of me and supported my journey like my brothers. A special word of thanks to Rev Moses and Lovedale Congregation of the UPCSA. My spiritual father, the Rev S Loni, who has always encouraged me to further my studies, many thanks, Dlamini.

The UPCSA

The following colleagues have also played a supportive role in my ministry, encouraging me in many ways to be the person I am becoming: Revs Z Makalima, Z Mtyhobile, L Mpetsheni, M Mfene, T Noti, S Dingiswayo, B Ngebulana, S Xapile, B Mdyesha, E Gaunt, A Combrink, S Sam, I Mabaso, F Jobela and T Ngalwana,

I was shaped by the following congregations of the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa: Semple Memorial, Lovedale Congregation, Thumedi Makgahlele, JL Zwane Memorial and lastly Delft Presbyterian Church where I was ordained and served for about three years.

JL Zwane Memorial Church

I arrived in JL Zwane in December 2010 to begin my ministerial journey as a probationer. The first few months in JL Zwane were both interesting and challenging at the same time. It was a new space and context where I had to attempt to apply my theology in concrete and real-life situations. While I preached for those months, I still struggled not to be abstract; after all, I was trained in Western theology. It was already at this stage that I began to realize that there was a disconnect between theology and real lives. Gugulethu and JL Zwane transformed my theology in many ways and helped bridge the gap that exists between church and community. One of the highlights of my ministry there was pastoral ministry, especially home visits. I have been to the worst, and I got to see and experience pain and suffering. The face-to-face encounter with the struggles of people made me more knowledgeable and in solidarity with them.

Delft Presbyterian Church, 'a loving and caring home'

I came to Delft when they had just become constituted as a congregation in January 2012 and became their first minister. They were not a financially stable congregation, and I remember, at times, they were unable to raise enough money for the minister's stipend. Delft was located in a newly established township in the Cape that can be described as a combination of vibrant life, poverty, disease and violence. I recall one of the painful incidences in my time there where a single woman and a mother of two, who was employed as a domestic worker to some white home, lost her son through violence. She had given all that she could for him to go to university, and indeed he did not disappoint his mother; he completed his education. It was in the year of his completion and when he had begun to think about job hunting that he was brutally shot in some gangster's fights. He was about to take his family out of poverty, and on the contrary, he died on the streets. Going to the family for a pastoral visit was one of the most difficult things I ever had to do. I was so caught in the intersections and could not begin to comprehend what the mother was going through. It was a humbling

experience for me. Her struggles and that of many others raised some of the theological and ethical questions this work attempts to respond to.

Ecumenical Movement

One of the best and defining moments of my life was when I was introduced to the ecumenical movement in 2012 by being firstly a participant in the Global Institute of Theology (GIT), a programme of the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC). In 2013, I was sponsored by WCRC to attend a WCC Global Ecumenical Theological Institute (GETI) programme in South Korea. In 2014, I joined the office of the WCRC as an intern on the Theology Desk and worked under the supervision of Rev Dr Douwe Visser. He touched so many lives, including mine, and I referred to him as 'coolest supervisor' ever! My year in the WCRC office, our work and conversations on the theology desk, our travels, dialogues, and his words of wisdom, encouragement and support are deeply cherished. Thanks for believing in me and encouraging me to be the best theologian. My work in the WCRC connected me to many people and created access to spaces that continue to form my being.

Supervisors and mentors

My PhD supervisor and mentor, Rev Dr Prof Vuyani Vellem, whom I officially met in 2007 when I was enrolled for an Honours in Theology, took an interest in mentoring me in both my Honours and Master's degrees. I remember how he tried to convince me to immediately register for my PhD after I completed my MA in 2010. He saw potential in me when I was not even conscious that I would later pursue a career in academia. An intelligent scholar with a deep and sharp mind, yet humble, introverted, and humorous, in him I found exceptional supervision and guidance. He is one of the people I admire and respect. As a result, I have been and will continue being afraid of failing him. *Ndibamba ngazo zozibini Msimang, Songo, Nonkosi, NoThabizolo!*

A special word of thanks to my two Unisa supervisors, Profs Marilyn Naidoo and Jaco Dreyer, who I worked with as their research assistant from 2009 to 2010. They were hard workers, perfectionists and intelligent scholars; working and learning from them was a blessing for me. Their support in transitioning from an academic space to the

local church was immense, even though they also felt that I should have stayed and enrolled for my PhD immediately after graduating my MA.

My current colleagues at UNISA

I am currently employed as a Lecturer and Discipline Leader of Christian Spirituality in the Department of Christian Spirituality, Church History and Missiology at UNISA. This is worth mentioning and raises questions pertaining to my contribution as a Systematic Theologian, an African, a Black woman, and a student of Black Theology of Liberation in the field of Spirituality and in the Discipline which is predominantly white and male.

A special word of thanks goes to my former Chair of Department (CoD), Zuze Banda, my mentor and former Discipline leader, who has recently retired, Dirk van der Merwe. My current CoD, Derrick Mashau, Christo Lombaard, Moses Maponya, Atele Coleman, Leomile Mangoedi, Karabo Makofane, Paul Gundani, Credo Mangayi and the entire department have been my support system, encouraging me to push and complete this D, as my CoD refers to it. Others encouraged me to deliver the baby.

The three musketeers

I started this PhD journey with my two best friends and sisters whom I met in the GIT in 2012, Revs Kudzai Lilly Phiri (Zambian) and Viktoria Viki Koczian (Hungarian). In 2013, the three musketeers (that's how we affectionately referred to each other, as an appreciation of each other's presence) attended the Global Ecumenical Theological Institute of Theology (GETI) Programme of the World Council of Churches (WCC), where we challenged and encouraged each other to enroll for a PhD and made a promise to be always there for each other. Lilly, after submitting her PhD thesis end of last year, passed away in February this year. Her death was one of the most painful ever to be experienced. She left a void in Viki and I and her support as we are busy with our PhD research is something that we miss. She had a way with words and was our crazy friend and sister. Her madness knew no boundaries, as she would say to me. This work is also dedicated to her!

Ecumenical siblings and friends: Nelson Kalay, Esambe Gilbert, Bonganjalo Mbenenge, Sunelle Stander Lays, Magriet De Villiers, Elizabeth Horn Petersen.

VukaniBantuTsohangBatho

Vukani is a movement whose aim is to invest in spiritual capital for the spiritual liberation of Black African people in particular and humanity in general. I joined this movement at its developmental stage and later became coordinator of the research team whose task is mainly research. We are tasked to assist the movement in looking at cognitive inadequacies of Black Consciousness itself, Spirituality of Liberation, refining and deepening our spirituality, dig deep and unmask the things that make Black people fall asleep. I joined the movement at a time in my life where I was challenged in my own spirituality. I struggled to reconcile the lived realities of black people and messages that are preached on Sunday.

My friends

As an introvert, I struggle to make friends and even in instances where I have those, I seldom spend time with them. Introverts thrive in solitude, and this work has been that space where I came alive. However, I wish to acknowledge a few people I call friends, who have stuck with me despite my personality traits and limitations.

My girls who have stuck with me through thick and thin: Unathi Mlisa, my confidante and advisor; Ayanda Gili, my homegirl, we grew up together, lived in the same street. Sayamo Dikana has an interesting mind and has often been a sounding board for some of my thoughts. My fellow brother and friend in the struggle for liberation of black humanity, Sandisele Xhinti.

To my ancestors:

AmaQocwa, ooZikhali maZembe, ooJojo, ooTiyeka, ooButsolo beeNtonga, ooMbizana, AmaCirha, ooNojaholo, ooNcibane, ooNtswentswe, AmaTshawe ooMdange kaTshiwo, ooKhawuta, amaZiya, amaMfene, ooLisa, ooJambase, amaBamba, ooKrila, ooThangana. Camagwini!

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my late grandparents, Wonga Wilson Kobo and Nolast Frances Kobo. This work is a fulfillment of their prophecies; indeed, I have become a teachable one that teaches and is a pastor. Continue to Rest in Peace my dear ones. To my mother, Nomawonga Therenia Kobo, I have sucked milk from the bravest of brave women. Thank you mama. The origins of my womanist voice are from reflections of my life as a granddaughter to Nolast and daughter to Nomawonga, two wonderful, beautiful and intelligent women.

To my late friend, Rev Kudzai Lilly Phiri, who after submitting her PhD fell in and passed away in February 2017 — this work is reminder of our friendship, the shared crazy moments in ecumenical spaces and in academia. Your words of encouragement and your support will always be treasured. Rest in Peace my Lilly!

ABBREVIATIONS

BC	Black Consciousness
BCM	Black Conscious Movement
BPC	Bantu Presbyterian Church
BTL	Black Theology of Liberation
CoD	Chair of Department
DRC	Dutch Reformed Church
EATWOT	Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians
FAP	FONDATION POUR L'AIDE AU PROTESTANTISME REFORME
GETI	Global Ecumenical Theological Institute
GBC	Grace Bible Church
GBV	Gender-Based Violence
GIT	Global Institute of Theology
LGBTQI+	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning/Queer, Intersex and many other sexualities
PCA	Presbyterian Church of Africa
PCSA	Presbyterian Church in South Africa

RPCSA	Reformed Presbyterian Church in South Africa
THE CIRCLE	The Circle of Concerned African Women
UP	University of Pretoria
UPCSA	Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa
UNISA	University of South Africa
WCC	World Council of Churches
WCRC	World Communion of Reformed Churches
WOWICCN	Women's Wing of the Christian Council of Nigeria

GLOSSARY OF TERMS

<i>Amaqaba</i>	The Illiterate
<i>Camagu</i>	Be honoured, and let it be so!
<i>Ikhaya</i>	Household/home
<i>Lobola</i>	Bride price, traditionally in the form of livestock
<i>Ubuhlanti</i>	The kraal
<i>Umntwana wethu</i>	Our child
<i>Umqombothi</i>	African Beer
<i>eziko/egoqweni</i>	<i>Kitchen and household</i>
<i>motho ke motho ka batho (Sotho) – A person is a person by virtue of others</i>	
<i>umntu ngumntu ngabantu (Xhosa) – A person is a person by virtue of others</i>	

LIST OF KEY TERMS

Black Consciousness	Philosophy that inspires BTL and good news from the black theological perspective to fix the degradation of black humanity.
Black Theology of Liberation	Theology that responds to faith of oppressed and enslaved black humanity.
Christianity(ies)	Our definition of Christianity derives from the understanding that there exists no single Christianity. There are Christianities.
Dialogue	Dialogue is a key motif in this thesis. Best illustrated by the circle and kraal, dialogue debunks Western modernity, conquest, binaries. It shifts the center by bringing to the center voices from the peripheries.
Womanism	Philosophy that inspires Womanist Theology and adopted as the combination of philosophy and faith examined.
Womanist Theology	Theology that responds to the faith of the oppressed black woman and black humanity.
Black humanity	An integration of the oppressed black man and woman that constitute a fragmented black humanity.

Ubuhlanti/Kraal

A governing, ethical artefact for amaXhosa and many black Africans, a place where economics, politics, spirituality and faith of a black home reside. It is a place for dialogue.

Circle

The circle at its core is inclusive and community-oriented, contrary to binaries. A circle is about community and dialogue.

ABSTRACT

This thesis proposes that a womanist dialogue with Black Theology of Liberation (BTL) in the 21st century is nothing but a de-westernizing praxis for a womanist. This proposition is based on a deeper examination of the gains of the School of BTL. This deeper examination of BTL uncovers a liberation notion that is not truncated, but comprehensive. This comprehensive vision, coupled with the motif of dialogue that is employed in this thesis, in the end debunks Eurocentric, conquering systems of knowledge in theology and the androcentric philosophical heritage, Black Consciousness (BC).

The thesis elaborates on notions of liberation that are developed in different phases and strands of the School. For example, if liberation is indeed notional, one strand is focused on race as a construct against which liberation had to be attained. If race was the only, if not major focus, in this strand of BTL, then other constructs such as class, gender and even culture would not receive equal attention and thus this vision of liberation would be truncated, the thesis argues. The notion of liberation that is espoused in this thesis is thus the critique offered both against the internal and external deficiencies on liberation. The philosophy of liberation that is related to BTL for this reason must be denuded of its androcentric language and symbols, while faith itself debunks ideologies that are Eurocentric and patriarchal.

The perpetuation of the colonial wound by Eurocentric frames of knowledge makes it difficult for a womanist to uncritically relate with feminist theory. Realising the tensions that constantly exist between one who is an academic and various schools of liberation, some elitist and others quintessentially grass-rooted, this thesis examines the inspiration and animation from lived experiences at grassroots level that must be in continuous dialogue with the construction of liberative knowledge from a womanist perspective. The journey therefore for a liberated black humanity requires both males and females, including other social constructs of gender such as the LGBTQ+, because no truncated view of liberation will be helpful for the advancement of the School.

CHAPTER 1

Mapping the Context

1.1. Introduction

This chapter introduces the purpose of the thesis, namely the apparent truncated nature of Black Theology of Liberation (BTL) in responding to the challenges of oppression against black people. In the struggle for liberation in South Africa, it is commonly said that there was a view that suggested that focus should have been on the liberation of black people as a whole first, thus relegating the plight of black women to the background.² For this reason, how BTL has responded to the challenge of patriarchy has not been the same as in its response to racism and class, for example, in the struggle for the liberation of black people. However, who are these ‘black people as a whole’?³ The background, the research problem, a hypothesis, the study objectives, methodology and the scope presented in this chapter broadly introduce this question, namely the thesis that the relegation of the women’s struggles to the background became a norm in BTL. In the main, this is a BTL study in dialogue with womanism⁴, more than it is a womanist study to examine whether emphasis on the constructs such as race and class in the development of the school was not ill-advised in pursuit of the liberation of ‘black people as whole.’ It is a critique of deficiencies one sees in BTL more than it is a critique of womanism, without necessarily downplaying

² In response to the question posed by the eNCA journalist on women’s emancipation in South Africa, looking back at the 9th of August 1956 and the 9th of August 2018, Dr Brigalia Bam, former Chairperson of the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC), former General Secretary of the South African Council of Churches (SACC), currently Chair of the Thabo Mbeki Foundation, acknowledges firstly the remarkable role played by women that day in 1956. She recalls a time where women’s emancipation was pushed back, as it was argued then that the liberation of black people as a whole was a priority. She suggests that this was due to lack of awareness, and observes that a celebration of women’s day in 2018 is a celebration of the slow awareness that has developed. She further observes how patriarchy, tradition and religion remain forces that subvert this awareness. (<https://youtu.be/8wPwAZV2K9k>, Date viewed, 16 August 2018).

³ When one talks about black people, one has in mind the rupture of broken black bodies that started in Elmina in 1492. Elmina is the epitome of broken black humanity as slaves, a rupture that continues in South African townships post-1994 which entails the growing intolerance by black people in townships today, whose struggle is to breathe, and be alive (See Vellem, 2017).

⁴ While womanism is a philosophy that inspires womanist theology, as will be demonstrated in chapter Two, in this thesis the term womanism is also adopted as the combination of philosophy and faith examined and thus used interchangeably with womanist theology, which is a dialogue partner of BTL.

the need for a self-critiquing stance for womanism. The womanist perspective we offer here flows from the gap related to constructs of oppression BTL has focused on. Drawing from other liberation theologies, it is carried out within the context of BTL, thereby setting the framework within which black women could begin to understand theology as liberation in the South African context.⁵

It is extremely important to map the context of this research, drawing from the history of the oppression of black people, which gives us a lens through which to grasp the struggle of black women, and which appears to have been downplayed in the phases of BTL. South Africa has a long history of colonialization and apartheid, which brought a lot of oppression and exclusion based on class, gender and race. The plight of black women thus runs through these two levels, the colonisation of black people as a whole and the oppression of women by the patriarchy among black people themselves.

The system of apartheid guaranteed that political, economic, and cultural power was controlled by the white minority. Social deprivation was heightened even further by the policy of separate development resulting in the forced removal of millions of people from their homes and a restrictive urbanization policy directed towards African people, implemented through pass laws and influx control measures (Sibeko & Haddah, 1997:84).

This succinct presentation of the total onslaught by the apartheid regime against black people may not be a full picture of what this history entails if black women are left out. Taking a view of a woman in society, admittedly the social status of a black woman is changing a bit in South Africa post-1994. The White Paper on the *Reconstruction and Development Programme* is the first official document in South Africa to acknowledge the inferior status of women in Government, public and private life and it commits to

⁵ It must be stated perhaps at the very introductory stage of this thesis that the understanding of theology as liberation as espoused in this thesis is different from that of the understanding of theology as salvation as in orthodox theology in particular. Liberation is not subsumed under notions of salvation. "Liberation means unpacking the gospel into living" (Townes, 2001:90). It does not only focus on the spiritual realm and preoccupation of taking people to heaven but engages human struggle, oppression, suffering and exploitation among other things. It is grounded in an understanding of the Gospel whose mandate is to eradicate that human struggle and systems of injustice, thus a theology of liberation whose core value is consciousness. Numerous scholars in this paradigm make this point, such as Katie Cannon (1984), James Cone (1975), Vuyani Ntintili (1996), Mercy Oduyoye and Virginia Fabella (1989), Emily Townes (2001).

redress gender inequality. However, even this document has flaws. The Agenda Collective (1995) states that “women’s participation in the drawing up of the document was peripheral” (1995:40). In fact, if there is anything about this flaw, our thesis that progressive black males committed to the struggles for the liberation of black people have ignored patriarchy is further clarified by the fact that a document, produced by the oldest liberation movement in Africa, the African National Congress, about the status of women, is found wanting.

African women in South Africa have experienced what many womanists and feminists call the “triple oppression”⁶ of race, class and gender. Black women have been oppressed because of their skin colour and gender by the apartheid regime as well as the patriarchal culture of subordination. They were stripped of any right and had no rights or ownership even of their own bodies. Their socially defined roles were those of bearing children, cooking, taking care of the family as well as grooming the girl-child into that role. Some women now are able to further their studies, own property and businesses, women are ordained and are given leadership roles by church and society. For some, unfortunately, it is still very much a challenge to break through as they were brought up by systems that made them to themselves as nobodies, and that was affirmed by the church too.

It still remains in their minds that they are black and female, which was derogatory and shameful to some extent. This “remaining” we are talking about— a state of frozen powerlessness— is expressed through Rambo’s (2010) theology of “remaining” and “breathing”, where she argues that in the immediate wake of the trauma, people do not have hope for the future.⁷

⁶ Womanists refer to various types of oppressions that intersect in black women’s lives as double, triple or multiple jeopardy (Kobo, 2018a:1). Hoover (1979:293) coins it slightly differently by using triple jeopardy to describe the situation of women. She attempts to bring in religion along race and gender and argues that black women are invisible in the black church and in black theology. Bennet (1986:170) argues that black women are triple exploited. They are exploited because they are black, women and they are workers.

⁷ For more insights on theology of “remaining” and “breathing” see Rambo, S. 2010. *Spirit and Trauma: A Theology of Remaining*. Louisville: Westminster John Knox, chapter 5

Allan Boesak (1977:19) describes BTL in this way: “Being a theology of the poor and the oppressed, Black Theology seeks to focus on them not as marginal people, but to bring into their lives a new understanding of their liberation in Jesus Christ.” Therefore, if this study is broadly premised on this description of BTL, then it implies that black women are equally poor, oppressed and marginalised. They too need to understand what liberation in Jesus Christ entails, rather than ‘salvation’ in Jesus Christ as construed in orthodox theology. An understanding of their liberation in Christ is one of the important aspects therefore of this thesis. It must also be stated that the understanding of Christianity in this thesis is that there are Christianity(ies)⁸ and this thesis is a critique of Western, white Christianity and church⁹ (Christendom) among other things. This forms part of the universalising project that the Coloniality School attempts to critique (Alcoff & Mendieta, 2000), and is a product of modernity that subsumed the belief systems and humanity of black Africans. A critique of Christianity(ies), therefore, must not be equated to a critique of Jesus Christ and the Gospel of Jesus.

This study is thus “A womanist dialogue with Black Theology of Liberation in the 21st century”, broadly for the purpose of understanding the liberation of black women in Christ from a black theological perspective and its implications for BTL as a whole. Abrahams asserts:

Womanism, like Marxism is a body of theory that must be tested in practice. In epistemological terms, we may say that its ultimate truth test lies in revolutionary practice. Womanism ideas may look great on paper. That is not the issue. The worth of womanist theories will only be seen in the ability of womanists to change the world (2001:73).

⁸ “There is not nor has there ever been, such a thing as “Christianity” or “Judaism”. Upon even brief reflection, this perhaps startling statement is obviously true. Whose “Christianity” does one mean when using the term: that of fundamentalist, orthodox Roman Catholics, members of various mainline or evangelical denominations, or that expressed within the realm of countless nondenominational “Christian” communities throughout the world? Similarly for “Judaism”; does it refer to Zionists, the ultraorthodox, “secular Jews”, or any other place on a wide and broad canvas? To attempt to place meaningful parameters on either term is to face the reality that the words simply have no concrete and specific meaning and never have. And yet, we find these labels used daily and throughout history as if they did have such concrete and specific meaning” (Howard-Brook, 2010: xiii).

⁹ “When under Constantine Christianity became a state religion, however, the Church changed. From then on, Church and State would be allies. The confession of the Church became the confessions of the State, and the politics of the State became politics of the Church. The politics of the Kingdom of God would henceforth be subjected to the approval of Caesar. G.J. Heering spoke of “the Fall of the Christian Church” (55) and rightly so. In simple terms, we might say, the Church became a white Church, and subsequent history would prove it. ... Once the Christian Church had discovered what could be done with its new-found economic and political power, there was no stopping it in joining fully in all the benefits” (Boesak, 1977:29).

In this regard, this research, among others, seeks to establish what the epistemological implications of womanism are for black liberation, what the tests are for its practice not only on paper but its validity in the transformation of the world. In other words, the question is whether the theories of womanism are revolutionary and ultimately add something distinctive to the notions of liberation or simply find appropriation in this paradigm, BTL, without necessarily or essentially altering it at metaphysical level. Scholars such as Enrique Dussel, Linda Alcoff and Walter Mignolo inspire this dialogue between womanism and BTL in this thesis.

Stated otherwise, the question is if womanism is a body of thought, should it be subsumed under the liberation assumptions and notions of BTL, or is this dialogue effective at a metaphysical level and with equal dialogue partners? Metaphysics entails preoccupation with philosophical, abstract, scientific, rational, materialist issues, which belong to the realm of empirically verifiable discoveries, data and theories. It is exempt from concrete experiences and thus lacks social analysis and action (Balasuriya, 1987; Ntintili, 1996; Segundo, 1984).

Thus, our¹⁰ examination of womanist theories in this thesis seeks to establish their revolutionary character in the light of the understanding of the gospel of Jesus Christ in dialogue with BTL. While essentially taking a critical look at BTL, the thesis does not test radical womanist theories outside this paradigm.

Oduyoye (2001a:16) argues that African women's theology "... does not stop at theory, but moves to commitment, advocacy and a transforming praxis". From this perspective, therefore, the examination of the commitment, advocacy and women's praxis might yield important knowledge for liberation. When Oduyoye (1995a:9) says, "I seek the quality of life that frees African women to respond to the fullness for which

¹⁰ It must also be stated that the use of "our" and "we" is intentional in this thesis. In my writings the use of plural is an expression of my location as a conversant in continuous dialogue, as womanists understand that conversations are never possible without others. It is also a conscious statement against the Cartesian ego (See Kobo 2018b:1). My writings are also an expression of one who emerged from being plunged in lived experiences of black African women in township congregations as an ordained minister in the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa (UPCSA).

God created them,” she might imply that the liberation of women does require a distinct set of theories in addition to the propositions of the liberation paradigm, within or beyond the frame of BTL. Our reading is that Oduyoye’s quest could be examined and could be plausible within the liberation paradigm that BTL has proposed, especially the comprehensive perspective of liberation, as defined by Vuyani Ntintili. For Ntintili (1996), a comprehensive perspective espoused in the Black Solidarity Materialist Strand not only nuances patriarchy in its conceptualisation of oppression, but also exposes the intersectionality of race, class and gender. However, to subsume African women’s theology under BTL’s truncated views of the black struggle should be seriously critiqued. At the same time, Hooks (1989:56) is in order when she argues:

We are in need of more feminist scholarship which addresses a wide variety of issues in Black life (mothering, Black masculinity, the relationship between gender and homicide, poverty, the crisis of Black womanhood, connections between health and our conceptions of the body, sexuality, media, etc.) – work that could have transformative impact on our future.

A wide variety of issues cited by Hooks broaden our thinking when we talk about womanism. The complexity of these issues, one might argue, call for a distinct set of theories beyond the frame of BTL but for us, it is the revolutionary character of womanist, including feminist theories and their practice in dialogue with BTL, which is the focus of this thesis.

1.2. Background to the problem

As a starting point, this thesis asserts that the struggle for South African black women to challenge the patriarchal culture of subordination is still pertinent for our context today in dialogue with BTL. “Patriarchy describes the institutionalization of male dominance over women in the home and society at large” (Trible, 1989:280), and so the continuation of this institutionalized dominance in South Africa today requires attention. Theologically, this dominance and rule of men over women is sinful (1989:281). “Patriarchy needs debunking but cannot be debunked in a heated battle”

(Lorke & Werner, 2013:395), it simply requires critical examination, or critical dialogue, the position we assume in this thesis. Williams (1993) equates other constructs of oppression. She writes:

Patriarchy, too, is a human construct, and one that has been sustained by Christian rationalizations. The concept denotes a system which maintains women's exploitation and oppression via the rule of men exercising controlled power in government, corporation, religious and other institutions, and domestic relations. Capitalism and patriarchy are inextricably intertwined (1993:83).

If capitalism and patriarchy are inextricably intertwined, then our view is that patriarchy is as bad as racist capitalism, class and all other constructs of oppression. In our history therefore, what then would be the justification to relegate patriarchy to the background in the struggle for liberation? It is this deferment of patriarchy as a construct such as race and class to the background in the struggle that this research finds troublesome.

BTL, from its conception, argued that race, class and gender are constructs but seems to have elevated some of these constructs above others. If patriarchy too is a construct, it should have had implications on BTL. To a similar extent, womanist theories should have also dealt with other constructs such as race and class in the same way. By debunking patriarchy, the thesis argues that questions around possibilities of creating hierarchies in the struggle for liberation might be clarified.

Mtsetwa (1998:59) suggests that it is important that we locate "... the efficacy of Africa's anti-life forces, systems and problems within the framework of post-apartheid South Africa."¹¹ Even though South Africa as a country has moved on and is now in a democratic era, so many traumas remain. So many anti-life forces and systemic

¹¹ Post-apartheid South Africa refers to the new dispensation in the country, which is marked by a democratic form of rule as opposed to the apartheid.

problems continue to traumatize our nation. Jones (2009) argues that contemporary studies have extended the application of trauma, which according to ancient Greeks was more on the physical, to the “mind and emotions, focusing on the effects of violence on our vast interior worlds... our psyches” (2009:12-18). Jones asserts that by understanding the scope and magnitude of a traumatic event, we can already see many of the effects it causes, namely, the loss of a sense of self, a breakdown in normal knowing and feeling and a paralyzing lack of agency in the face of the harm suffered. The magnitude of these events is such that the effects they produce, like a grievous physical wound, can remain and fester long after the initial harm. She further observes that trauma survivors can lose confidence that they are effective actors in the world because in the original event, they experienced just the opposite: a state of frozen powerlessness. Our history of colonization and apartheid certainly traumatized black people and created a state of frozen powerlessness among black people.

BTL, one can argue, has already made the point that Black Consciousness (BC) is understood to have provided psychosocial analytical insights related to the oppression of black people as a whole in South Africa. Ntintili (1996:7-8) elucidates this point by arguing that racism has left some deep scars on the psyche of black people. He further argues that these scars left black people demoralized and they have incurred a debilitating sense of inferiority with all its self-deprecating tendencies (1996:9). BC has brought out in clear ways the trauma and a state of frozen powerlessness of the entire race of black people at the hand of racial oppression. The extent to which patriarchy (as one of those other traumatic constructs) results in a state of frozen powerlessness, especially among black women, should have been important for BC, the philosophical dimension of BTL, according to this research.

BTL talks about God, unlike BC which is more about philosophy. We need to grasp that BTL as faith is a distinct form of knowledge, different from BC as a philosophy. BTL is a language of faith. In other words, one has to grapple with how BC as a philosophy relates to the faith of black people in general and women in particular to deal with the challenge of patriarchy. The relationship between faith and reason therefore seems to be one element of this research as trauma, powerlessness,

consciousness, viewed from the point of view of philosophy are important, but cannot only be viewed philosophically, as knowledge forms of faith will examine the same challenges with a different rationality. How traumatic then can a defective relationship between philosophy and faith be? How does BTL maintain the tension between faith and reason among the oppressed? Indeed, if the theories of womanism are about certain forms of knowledge, distinct from the knowledge of faith, where does any analysis of patriarchy lead us if the relationship between faith and reason is deficient? That is where this research identifies the tension between womanist theory and Black Theology of liberation, among others. One must grasp that within womanism, there is a dimension of philosophy and of faith. To make this distinction is critical, as this research is in the main a project of faith, i.e. theology, yet not any theology, but a liberation theology.

The theology of liberation is defined best by Gutiérrez (1973) as follows:

The theology of liberation attempts to reflect on the experience and meaning of the faith based on the commitment to abolish injustice and to build a new society; this theology must be verified by the practice of that commitment, by active, effective participation in the struggle which the exploited classes have undertaken against their oppressors. Liberation from every form of exploitation, the possibility of a more human and more dignified life, the creation of a new man all pass through this struggle (1973:703).

Central to the notion of liberation as pointed out by Gutiérrez is the reflection on the experience of the oppressed in the light of the gospel message and the commitment to transform the oppressive situation. This is if you like the philosophical dimension of liberation theology. What he seems to suggest is that any form of liberation theology must be premised on the experience of the poor and marginalised and commitment to transformation of oppressive systems. Enrique Dussel argues that any philosophy of liberation must be premised on experiences of those that have been excluded, i.e. the victims of oppression (Alcoff & Mendieta, 2000:2). BC makes the same point and its presuppositions are the oppressed, blacks in an anti-black world whose humanity must

be restored (More, 2017:34). This is where BC and BTL meet: the experience of the poor and marginalized.

At its core, womanism is a philosophy that celebrates black roots and ideals of black life, while giving a balanced presentation of womandom (Ogunyemi, 1985:72). It incorporates the well-being of men who are also victims of the Eurocentric world, a power structure that subjugates black people as a whole (Kobo, 2016:3). The experience of the poor and the marginalized is the place of convergence between womanism as a philosophy and womanism from a theological perspective.

Ntintili (1996) argues that the premise for BTL is the concrete experiences of oppressed people, contrary to what he calls the abstractionism of traditional theology, which concerns itself almost exclusively with metaphysical issues. He also argues that it does not divide life into sacred and secular spheres, but treats life in a more comprehensive and holistic manner: "What happens in one sphere inevitably affects what happens in others," he writes (1996:13). Indeed, traditional theology's emphasis was on the individual (Burrow Jr., 1994:34). For Ntintili, BTL is praxiological, as it is not only concerned with engaging in analysis for academic purposes, but rather committed to the transformation of oppressive situations. Like BTL, womanist theology informed by the philosophy of womanism should be praxiological and premised by the experiences of oppressed black women in a quest to comprehensively liberate them (Kobo, 2018a). Mosala (1986:131) observes the importance of women's experience in feminist theology as a critique to androcentricism in classical theology. She posits how women's subordination, while attributed to a physiological role in procreation, extends to inferiority of mind and soul as well, a point that was also raised by BTL.

This research thus puts a spotlight on the tension between faith and reason, philosophies of BC and womanism and faith as understood by BTL, a liberation theology. So far then, there are two important points one discerns, a combination of philosophy and faith expressed in the relationship between BC and BTL, and logically,

in womanism and womanist theology. These dimensions offer us a framework of dialogues between BTL and womanist theology.

The motivation for this thesis equally derives from the experience with women in township congregations in Gugulethu and Delft in the Western Cape. Both townships are the products of the systems of apartheid and can be described as a combination of vibrant life, poverty, disease, violence and seedbeds for patriarchy. One reflects on journeying with women in the church as well as communities, with the majority of them being employed as domestic workers, mostly, a vocation imposed upon them by the same systems. The above analysis of trauma is very much evident, as they are still bound by the patriarchal culture and the repercussions of the apartheid regime and its systems. Even though women assume leadership positions, they still feel obliged to be submissive to men, with an understanding that a man is the head. For example, they decline leadership roles, often turning down certain tasks such as conducting funerals and chairing meetings. The researcher has observed how some still see themselves as second-rate citizens. Such a mentality hinders the development and independence of women, not only in church and at home, but also in society.

The question is whether there are radical theories in our Church, the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa (UPCSA), that help women to understand their liberation in Christ. More specifically, what is there between the theology of the UPCSA and its ideologies? If women and black people in the context of the township outlined above represent a black church, then how are their struggles influenced and shaped by BC or philosophies of liberation? Is there any harmony between their faith and ideology (reason)? It is the argument of this thesis that a deficient relationship between philosophy and faith produces a deficient spirituality (Vellem, 2017; Cone, 2011). Allan Boesak argued many years ago that BTL is a critique of theology and ideology (1977:29). This means a critique of faith and ideology (faith and reason). Boesak speaks about pseudo-innocence, and thus the deficiency between theology and ideology produce a spirituality that we have designated as pseudo-spirituality (Kobo, 2018a), meaning spirituality that is a product of a deficient relationship between ideology and faith. Looking at the problem of theology and ideology in the association

of women in our denomination, we have averred that there are contradictions. Contradictions in women's *iimanyano* however speak to those found in the entire denomination.

A brief turn to the history of the UPCSA and *iimanyano* to grasp the theology and ideology that inspires them might shed more light. The UPCSA is a uniting church because it is a merger of the former Presbyterian Church in South Africa (PCSA) and the former Reformed Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa (RPCSA). Both former denominations generally owe their origin to the Church of Scotland, though their his/herstories are different. The former (PCSA) was formed as a result of colonial interests in Cape Town and thus by the British-Scottish settlers, who, according to Vellem (2007a:48), were brought for political reasons and mainly to entrench British power and thus white power in South Africa. The latter, the RPC, was as a result of the Church of Scotland's mission work, later seeing the need for an African Church in which African ministers and elders would have a real voice. A Bantu Presbyterian Church (BPC), which was predominantly black, was formed and later it became the former RPCSA. The formation of the BPC was meant to offer the black people their own space of expression based on their experience. The BPC thus developed within this culture, finding expression in structures and forms called "*iimanyano*"¹².

Our view is that *iimanyano* is a yearning of unity by Black Africans who lost everything, including their land, kraals, rituals, culture, customs, and traditional practices and suffered fragmentations through policies of separate development at the hands of colonialism, missionary enterprise and apartheid in South Africa. In a nutshell, we view *iimanyano* as a struggle against fragmentation, faith expressing a yearning for wholeness. This yearning is a direct result of wars ultimately leading to the defeat of amaXhosa and the constant movement of the colonial power into the spaces of black African lives (Kobo, 2018a:4). Importantly, if the theology of the UPCSA does not

¹² *Iimanyano* is a Xhosa word for unity and also used to refer to a group of people who share the same vision. The UPCSA is structured in such a way that men affiliate with the Men's Christian Guild (MCG), married and unmarried women with the Uniting Presbyterian Women's Fellowship (UPWF), unmarried young women with the Imanyano Yezintombi ZamaRhabe Amanyanayo (IYZA) and the youth affiliate with the Youth Fellowship (YF) (Kobo, 2018a:2,7). Following on Vellem (2007a:54), the researcher has reflected on this question of *iimanyano*, the "uncoerced cultural sites which give expression to the marginalised values of the Black masses" (see Kobo, 2018a).

integrate this yearning, whose yearning then does it respond to as a product of a church that sought to respond to the British yearnings and the yearning of unity among blacks?

This point is further elucidated by Njoh's critique of the missionary enterprise as life-killing for Africans, as Christian missionaries denigrated African belief systems, traditional practices and customs relating to the institution of marriage. They eroded African value systems, the location and role of women in society, production and reproduction. For them these were antithetical to Christian religious doctrine (2006:4). *iimanyano* thus created space for black people in the history of land dispossession, cultural killing and erosion of traditional practices. Indeed one could see the sacredness of this space for men who had no choices politically, economically, culturally as they started *iimanyano*, which was later extended to include women, young and old and youth. One could also argue that it was a space of reflection, expression and quest for liberation for a people that lost their Africanness which was more evident in worship. Worship became a space of defiance and revolt against evil spirits that threatened and subsumed the being of an African. The body movement during drumming, the trance, the cathartic frenzy were all expressions of a refusal to succumb to Scottish forms of liturgy (Vellem, 2007a:50).

Following Vellem's thesis, we could say that central to *iimanyano* is arguably the spirit of resilience, rebellion and refusal to succumb to powers that continue to oppress Africans as observed in their rejection of Scottish liturgy. For us, *iimanyano* simply show a spirit of refusal (Kobo, 2018a:4). The spirit of refusal and resistance embedded in *iimanyano* suggests that for women in this space, one could argue, patriarchal violence is rejected and the space itself cannot be an androcentric vessel of spirituality, faith, epistemology and life. Sadly so, *iimanyano* are filled with contradictions and are patriarchal sites, as will be demonstrated in the critique that follows on women's *manyano*, the Uniting Presbyterian Women's Fellowship (UPWF).

When one looks at the UPCSA as a whole, and the membership in various congregations, women are in the majority. Yet the church leadership remains male-dominated¹³. The leadership structures from the Kirk Session, which is at the congregational level, to that of the General Assembly, gives us a picture of a denomination that is patriarchal. One of the church practices that is worth mentioning is *ukusikwa kwentombi xa ikhulelwe*,¹⁴ meaning a disciplinary act by the Kirk Session, which is mostly predominantly male, to suspend and exclude from Communion a pregnant unmarried woman, and which does not suspend nor hold the man responsible for the pregnancy accountable. The endorsement and arguably policing of year plans of *iimanyano*, including of women, is the responsibility of the Kirk Session.

One of the aims and objectives of the women's *manyano* is to prepare women for leadership by empowering them and encouraging them to play a constructive role in church and society at large. One wonders who puts men in power therefore, if not women. This speaks to women's complicity to patriarchy if one looks at these contradictions. Their inability to build each other up in practice and to even affirm and support those that are in leadership arguably makes them androcentric vessels of patriarchy and an expression of a theology and ideology of a denomination that is patriarchal. Our view therefore is that "The UPWF simply reproduces the power of a patriarch" (Kobo, 2018a:5).

Indeed, we need to ask whether the women's *manyano* has liberated women or not by examining and critiquing its theology and ideology, its faith and reason. These issues call for a deconstruction of this site: "To expose how the systems of oppression interconnect in different spaces in the entire denomination, and calls for a critique of

¹³ An interesting observation was made by Ms Thoko Mkhwanazi-Xaluva, the Chairperson of the Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities (CRL) recently at the University of South Africa (UNISA). In her reflection on the report by the commission on the issue of commercialization of Religion and Abuse of People's Belief Systems, she exposed the affinities between these issues and leadership that is male-dominated in religion. She cited a response they got as the commission in one of the churches they visited when they asked about the participation of women, where they were told women are in *iimanyano* and have no business in the running of the church. She also bemoaned the pervasive exploitation of women and children under the guise of religion (27 August 2018).

¹⁴ A phrase literally translated a 'pregnant woman being cut off from society and church'. See Kobo 2014 for more insights on *ukusikwa kwentombi xa ikhulelwe*.

these spaces for the liberation of all” (Kobo, 2018a:7). The theme of pseudo-spirituality is thus pursued in this thesis as one important subject for the critique of theology and ideology and thus a quest for forms of spirituality that are liberating. It is necessary therefore to demonstrate that these contradictions maintained by women’s *manyano*, spaces that arguably do not liberate them, have a bearing on the spirituality of the association.

In this work one observes how the organisational capacity of women is held under arrest by the intrusion of males — patriarchy. We see how even in decision-making spaces that they occupy, in leadership positions they assume uncritically, their agency collapses and they simply legitimise male domination over them, thus becoming androcentric vessels of patriarchy (Kobo, 2018a:5). This suggests that women’s spaces are ruled by patriarchs¹⁵. In women’s *manyano* men rule, as observed in the above quotation. Women in these spaces are unable to transcend this rule, the patriarchal violence eats them up and turns them into patriarchs and even against other women. When they ascend into leadership positions, they become vessels that safeguard this rule. The power of the patriarch is revised while women’s issues are relegated to marginal sites, ghettoised by women themselves as suggested by Joy Ann James (1997:216). Another observation the researcher makes about *iimanyano* is that structures of leadership are patriarchal. Male minister’s wives automatically ascend into power and have clearly defined roles as women’s leaders whether they are capable or not (Theilen, 2003:48-49). Female ministers’ husbands however are not accorded the same privileges. There is no clearly defined role for them. These contradictions are further demonstrated in the androcentric use of language with reference to God and ministers that must be deconstructed.

The most recent incident worth noting which illustrates the patriarchal theology and ideology of the denomination that marks 40 years of ordained women’s ministry, when in its entire history it had only one female moderator and the church office that is male-dominated with women largely employed only as support staff, is the recent

¹⁵See Kobo (2016: 4). In *eziko/egoqweni* (kitchen and household), “the patriarch rules, leaving the woman completely disempowered”. One further observes how much power women lost in their ‘space’ and the implication of that on life.

appointment of a white woman as Ministry Secretary. The contradictions one observes include the recent General Assembly (2018 General Assembly) of this denomination, where an event to mark this anniversary was held, yet an opportunity to elect a moderator designate who is a woman was missed. Sibeko and Haddad (1997:85) have long pointed to these contradictions of churches that ordain women yet leadership structures remain male-dominated, as it is the case in the UPCSA. The gender statistics provided by Hendricks (2012:25), which show that there are 439 ordained ministers and only 22 of those are women, are telling. Nevertheless, this structural problem does not come as a surprise if one also looks at the ecumenical bodies associated with the UPCSA. The World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC) office in Hannover is male-dominated; all executives are men with women as support staff. The recently elected committee of the Africa Communion of Reformed Churches (ACRC) is also male-dominated.

There seems to be no urgency in redressing gender imbalances in leadership. The consultation of Reformed churches in the Southern Africa Region held in March 2018 in Benoni exposed these imbalances. The delegation was male-dominated, and in the programme there were nine speakers (white and black males) and only one was a white woman. It was an exposition of the transversal nature of racism, to which a womanist framework responds and makes its contribution in dialogue with BTL. When the question of misrepresentation was discussed, the justification was that there are no women capable of leading the church¹⁶. Prof Rothney Tshaka, who was one of the nine speakers, conceded that patriarchal violence has a tendency to elude even liberated men.

These contradictions could also be traced by looking at the history of the Reformed faith and theology expressed in Elmina Castle in Ghana, which the researcher visited in 2015¹⁷ and 2018¹⁸, which signifies the genesis of the fragmentation of black

¹⁶ See Kobo (2018 b) for more insights on the consultation and occlusion of patriarchal violence.

¹⁷ As a delegate of the UPCSA in the Bi-Regional Consultation of the two regions of the World Communion of Reformed Churches (WCRC); Africa Communion of Reformed Churches (ACRC) and Northeast Asia Area Council (NEAAC), in Tesano, Accra, Ghana, 16-21 November 2015.

¹⁸ To conduct a Bible Study on the Council for World Mission (CWM) legacies of slavery hearings, in Elmina, Ghana, 7-12 January 2018.

humanity and 'dungeoning'¹⁹ of black African women. The structure of that castle and the location of black women in dungeons below a Dutch Reformed Church suggest the hypocrisy of having a church above a dungeon where the commodification of lives takes place. A church that is sitting on top of black women's bodies remains the question of the 21st century, as demonstrated in later chapters of the thesis.

The point being argued here is that there are contradictions in the church pointing to a dissonance between theology and ideology. Put otherwise, this entire section could be argued as a demonstration of the ideological captivity of the faith of women in *iimanyano* and the denominations. The recovery of these spaces is needed in a quest to liberate women; we cannot have a women's space that is patriarchal and produces pseudo-spirituality.

When one uses BC to look at the experience of women in the UPCSA as depicted above, what Steve Biko suggests about an assimilation of Black people into an unchanged white world—the white power structure—sheds more light. Women are assimilated into an unchanged male-dominated world. The systems in the UPCSA are patriarchal, and following Tribe (1989), this thesis argues that patriarchy is a sin from which the UPCSA and other churches should repent. This is done in line with the views expressed, namely that patriarchy is a construct that needs to be debunked and equally prioritized like others that have been identified by BTL for the liberation struggle. In this quest, the experience of the oppressed, according to womanists and BTL, includes women being analysed in the light of the understanding of the gospel of Jesus Christ as liberation.

What has been discussed presents a motivation for this thesis which already suggests what the research gap is, namely, the deferred struggle of black women in the assumed notions of liberation for black people. The philosophical content and faith dimensions of the black struggle and its contradictions with implications for black

¹⁹ A term we coin emanating from the experience of black women kept in dungeons.

spirituality suggest challenges with regard to spirituality in this struggle. It constitutes the core problem examined in this research. The literature review will thus sketch and deepen our grasp of the implications of the relegation of patriarchal violence to the background in our notions of liberation in BTL for dialogue with womanism.

1.3. Literature Review

BTL seems to have focused on the liberation of 'all black people' by apparently relegating the challenge of patriarchy and its constructs to the background and the 'ultimate day' of the liberation of 'all black people'; this is undeniably a challenge and problem for black liberation (Cone, 1979; Grant, 1979; Kobo, 2018b; Masenya (ngwana' Mphahlele), 2004b; Mofokeng, 1987; Moore, 1973; Mosala, 1986; Mosala, 1987; Oduyoye, 1995b). There is more than adequate literature that suggests this problem. The most recent one worth noting is Allan Boesak's upcoming book, where he employs Cheryl Kirk-Duggan, a womanist, to critique the Exodus motif, the foundational paradigm of BTL, by posing the question of the role of women in Exodus (2018)²⁰.

Dialogue is a key motif of this thesis, and it takes place at two important levels. First, the internal levels that include womanist theology and BTL, womanism and BC and ultimately, the philosophy of the theology of black liberation. Second, the external levels about dialogue include the problem of BTL and Eurocentric categories with its constructs. The definition of dialogue is inspired by Enrique Dussel's understanding of philosophy as dialogue and other works of the Coloniality School.

Eurocentric modernity has dominated humanity and the world for 500 years (Dussel, 1995; Alcoff & Mendieta, 2000; Mendieta, 2003), leading to the rest of Europe placing itself as the centre of the world system with a capitalist economy (Mendieta, 2003). Philosophy, ethics, religion, culture and humanities all have been understood through

²⁰ Manuscript submitted for publication

Eurocentric lenses. Grosfoguel (2013), Maldonado-Torres (2014a&b) and Mignolo (2013) are among those scholars who have exposed the myth of the universalism of knowledge and life centred on the West.

According to Grosfoguel (2013), the world's knowledge system centers on the West, at a philosophical level, and Cartesian philosophy, which entails the separation of the mind and body, is at the core of the knowledge system of the West. The affinities between Eurocentric philosophy and conquest constitute the core of the critique offered by the Coloniality School and BTL. Dialogue is extremely problematic in relation to knowledge that is preceded by conquest. For example, Nelson Maldonado-Torres (2014a&b) brings in the dimension of the subversion of dialogue through the domain of religion fused with modernity. Walter Mignolo (2013) observes that the problem of the West is its inability to accept that there exist other localities that are non-West, and to universalize Western localities erases other localities.

Dussel and the Coloniality School broadly critique postmodernity as part of Eurocentric Modernity. "Trans-modernity", a concept associated with Dussel, suggests moving beyond modernity. Accordingly, the ability of transcendence paves the way for philosophical communities that had been pushed away from the centre to reclaim their space, develop their philosophies and histories and enter any possible dialogue as equal partners. Surely without dialogue there is doom in the world of philosophy, yet, the illusion of the West as centre is crumbling. "Things are shifting, centres are moveable..." (Mignolo, 2013:2). This understanding of dialogue and its relationship with philosophy has immense implications for BTL and womanism within the internal discourses of black liberation. The deferment of patriarchy might imply the conquest of black women by black males first before all blacks are liberated. Could this be what BC stands for?

A view of dialogue in this thesis is further inspired by the symbol of the circle as employed by Mercy Amba Oduyoye, an Akan from Ghana and a founder of The Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians (The Circle). "All circles began with a single

point, which then disappeared. A solitary person does not make a community: therefore, a circle is about a community". She further posits that "The story of the Circle is that of an "I" who becomes a "we" (Oduyoye, 2001b:97). Velleem (2007b), a Black theologian, employs the symbol of *ubuhlanti* (kraal) and thus *ubuhlantification* (kraalonization), which is "like a hermeneutical circle, where the mediations of the bonds of spheres and the instantiation of their life take place" (2007b:321). This work also inspires our view of dialogue.

Maluleke (2001), a Black theologian and missiologist, is one of the scholars who have sharply critiqued the work of The Circle, namely, black women's engagement with the problem of patriarchy. One of the questions he poses is the location of The Circle in academia, therefore, the ideological, elitist and exclusive aspects of The Circle. Sarojini Nadar, a South African womanist, in her work co-authored with Kaunda (2017) which explores possible agendas for The Circle, ponders on the role of grassroots women in the Circle, among other things. The critique of Maluleke, Nadar and Kaunda alerts us to the need for self-critique as womanists.

BTL, at an external level, questions the theology and ideology of the West (Christendom). This has been patriarchal too. Feminist and womanist voices such as Masenya (ngwana' Mphahlele) (2004), Mosala (1986), Oduyoye (1995) and Williams (1993) have exposed the androcentric nature of Western theology which, in turn, inspires the androcentric interpretation of the Bible to sustain and justify the exclusion of women from the church or leadership roles in church and society. They have argued in more ways than one how the construct of patriarchy has been theologically justified and sustained by Christian rationalisations. The motif of dialogue is useful to engage both philosophy and faith, namely, both BC and BTL, and even womanism in its philosophical and theological dimensions. For womanism too, blackness and the critique of Eurocentric categories of faith and knowledge is the subject of this critical dialogue.

Written in the 21st century after so many years and centuries of dialogue between blackness and Eurocentric systems of knowledge, this thesis proposes to move beyond critique and critical dialogue with the West in favour of decentring the West. The notion of decentring by Mignolo (2013) inspires the study. In their critique of Eurocentric modernity, the Coloniality School argues for decentring from the West, which is brought forth by emerging consciousness on the part of those that have been on the periphery. The notion of unthinking the West by Vellem (2017) helps us to nurture the idea to decentre Eurocentric categories of knowledge as well.

Accepting that BTL has somehow created a hierarchy of struggles among black people and that there is a danger in leaving theology and ideology in a relationship that does not harmonize the aspirations of liberation, the overriding concern with regard to the liberation of women could be discerned in the philosophy of BTL, namely BC. Biko (1987), Mangcu (2012), Mkhabela (2017) and More (2017) are among scholars who argue for the importance of BC in opening eyes for black humanity. Premised on Biko's 'black man, you are on your own,' BC is the awakening of the consciousness of blacks towards their own liberation. It is an attempt to fix the degradation of black humanity caused by Eurocentric modernity. It is a call for self-affirmation on blacks whose whole existence, i.e. culture, history, philosophy, and so forth has been on the underside of modernity. It is an attempt to liberate blacks from mental bondage and captivity. It is on the edifice of BC that BTL developed a theology and faith premised by experiences of blacks in relation to the message of the Gospel (Vellem, 2007b), a theology "... in revolt against the spiritual enslavement of black people, and thus against the loss of their sense of human dignity and worth" (Moore, 1973: ix). BC, as a philosophy, is also different from Western philosophy. It is a philosophy of existence.

Following the review of these aspects above, notions of liberation, as defined by Ntintili (1996), are important. They holistically capture the developments in the School, and through them, one is able to grasp in totality what BTL is and aspires to be. One also grasps how it has nuanced patriarchy from the very first publication of BTL by Moore (1973). Mofokeng (1987), Mosala (1987), Mothlabi (1973), Maluleke (1997, 2002, 2004) and Vellem (2007b, 2014b, 2015) are amongst Black theologians that have

continued to reflect on the importance of the liberation of women. However, there can be no denial of the fact that patriarchal violence has been subsumed under other constructs such as race and class which preoccupied BTL. Furthermore, the School itself identifies various strands of BTL (Ntintili) or different Black Theologies (Mosala, 1989) equally with different notions of liberation.

Both the background of this research and the current section review and engage literature to clarify the depth of the problems associated with the relegation of patriarchal violence to the background in the black struggles for liberation. The engagement of the ideological and theological foundations of BTL points to a number of contradictions with regard to black faith and spirituality. There are various notions of liberation internally, and dialogue as a motif of the research helps us deepen our comprehension of the problem at stake articulated succinctly in the next section.

1.4. Defining the Research Problem

Since the time Black Theology of Liberation emerged in South Africa in the 1970s, a period which was regarded as its defining stage, over the years and today, there seems to be an overriding concern with regard to the liberation of women in this school of thought. The research problem is three-fold and finds substance in the following questions:

1. To what extent has Black Theology of Liberation responded to the constructs of race and class without placing patriarchy as an equal challenge to black people themselves?
2. Does liberation of women require a distinct set of theories in addition to the propositions of the liberation paradigm within the frame of Black Theology of Liberation?
3. What are the possibilities of womanist- and Black Theology collaborating as strong forces for liberation of Black humanity?

1.5. Hypothesis

While BTL, within its first phases of development, recognised the importance of patriarchy as a vital construct to engage, it shifted this problem to the back burner. This was with the understanding that the liberation of black people as a whole should be given priority by focusing on constructs such as racism and class, thus the School created a gap for the comprehensive understanding of liberation for black people. BTL apparently overlooked the androcentric categories in its philosophical orientation, namely, BC philosophy, in addition to the pervasive contradictions of black faith that exhibits traits of patriarchal violence.

1.6. Objectives

Our objectives therefore are:

1. To show that Black Theology of Liberation responds to constructs of race and class without identifying patriarchy as an equal challenge to black people themselves.
2. To show that liberation of women requires a distinct set of theories in addition to the propositions of the liberation paradigm, within the framework of Black Theology of Liberation.
3. To explore the possibilities of womanist- and Black Theology collaborating as strong forces for liberation of Black humanity.

1.7. Purpose

The research purposes to demonstrate that liberation of blacks, as espoused in BTL, is truncated if black women are not liberated. Jordaan (1987:44) pointedly argues that liberation should address itself to the emancipation of the whole person; otherwise, it misrepresents the concept of liberation. She further asserts that it is impossible to claim to be a liberated humanity when there is a person who is in chains. What this

implies is that in their endeavour to liberate Black humanity, by downplaying the interlocation of Black women, BTL compromised the whole concept of liberation. “Struggle between struggles”, is what Mosala (1987:39) highlights as the problem. It is the tendency to give attention to other struggles while leaving others to suffer. BTL focused on liberating Black people from white domination, but in the process, they were not conscious of themselves oppressing Black women. This is the cry of the womanists.

By looking at how BTL has dealt with other constructs, the thesis posits that, while it nuances patriarchy in its vision, sexism has not been given the same attention, hence a call for an autonomous discourse of womanism within this framework, to bring forward to the agenda the liberation of black women who should be dialogue partners in the struggle for the liberation of black people. The ultimate goal, therefore, is to liberate black humanity, i.e. black men, women, gays and lesbians, children, and their relationship with creation. This is the concern of womanism even though the focus in this research is on patriarchal violence.

One of the cardinal tenets of BTL is not to romanticise issues, so while looking at Black and womanist theologies, the thesis does so critically, thus exposing its shortcomings. The dialogue is a call to both Black and womanist theologies to work on the same agenda, to liberate black humanity, to assume their roles as prophets and speak against the injustice and ills of society that keep black people in the same trenches of destitution. It is a call to review the location of the two, with BTL having started from the pews and now being solely an academic enterprise, together with womanist theology, which has not broken ground in the pews.

1.8. Research Methodology

BTL provides a framework from within which black women begin to understand theology as liberation in South Africa. In particular, Mosala (1987:39) rightly puts it that “... the measure of the success of any liberation struggle is the extent of the liberation

of women in that struggle”. He further argues that without such an autonomous ‘Black Feminist theological’ discourse of struggle, black theology is dangerously truncated” (1987:39).

This thesis is a dialogue between BTL and womanism. Our understanding of dialogue is inspired by the Coloniality School and how Enrique Dussel defines dialogue and the importance of dialogue in philosophy. This thesis debunks the idea of a closed circle of Eurocentric universalism and espouses dialogue that enables whatever has been obscured under the guise of modernity, histories, and philosophies, among other things, to be revealed in all traditions of the victimized. Dialogue will enable the world to have access to diversity as each tradition brings its unique contribution. It also promises equal recognition of communities and their philosophy. Dialogue for Dussel is possible when we transcend Eurocentric universalism and modernity (2009:500). Without dialogue, Dussel foresees doom in the world of philosophy. The illusion of the West as centre is crumbling, there is a shift and centres are no longer untouchable but are, in fact, moveable (Mignolo, 2013:2). The perspective of womanism debunks the question of conquest and forms the basis of a relationship between BTL and womanism. The methodology of womanism is best illustrated by the circle (Oduyoye, 2001a) and kraal (Vellem, 2007b) as symbolic of a holistic, integrated cosmos of black life.

The dialogue is with womanism, not feminism and Alice Walker (1984), even though they are also engaged. Ogunyemi (1985) helps us in defining womanism as a philosophy combined with faith examined in this thesis, as expressed by the womanist theologians Cannon (1984, 2006), Townes (2003, 2010) and Weems in the African-American context. Our very own Masenya (ngwana’ Mphahlele) (1995) defined womanist theology in the South African context. Nadar (2003) also chooses womanist theology because of its exposition of race and class in the quest for liberation of black women. Schüssler Fiorenza (1975) and Landman (1995) assist us in making the distinctions between western feminism and womanism and what is important to each.

A womanist framework is premised by black community, history and culture (Cannon 1984). Mercy Oduyoye (1986, 2001a, 2001b); Musimbi Kanyoro (2001), Libuseng Lebaka-Ketshabile (1995), Madipoane Masenya (ngwana' Mphahlele) (1998), Rosemary Edet and Bette Ekeya (1989) are among scholars who have emphasized the importance of culture in African women's theology. They argue that life for an African and a woman is comprehensive, and culture therefore intersects with religion (Kanyoro, 2001).

BTL has also spoken about the need for recovery of African culture which was subsumed by Eurocentric modernity and its affinities with cultural imperialism (Goba, 1986; Vellem, 2014b). A reflection of how the West continues to denigrate African culture in the 21st century was observed in a recent conference in Louisville, Kentucky in the USA²¹, where two Presbyterian women came to a couple of countries in the African continent to do a study without engaging African scholars and returned to the North to speak on Africa's behalf (see Spivak, 1988). This is the most recent example of what Maluleke (1996:20-1) describes as fraudulence of theology and religion in their encounter with "people of the grassroots", and cites the missionary enterprise as an example.

Black Theology argues that "it must be a black man who knows how best to live as a black man today" (Manasa, 1973:34). Therefore, for a black man to be liberated, a black man must advocate his own liberation. Mosala (1986:132) argues that liberation does not fall into one's lap but must be claimed and protected. By turning Black Theology's philosophy inside out, a womanist would then argue that it is a black woman who knows how best to live as a black woman today and thus only she can advocate for her own liberation.

²¹ Churchwide Gathering of Presbyterian Women, 2-5 August 2018, Louisville, Kentucky

Methodologically, therefore, this approach would be a theology from below with an African black woman as an interlocutor. An understanding of a black woman that inspires this work could be traced back from 1492 in the dungeons of Elmina castle in Ghana. Elmina represents the structural oppression and commodification of black humanity as slaves, its structure and the location of enslaved black African women below a Dutch Reformed church. The spirit of resistance and refusal demonstrated by this woman is nuanced in the statement of the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT) (1993). This posits BTL as a response to an epoch in history and entails the cries and groans of black African women that commenced with the transatlantic slave trade in Elmina and continues in various parts of the world, including the Global South, up to this day.

By using women, particularly black women, as interlocutors, it sets the framework from within which women begin to name and reclaim their place in Christ's ministry. It is important to note primarily that the women who enter into this dialogue as interlocutors know what it is to be black, poor and oppressed. They have experienced domination from both white and black men. Furthermore, they have suffered domination from white women too. It is their unique situation therefore that distinguishes them from their white counterparts, "feminists". Ntwasa and Moore rightly put it:

If black women are white men's nobodies (except the sex objects of a few Nationalist perverts) they are also black men's property bought at a *lobola* price and expected to be obedient servants in the home. And if the black home is too poor to afford the luxury of a 'kitchen-servant' wife, then she must become the 'kitchen slave' of a white woman. A married black woman knows fears and insecurities beyond those of her married black neighbours. In the cities, she may not rent a house for herself, a right accorded to men only (1973:25).

When black women are freed, as interlocutors, they enter into dialogue as equal partners. As dialogue partners with their own agency, they can journey in collaboration with male counterparts as intellectuals in the struggle for the liberation of blacks and

humanity. Following Dussel's understanding of dialogue as "transcendence" and "beyond", our methodology could, therefore, be described as "Analectic Exteriority" which is that of 'transcending systems, by "the other", namely black woman and man in a quest for justice and liberation' (Dussel, 1988:238).

This is a literature study and thus a qualitative approach insofar as it "...stresses the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape enquiry" (Clough & Nutbrown, 2002:19). "It starts from the notion of the social construction of realities under study and is interested in the perspectives of participants, in everyday practices and everyday knowledge referring to the issue under study" (Flick, 2007:2).

1.9. Delimitation

I write this thesis as a black woman in the discipline of Social Theological Ethics, and Black Theology of Liberation in particular. I am a black, educated woman who grew up in the township as a Christian. I am aware of the limitations of speaking on behalf of others and the related struggle of objectivity in theological reflection. I regard myself as an organic intellectual, (Gramsci, 1971), one committed to the struggles of black women in continuous dialogue with the marginalised while conscious of my position, both in society and in academia. James Cone, in his book entitled *God of the Oppressed*, has long critiqued western theology for its assumption that theology and modernity could ever be objective and universal. The valorisation of the experience of the marginalised in Cone's theology is a direct critique of the myth of objectivity in the study of faith and, therefore, the relationship of theology with objective science.

That I share the experience of black women might be the limitation of this thesis, but also its strength, as this work is not without any interest, namely, the liberation of black women and black people. The inspiration of this thesis derives from the experience of black women as the interlocutor of the womanist approach taken upon reflection. The thesis is made up of seven chapters and is limited to BTL's perspectives and thoughts

in social theological ethics. Its contribution to an important discourse in the 21st century, namely, studies on gender and patriarchy for multidisciplinary purposes, may not be disputed. Research is political and my own experiences cannot be separated from this work. How this journey of immersing myself in the struggles of black people has shaped me features at length in the epilogue whose purpose is to acknowledge my interest in this work.

Lastly, other questions such as homosexuality and the issues of the LGBTQ+ are acknowledged, but the focus is on patriarchy. This might be a weakness, yet the thesis could be applied to these pressing matters too as they are generally included in the comprehensive vision of liberation for blacks that is argued with patriarchy as the major focus.

1.10. Chapter Outline

The thesis is divided into seven chapters, a conclusion and an epilogue.

Chapter 1 – General Introduction

This chapter introduces the core of this thesis, namely, the pervasive challenge of patriarchy to BTL. The background provided in this chapter reviews literature that substantiates the fact that BTL may have fallen into the trap of deferring liberation of black women to the background. This thesis is motivated by a pressing question of how BTL must deal with contradictions within itself; external challenges related to modernity, demonstrated in the research problem; study objectives; hypothesis and methodology that is shaped by BTL and the understanding of dialogue inspired by the Coloniality School. In the context of the struggle and quest for liberation of black humanity, it presents the following themes and titles of the chapters to follow, namely: Black Theology of Liberation and Patriarchal Violence; I am a womanist, not a feminist!; *Gender Trouble*; A Rupture of Broken Bodies in South Africa Post-1994; Walking together to the Promised Land: a Womanist dialogue with Black Theology of Liberation in the 21st Century, and Decentering the West: The *praxis* of Womanism in the 21st Century.

Chapter 2 – Black Theology of Liberation and Patriarchal Violence

The main purpose of this chapter is to review the gains of BTL in its response to the challenge of patriarchy. The argument in this chapter is that there are different notions of liberation and even different types of black theology. At the core is Steve Biko's BC philosophy and the presentation of black personhood through the androcentric phrase "Black man." Concisely, this chapter is a self-critical presentation of the harmony that must exist between faith and reason, and the promise of BC philosophy. It does so by firstly mapping briefly the South African context in order to get a better understanding of this history of oppression and its impact on black people as a whole. It problematizes 'black man' as a construct and a product of capitalism with a black home being a site of struggle. This context gave rise to the era of the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM), and ultimately, the emergence and development of BTL as responses to this history of oppression.

Chapter 3 – A Womanist, not a Feminist!

The purpose of the chapter is to present a compatible dialogue partner, a black woman in dialogue with a black man in pursuit of black personhood devoid of Eurocentric categories of knowledge such as the Cartesian ego and the conquering spirit of modernity and colonisation. The chapter presents a womanist perspective: communal, pro-dialogue, integrative and constantly in search of its relevance to the interlocution of black women in grassroots and 'dungeons' today. The statement of the third Assembly of the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT) exposes the sets of theories proposed by women, which must be examined. Following that, we look at womanism and its geopolitics of knowledge foregrounded by definitions of womanism by Alice Walker and Chikwenye Ogunyemi. We problematize the contexts out of which the definitions emerge as they influence womanism as the epistemological agency of black women. We look also at culture as a unique contribution and affirmation of comprehensive liberation in the womanist discourse and how womanists deal with race. We conclude by demonstrating critiques and shortcomings of the discourse.

Chapter 4 – Judith Butler’s “*Gender Trouble*” and Womanism

The purpose of the chapter is to see if womanism in dialogue with theories of gender could help transform the fundamentals of Black theology itself as well as womanist perspectives. It also distinguishes between feminist Eurocentric perspectives that address the challenge of patriarchy, scholarship that addresses the trouble of gender and patriarchy. Gayatri Spivak and Judith Butler help us to look at the trouble of gender, which is predominantly heterosexual and divides life into binaries of female, and male, women and men. Moreover, we look at how these binaries are foreclosed and arguably exclusionary, thus creating epistemological disturbance, which calls for their deconstruction. We examine norms that safeguard the binaries of gender and sexuality, and decide who and what we are as determined by those in power. We further analyse use and misuse of power in relation to gender to establish the extent in which it either gives or threatens life or both.

Rupture between power and life poses ethical risks and has implications on being human and therefore on our lived bodies and epistemological agency. By looking at black women’s experiences as disturbers of Eurocentric epistemology and patriarchy within the ‘kraal’ of black women, we posit that no western framework could ever be representative of those bodies. We debunk Eurocentric binaries and propose a circle as a comprehensive epistemological approach. We posit that gender from a womanist perspective is African, comprehensive and interconnected.

Chapter 5 – A Womanist dialogue with the grassroots

This chapter engages the experience of the grassroots and is about dialogue. It is about our vision to construct epistemologies and paradigms of knowledge that are liberative and life-affirming. Sarojini, Maluleke and Oduyoye offer insights on issues of methodology we find helpful for an encounter with grassroots communities. The chapter examines how other black women could be conquerors of black women rather than dialogical partners for the affirmation of their lives. If there are different black

theologies, the assumption of this chapter is that there are different womanisms too in relation to their connectedness with the grassroots and the methodologies employed to respond to the interlocution of a black woman. The discussion takes us to the lived experiences of black women in South Africa specifically based on the reflection on the proceedings of the conference hosted by the Centre for Public Theology in the University of Pretoria in conversation with West African women from the Women's Wing of the Christian Council of Nigeria. The general objective of the ecumenical conference was to create a space for dialogue between women from West Africa and South Africa on the brokenness of bodies of African women and the ramifications of patriarchy in the 21st century.

Chapter 6 – Walking together to the Promised Land: A Womanist dialogue with Black Theology of Liberation in the 21st Century

Having debunked and critiqued the androcentric perspectives of BC and BTL and clarified the type of womanism that might assist in our quest for the liberation of black personhood, this chapter identifies the tenets of the journey and walking together of a black woman and man. Furthermore, it asserts that this journey may not be possible without altering BTL at a metaphysical level. This chapter fiercely critiques pseudo-spirituality and Christendom, headship theology and androcentric use of language and looks at the following themes: white South African academia and the alien fraudsters, African culture, patriarchal violence and womanism, Black humanity, patriarchal violence and BTL, Womanists and BTL walking together, Womanist Theology is Black Theology, Walking together to the Promised Land.

Chapter 7 – Decentring the West: A Praxis of Womanism

This chapter asserts that no man can be the centre of any notion of liberation among black people, much as there will be no external vision of liberation for black people such as the impositions of Eurocentric knowledge. A decentring of the androcentric,

sexist conquering man within the internal discourses of BTL is as bad as the conquering West if not worse. The assumption that a black woman who is liberated can sustain dialogue with the West in particular that has continued to 'dungeon' black women's lives even in the 21st century is no longer helpful. The praxis of womanism is on decentring the West, we argue. In decentring the West, womanism looks at how the West has destroyed the knowledge systems of black people, and we are moving beyond critique to decentring.

Chapter 8 – Conclusion

This chapter concludes the thesis by bringing into focus the key themes that have emerged in the research. It takes us through these questions briefly as a way of re-articulating the problem to which this work attempts to respond. It highlights key issues raised in the thesis and their contribution to the School of BTL and poses questions and challenges of the 21st century that remain to be further researched.

Epilogue

The thesis reflects on the experiences of black African women and posits that they are epistemology. The researcher's own experiences and reflections on the journey of immersing herself into these struggles cannot be excluded; therefore, they feature at length in the epilogue.

1.10. Conclusion

This general introduction presented the introduction of the entire thesis and its purpose that responds to the following problem statement: To what extent has Black Theology of Liberation responded to the constructs of race and class without identifying patriarchy as an equal challenge to black people themselves? Does liberation of

women require a distinct set of theories in addition to the propositions of the liberation paradigm within the frame of Black Theology of Liberation? What are the possibilities of womanist theology and Black Theology collaborating as strong forces for liberation of Black humanity? It is written within the methodology that is Black and womanist and looks at the oppression of black women as pointing to a fragmented black humanity. A thesis written from a Black theological perspective will certainly require one to ask a question about patriarchal violence and this School. This is the theme discussed in Chapter 2.

CHAPTER 2

Black Theology of Liberation and Patriarchal Violence

2.1. Introduction

This chapter reviews the gains of BTL in its response to the challenge of patriarchy through the lenses of various strands of BTL and views on notions of liberation. BTL has responded to the constructs of race and class while apparently overlooking the detriment of patriarchy as an equal challenge to black people. The argument in this chapter is that there are different notions of liberation and even different types of black theology itself, following Mosala (1989). This chapter is a self-critical presentation of the harmony that must exist between faith and reason, and the promise of BC as a philosophy of liberation. At core is the engagement of Steve Biko's BC philosophy and the presentation of black personhood through androcentric language, such as the use of the phrase "Black man". We problematize this "Black man" as a construct, a product of Western capitalism with a black home being a fragmented site of the struggle of black African culture, as also being patriarchal.

We first deal with the notions of liberation in BTL and then examine the roots of BC in BTL. We move on to present the problem of patriarchy and argue the paradox of blackness by assuming a view that BC is good news and the same could be said of BTL. When they become conscious of their oppression, their resistance erupts.

2.2. Notions of Liberation in Black Theology of Liberation

To clarify contradictions with regard to black faith, we first look at the notions of liberation in BTL. BTL works focus on the history of South Africa as a history of oppression justified by faith. Boesak writes, "South African society is based on white

racism maintained by violence and oppression. Legalized discrimination in all areas is a way of life” (1987:5). He further states that what is unique about the South African situation is not oppression and exploitation, which are a global problem, but how these have been theologically justified and thus an apostate role played by the church, especially Reformed churches, in entrenching these ills.

We will discuss later the point on close affinities between faith, theology, church and oppression. Suffice it to say that these works in BTL show that South Africa has a long history of colonialization, culminating in the apartheid regime which legalized oppression and exclusion on the basis of class, gender, race, and for that matter, forms of knowledge in relation to a self-understanding of black people through faith. The centrality of faith is key to the response BTL has offered in our history of oppression.

Boesak cites a racist constitution, homelands policy, forced removals, and numerous killings among others as total contradictions to the then South African government including its erstwhile constant talk about “reform” (1987:75). Such a totality of oppression finds its uniqueness in the use of faith. To reiterate an earlier point by Sibeko and Haddad (1997:84), the power of politics, economy and culture rested in the hands of a white minority in the apartheid system, which was a system that was justified by faith. The fragmentation of the black community, the separation of black families, black men leaving their homes unattended to look for employment in urban areas, is at the heart of the question of black humanity and life. The depth of this fragmentation is not enough if we do not grasp the role of faith in fragmenting black lives in addition to the history of the displacement and dispossession of their land.

BTL, in other words, preoccupies itself with the question: what kind of faith does a black person need for their liberation when faith is used to justify the power of politics, economy and culture in the hands of the white minority? Biko at philosophical level rightly observed these close links between faith (Western Christianity), apartheid, white supremacy, capitalistic exploitation and deliberate oppression, which created a complex problem in the struggles for liberation by black people (2012:30). This

problem is the complexity of faith and reason, the relationship and tension between faith and philosophy, including the relationship between BTL and BC.

One such key factor in this complexity in the struggle for liberation is the difference in understandings and expressions of the very notion of liberation. Vuyani Ntintili's work (1996) entitled "Notions of liberation in Black Theology: Which is more liberative?" provides the framework for the lenses we use to differentiate understandings of liberation in the struggle against oppression within blacks. Ntintili uses the idea of different strands to aggregate the work and development of liberation notions in BTL. He says that BTL espouses divergent notions of liberation, and some are more liberative than others (1996:1). In the three strands that Ntintili discerns, oppression is conceptualised differently and attention given to oppressive systems varies from one to the other, i.e. some forms of oppression are more privileged than others in the analysis based on each of these strands. He observes the role of politics in South African academia, which was and is, to some extent, even today predominantly white and male-dominated in presenting his analysis. He argues that white theologians rejected the emergence of BTL and as a result, they hoped for and anticipated its demise. BTL, on the contrary, grew and diversified into three different strands, namely Black solidarity and the Black Solidarity Materialist and Non-Racialist strands.

The Black Solidarity strand looks at oppression through the lens of race and suggests that racism has subjective and objective dimensions. The subjective dimension analyses the psychological impact and its objective, and looks at the social, cultural, political and economic effects of racism on black people. This strand's vision of liberation is that of an anti-racist society. It privileges race but ignores class, gender and other forms of oppression. This approach fails to grasp that sexism co-exists with race²² in Eurocentric modernity and the lived experiences of oppression by black people. For this reason, Cone (1979:363) says racism is regarded by others as basic injustice and feminism as a cry for middle-class white women and has nothing to do

²² Ramon Grosfoguel in his critique of Westernized universities has long exposed the racist/sexist hierarchy in knowledge systems of the West. He has argued that these knowledge systems are Western and masculine (2013). See also Kobo on the use of 'racist/sexist' permutations which exposes the transversal nature of racism (2018b:2).

with black women, who they [black women] believe are not oppressed. This is an example of how inadequate the strand is. There is no way for black humanity to be liberated through the analysis of this strand only, we argue.

In its analysis of oppression, the Black Solidarity Materialist strand looks at class, race and gender. Its primary interlocutor is black workers, and its vision for liberation therefore is that of a society in which black workers enjoy full participation in all spheres of society and life. This strand nuances patriarchy in its conceptualisation of liberation. The Non-Racialist strand singles out apartheid as its focus. Accordingly, oppression, the strand argues, affects all South Africans regardless of colour. Liberation for them means elimination of apartheid only. For this reason too, all other forms of oppression are not given attention, and the preoccupation is only with the demise of apartheid. Obviously, this approach also has shortcomings if one looks at what the implications could have been after the demise of apartheid. Indeed, there are elements of this in South Africa post-1994, where some have equated the demise of apartheid with complete liberation for black people. The preoccupation with apartheid conceals other forms of oppression and a deeper understanding of apartheid itself. There seems to be no consciousness of the oppression of gender oppression and the plight of black women, if the understanding is that black women are already liberated in South Africa post-1994.

From Ntintili's analysis, one is able to identify gaps in the school and see that their view of liberation is truncated. While the Black Solidarity and Non-Racialist strands have valuable contributions in the liberation of blacks, they have limitations, as each focuses on one category or construct of oppression, leaving out others. The Black Solidarity-Materialist strand gives a more comprehensive approach and identifies the construct of patriarchy in its conceptualisation of oppression. It is, in that regard, helpful for this research, except that its comprehensiveness is yet to be attained.

Of the three strands, without rejecting their importance, the Black Solidarity-Materialist strand remains most helpful in the light of the understanding of liberation envisaged in

this thesis, clearly articulated by Ntintili to require comprehensiveness, integration, identification, planned involvement and a commitment to praxis characterised by transformative action (1996:13-15). This means that for liberation not to be truncated, it should give the same attention to all aspects of oppression, integrate its response and clearly identify itself with planned actions of transformation. BTL, thus, makes choices and takes sides one needs to be identified with, as pointed to earlier by Boesak on neutrality (1987:13). BTL is not neutral, and you either identify with a particular strand. This critique against neutrality is valid internally within the discourse of BTL and is useful for the critique of external levels of oppression such as the colonization of black people. In analysing the three strands of BTL, we are able to discern the various stages it underwent in its development and the threats it poses to the white power structure and white Christianity.

More importantly, a truncated notion of liberation has immense implications for our understanding of faith, black faith in particular. It suggests truncated forms of faith among blacks, meaning faith that perceives liberation as equal to the absence of apartheid or the anti-racist struggle only, for example, if one appropriates these strands to faith. What Kritzinger (1988) observes about the negating dimension of BTL is crucial: "Black theologians often use expressions such as 'reject', 'discredit', or 'debunk', when referring to aspects of Christian civilisation in South Africa, thus revealing their moral outrage at the state of affairs" (1988:99). Therefore, if we apply these expressions in each strand, Black Solidarity rejects, discredits or debunks racism, while the Non-Racialist strand does the same for apartheid.

The Black Solidarity-Materialist strand, however, debunks, rejects and discredits racial, economic and gender oppression by taking a comprehensive approach to liberation. It is a comprehensive vision of faith. Thus, all constructs of oppression, in our view, must be morally rejected, discredited and debunked equally, otherwise emphasis on one against the others creates a moral and ethical problem for the struggle of faith BTL wages against black oppression. Put differently, a notion of liberation that excludes other constructs of oppression suggests a deficient faith praxis and a deficient form of liberation spirituality. Ntintili's article is crucial for us as we

explain the deficiencies of faith in relation to liberation through the inadequacies of strands in BTL for as long as they are not integrated, and as we explain challenges of spirituality from within the school and among black people themselves. Any black theologian should be conscious, therefore, of the strand he or she identifies with and be clear about their model of doing BTL.

In this thesis, we identify with the Solidarity Materialist Strand without excluding the others as we argue for the indivisibility between the constructs of oppression and notions of liberation. The gap created by BTL's deferment of gender as an important construct and patriarchal violence as a crucial challenge like racism and economic exclusion can be seen from this. Nevertheless, what about the philosophical aspect of the school, namely, BC? Before we examine the question of philosophy, let us briefly paint a picture of the role of BC in BTL for purposes of clarification.

2.3. The Roots of Black Consciousness in BTL

The relatedness between BC and BTL in the following statement by Simon Maimela is discernible:

Black Theology is a conscious and systematic reflection on the black situation of racial oppression born out of a historical experience of suffering, of domination and humiliation of the powerless by the powerful racial group, which denies their fellow South Africans the right to become creators of their own history. It is born out of the awareness by blacks that they are not poor and oppressed by accident or by divine design. Rather, they are made poor, powerless, and that they are oppressed by another racial group, the rich and the socio-politically powerful whites. Black Theology is born of this, and the decision made by awareness of being made poor, the powerless and the oppressed blacks people that they cannot accept the world as it is, ordered by the ruling elites, and opt for a radical change which may involve them in a confrontation with those who want to maintain the present unequal material relationships (Maimela, 1986:102).

There are key words in this statement above and “consciousness” is in the first sentence of this quotation. Another word is “awareness”, the awareness of being made to be poor, the awareness that black pain is not accidental. This awareness or consciousness is BC, meaning that BTL is a BC and systematic reflection on the black situation. Maimela’s definition premised by the black situation is comprised of suffering, humiliation, domination and powerlessness as attributes of black people’s experiences all around consciousness. The state of consciousness is a central feature of this definition. Consciousness is core to the paradigm of black liberation, and thus BTL and womanism (Cone, 1975; Vellem, 2015b; Kobo, 2018a).

Maimela contrasts consciousness with traditional theology with its overriding concern to save individuals from the pangs of hell, thereby preparing them in this life for salvation in the life hereafter (1986:108), as opposed to Black Theology’s requisite awareness of the black situation as not being divinely ordained, but orchestrated by another racial group with the aim to justify and preserve unequal distribution of resources. See also Ture and Hamilton (1992) and Biko (2012), who argue that when people form part of a community of privilege and abundance of resources and can’t imagine ever being without them, they build systems to protect it at all cost. In this kind of society portrayed by Maimela, Williams and Biko, where a certain group is privileged by race, such a situation becomes normalised, institutionalised and constantly defended. They even convince themselves that it is God’s plan and their destiny and thus anyone who threatens that, including the poor, are disobeying God’s will and command, hence the theological justification and use of the Bible to make the poor and the oppressed subservient and accept this position willingly. Consciousness is thus central to black faith. It is a form of conversion, transformation and alertness created by the suffering of blacks that is not caused by God.

Mothlabi (1986:38) points us to two interrelated approaches in the search for BTL roots. First, he provides a three-dimensional analysis of the history of black people in the United States and South Africa which entails culture, religion and philosophy. Second, he details its encounter with Western culture and religion and lastly looks at

black people in a white-colonized world. BC is thus a philosophy at root level in the development of BTL.

The second approach looks at the literary origins of BTL as an intellectual discipline, which was arguably started in the US by James Cone in his 1969 work entitled *Black Theology and Black Power*. Therefore, the roots of BTL can be traced back from both the USA and SA. In addition, Vellem observes that “Ethiopianism and the rise of African Initiated Churches in South Africa, together with what they stood for will have an important bearing on the origins and rootage of Black Theology” (2007b:43). Another important and helpful insight for our discussion is Cone’s conviction about the oppression of black women, as articulated in his introduction to the section on “Black Theology and Black Women” in his 1979 work which he co-edited with Wilmore entitled *Black Theology: A Documentary History, 1966-1979*. He points to BTL’s omission of Black women in its development. He admits that when he undertook the task to develop BTL, he was not theologically conscious of black women’s distinct contribution. He alludes to two events that helped raise his consciousness in Japan and in Mexico. In viewing women’s experiences in a renewed consciousness, he makes the observation of their strife, how Black men react to sexism and the tendency to trivialize the cry and pain of the women. Notwithstanding the well-known history of the participation of the black church in the struggle against racism, he poses a question as to its role in this particular struggle (Cone, 1979:363-365). Seeing how Cone became conscious of the problem at a certain time demonstrates how central the question of consciousness is in the roots of BTL.

According to Vellem (2007b), in the South African context, BTL as an identifiable and explicit movement started in the University Christian Movement in 1971, with Basil Moore playing a pivotal role as a director of theological concerns and Sabelo Ntwasa as the first director of the Black Theology project. BTL owes its promulgation to seminars, ministers’ caucuses, and the immense influence of BC. Moore asserts that BTL is situational and points to the situation of the black man in South Africa which has been left out by traditional theology, including the impact of the arrival of white colonialists and their religion on black life as the datum of BTL. With liberation and

freedom as passionate concerns of BTL, he defines BTL as a passionate call to action for freedom, for God, for wholeness and for man (1973:10). We note the androcentric language used by Moore already in this and will discuss it later. To have a picture of BC, let us now turn to the story of the Black Consciousness Movement.

2.3.1. The Black Consciousness Movement

Kritzinger (1988) traces the first concrete manifestation of BC in South Africa to the formation of a black caucus by students attending the University Christian Movement (UCM) national conference at Sutterheim in 1968. From this emerged a number of Black Consciousness organisations such as the South African Students' Organisation (SASO), the Black People's Convention (BPC) and ultimately, the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM). He further observes the links between the African National Congress (ANC), Pan African Congress (PAC) and these other Black Consciousness organisations, and further argues that "It was the awareness of being imbedded in that tradition of resistance which was the most important factor to shape the Black Consciousness Movement" (1988:24).

Vellem's (2007b:47) insights on the conception of BC and its theological implications similarly suggest that a philosophy of consciousness to liberate blacks from their self-incurred mental bondage was propounded to call blacks to return to their personhood. To return to their personhood, blacks have to reject the white value system and more importantly, the BCM, according to Vellem, created a climate that enhanced the development of BTL. Following Vellem, the aim of BC is that of liberating blacks from mental and psychological bondage. To reiterate an earlier point made by Ntintili (1996:7-8) on the effect of racism on the psyche of black people, Vellem argues that racism left black people deeply scarred and traces a debilitating sense of inferiority and self-deprecating tendencies of the entire race of black people at the hand of racial oppression.

Black people have a tendency to want and desire to be like white people with their hearts, yearning for the comfort of white society (Biko, 2012:31; Fanon, 1952:202). BC thus brings out the extent of such a trauma and a state of frozen powerlessness, as explained in the first chapter of this thesis. The core idea of BC is to assist blacks by creating an awareness of firstly, their contribution to their own oppression, their complicity and acceptance of white value systems. BC introduces to the black mind black value systems. It enhances the recognition of their blackness as essential to their humanity and as a “reality that embraces the totality of black existence” (Boesak, 1977:26). This recognition of blackness is, arguably, the ethos of black humanity (Boesak, 1977; Velle, 2007b).

If this is our understanding of BC, it is thus improbable for black men to turn a blind eye to the oppression of black women. It simply does not make sense as it dispels the very notion of ‘totality of black existence’, one can argue. If blacks have been complicit in their own oppression and upon realising that with the aid of BCM, embarked on the process of conscientization and the rejection of the white value system, the thesis argues that blacks should equally reject patriarchal violence and a patriarchal value system. The black mind cannot be the mind of a black man only if BC is at the root of BTL. A new theological climate created by BC suggests that we can no longer accept oppressive theologies as black humanity at root level. BC makes us aware of this. It makes us aware that the subservient role that was assumed by blacks on the basis of ‘nobility of servitude’, a prominent strand in the Biblical language, as alluded to by Biko, was a white lie. This new climate necessitates a new understanding and interpretation of the biblical message and the Gospel of Jesus. Miguez (2003:57) suggests that the evil can be undone with the same tools used to create it. Christendom BC makes us aware of this truth. The relationship between BTL and BC at root level is not only a rational exercise, but also the intertwined story of BCM and the project of BTL, a totality of black existence, which includes all genders.

2.4. The Problem of Patriarchy in BTL

In the background to the problem statement of this thesis, patriarchy has been defined as the establishment of a system that entails male dominance over women. We explained that this is a system that must be debunked in order to clarify questions around possibilities of creating hierarchies in the struggle for liberation and thus contending notions of liberation. Patriarchal violence in relation to BTL is the inability to include women in the search for life-affirming forms of liberation knowledge for black humanity. Patriarchal violence has all elements of internal exclusion with a mind-set of conquering as seen in the violence black women suffer from black men up to this day in South Africa. Patriarchy is violent because it is Cartesian, especially in relation to the transmission of colonial rationality in the lives of black people, meaning that it is a conquering spirit based on a monologue of Eurocentric civilization that was imposed on black people as a whole. Thus, patriarchal violence is anti-communal, anti-dialogue, violent and mono-logical as opposed to the black African knowledge systems and vision of life which are communal and dialogical. We thus argue that we cannot have a philosophy of liberation, BC, that justifies such rationality by downplaying the androcentric language of this philosophy and at the same time have a faith (BTL) that relegates patriarchy to the background, as stated already. This chapter thus points to the flaws firstly arising from different views of liberation in BTL and equally those of BC at foundational level—the rationality espoused to justify or validate faith as liberation in Christ.

Vellem's analysis of the statement by the National Committee of Black Churchmen (Cone & Wilmore, 1993:38) ²³ is helpful to begin our conversation on patriarchy and the phases of BTL.

Black Theology is a theology of liberation. It seeks to plumb the black condition in the light of God's revelation in Jesus Christ, so that black community can see that the gospel is commensurate with the achievement of black humanity. Black Theology is a theology of "blackness." It is the affirmation of black humanity that emancipates black

²³ A product of the Committee on Theological Prospectus of the NCBC, adopted in 1969, Georgia, Atlanta.

people from white racism, thus providing authentic freedom for both white and black people. It affirms the humanity of white people in that it says “No” to the encroachment of white oppression.

Vellem’s analysis of this statement posits that the interlocutors of BTL are the poor and black and suggests that there is a symbiotic relationship between being black and poor (2007b:36). BTL is, therefore, a theology of liberation for blacks from suffering, humiliation, being made poor and subjugation from white people, and such conditions are “viewed from the understanding of how Jesus is revealed by God in their context” (:55). He further states that it is a theology of blackness aimed at self-affirmation of blackness which is comprehensible in the dictum: *motho ke motho ka batho* (Sesotho) or *umntu ngumntu ngabantu* (isiXhosa) (:37). If what Vellem says is our key to understanding BTL, then patriarchy cannot be defended, as it presents irreconcilable contradictions and undermines the African value system of *Ubuntu* (Kobo, 2016). *Umntu ngumntu ngabantu* reconciles woman, man and children into a unit, and patriarchal violence is an antithesis to this unit and an integrated view of life. The interlocution of black women therefore cannot be downplayed; it is a combination of impoverishment and blackness in women.

BTL is best categorised in two phases of analytic paradigms, namely different types of black theologies such as racism and classism. These phases provide BTL with content and ideology and highlight its areas of tension manifested in “the so-called race/class debate” (Sebidi, 1986:2). Most important for our discussion are the implications of this categorisation for the comprehensive liberation envisioned in the thesis, as opposed to the truncated view of liberation.

The first phase of BTL, which dates back to the 1970s, pointed to race as the root cause of the South African socio-political situation. It was aligned with the BCM, and its proponents were the likes of Biko, Boesak and Moore, among others. This phase was marked by its “conscientization” of black masses to become the vehicles of their own liberation” (Vellem, 2007b:57).

The second phase emerging in the 1980s in the works of Mosala, Thlagale, Mothlabi, and Maimela, among others, privileged class as the root cause of the South African socio-political situation. It focused on the material conditions of life (Sebidi, 1986). Vellem posits that the phase “arising out of Marxist class analysis the ‘struggle between struggles’ made the question of women’s struggle exceedingly urgent” (Vellem, 2007b:62; Mosala, 1987:6-7). He writes, “Clearly the appropriation of Marxist tools meant that the grammar of Black Theology in South Africa, in spite of internal rigorous debates, was expanded to include gender” (Vellem, 2007b:63). Liberation of black women, in Vellem’s analysis, was and is a condition for the success of the liberation of black humanity as whole; in that regard, he is helpful and presents the comprehensive approach of liberation espoused in the thesis. Gerald West, even though he identifies a third phase, captures our point succinctly:

While race-class (as understood within the contours of apartheid racial capitalism) remains the central tenet of each of the phases of Black Theology, and while gender emerges within the first phase and becomes more foregrounded in the second phase, culture and/as religion is re-evaluated in phase three. Whereas phase one Black Theology “ventured somewhat into cultural... issues”, argues Maluleke, phase two “became more and more concerned with the struggle of black people against racist, political, and economic oppression”. However, even within phase two, “At crucial moments connections with African culture would be made – provided that culture was understood as a site of struggle rather than a fixed set of rules and behaviours” (West, 2016:341-342).

Gender is rightfully prevalent in the first and second phases but somehow overtaken by culture in the third phase. What we can discern is the privileging of certain struggles to the detriment of others. From both strands and phases, we observe how the privileging of one can lead to the subordination of the other constructs of analysis, a point elucidated by the phrase “struggle between struggles”.

In the analysis of the three strands and notions of liberation, as we have done, only one seems to be comprehensive and nuances patriarchy in its vision and notion of liberation. The truth is that the school is aware of the challenge of patriarchy, and the expansion of its grammar to include gender is telling. Nevertheless, to nuance patriarchy in the manner that has been done through its phases of development is, arguably, not adequate. If it was nuanced and acknowledged already in these various phases and strands, then it can be argued that patriarchy is a rigid system, deeply entrenched venom that can no longer be justified nor defended or even pushed back as a construct that BTL must now confront.

The sporadic occurrences of the problem in these phases, without deeply asking what patriarchy means to the foundations of BTL, is probably the reason for its pervasive challenges. For this reason, Ntintili is helpful in pointing to the notions of liberation at play in the struggle against oppression and how they influence black priorities in the struggles for liberation. His use of notional concepts of liberation suggests that BTL is tentative and can thus be improved and altered even at foundational level. We turn now to look at the “Black man” as a construct if not a diagnostic procedure of what colonialism has done to black people, as seen by Steve Biko.

2.5. Steve Biko’s Black Man and the Plight of Black Humanity

BC is central to the development of BTL if not inseparable from this school of thought. The logic behind white domination in South Africa, according to Biko, prepares the black man for his subservient role in society (2012:30). This subservient role was theologically justified (Cone, 1993:107) and reinforced by ‘nobility’ of servitude, a prominent strand in Biblical language which, in this context presented by Biko, came to mean ‘nobility’ of black servitude (Moore, 1973: ix). What this seems to imply is that a black African man is a construct whose whole existence is designed, whose standards are set, and is thus measured on how he conforms to the life designed for him by the white power structure. Is he a defeated man? What are the implications of this defeated black man and the ‘subservient role’ for a black woman, child and black

humanity in general? Our argument is that BC, as a philosophy, is androcentric and fosters rationality in the struggle for liberation that fails to rise to the challenge of patriarchal violence. Steve Biko offers a poignant analysis of the colonial destruction of a black man. While this analysis is adopted in the thesis, the addition is that it is an analysis of black humanity which includes men and women, but also the LGBTQI+ communities, as homophobia is an unacceptable challenge to sexual diversity and our understanding of what it means to be human. The problem is that Biko is saying “black man”, not black humanity or personhood; he uses androcentric language yet what he says is also applicable to the ‘black woman’ who is equally oppressed. Let us then look closely at this quotation at length.

Steve Biko avers:

...the type of Black man we have today has lost his manhood. Reduced to an obliging shell, he looks with awe at the white power structure and accepts what he regards as the “inevitable position”.

The first important thing here is the loss of manhood. Biko continues:

Deep inside his anger mounts at the accumulating insult, but he vents it in the wrong direction—on his fellow man in the township, on the property of black people. No longer does he trust leadership for the 1963 mass arrests were blameable on bungling by the leadership, nor is there any to trust. In the privacy of his toilet, his face twists in silent condemnation of white society but brightens up in sheepish obedience as he comes out hurrying in response to his master’s impatient call.

If what Biko suggests here describes anger, one has to see how this anger manifests itself in acts of distrust and how it qualifies our problems with leadership even today.

Biko also goes to our homes:

In the homebound bus or train, he joins the chorus that roundly condemns the white men but is first to praise the government in the presence of the police and his employers. His heart yearns for the comfort of white society and makes him blame himself for not having been “educated” enough to warrant such luxury. Celebrated achievements by whites in the field of science—which he understands only hazily—serve to make him rather convinced of the futility of resistance and to throw away any hopes that change may ever come (2012:30-31).

Above is an exposition of interplay of power, economics, authority, domination and its implications on the less powerful. Arguably, Biko gives a portrait of what a black 'constructed' man looks like, feels, thinks and acts like, a man that has lost his manhood! He exposes a black man's dilemma in a white society which comprises of a white power structure where the white patriarch rules, and in some instances, the white madam is the one giving orders, commanding 'black boys' (as black men were previously addressed) to embrace their inevitable position. This cruel white power structure reduced this black man to a labourer only valued for his service and benefited his white master. He must constantly reconcile the tension between how being part of this society continuously castrates his manhood, yet he cannot escape it.

Fanon equates a black man's castration to a loss of his corporeality and the lynching of his tangible personality (1952:142). In his analysis of the black man who is castrated, he observes how black men are perceived as sex symbols in white society, a myth which is built on the perception that they are beasts and on the possibility of them raping white women, hence they must be castrated. "The penis, symbol of virility, is eliminated: in other words, it is denied" (:140). Gqola says:

The stereotype of the Black male rapist of white women has been central to the rise of racism, and it has also been used as a justification for lynching and killing tens of thousands of Black men across the globe – in the Americas, on the African continent and in South Asia (2015:4).

Gqola exposes the close affinities between a black constructed rapist and racism as the antithesis to black life. The image of the violation of white women's bodies by black men must be entertained in order for the black race to be wiped off the face of the earth. The black race disturbs the white race's dream of enjoying their privileges and resources, as argued earlier. Castration, therefore, is a denial of his whole existence. It also purges him of the evil that he represents, suggests Fanon. "Whatever is evil, repulsive, ugly and undesirable is always already symbolically associated with blackness and darkness" (More, 2017:37); furthermore, "blackness is fundamentally

opposed to life, while whiteness or light promotes life” (More, 2017:37). This then is translated to human bodies and ultimately, raced bodies. Therefore, castration is, arguably, a means in which this white lie of privilege and superiority is kept intact.

Not only did he, the “black man”, lose his manhood, it destroyed his belief systems, faith and spirituality; how could he have kept the faith when his position in the racist society was justified theologically? The Bible was used to secure the white lie. Being the highly religious man that he was, the black man became submissive, lest he calls upon himself God’s wrath, as it was preached to him. This black man’s faith, among other things, was killed then and to some extent today, where black people still find solace in Scripture, albeit in ways that are not liberating for their suffering and impoverishment. They practise pseudo-spirituality that propels them to escape and not to respond to their material conditions.

What Biko failed to grasp, nonetheless, is the extent to which black women suffered in this capitalist and white society. Perhaps he included them but did so in androcentric constructs. Black women’s position is made even worse by the fact that theirs is a triple oppression of race, class and gender, as articulated by Morrison below.

...everybody in the world was in a position to give them orders. White women said, “Do this.” White children said, “Give me that.” White men said, “Come here.” Black men said, “Ly down.” ...They ran the houses of white people, and knew it. When white men beat their men, they cleaned up the blood and went home to receive abuse from the victim (Morrison, 1970:109-110).

A point is made even by the first work on BTL, as cited in the previous chapter which affirms the triple jeopardy of black women (Ntwasa & Moore, 1973:25). So, as black men lost their manhood to the white power structure, black women lost their womanhood to the white and black power structure. Gqola explains this as follows:

The same white supremacy that constructed the stereotype of Black man as rapist created the stereotype of Black women as hypersexual and therefore impossible to rape. Making Black women impossible to rape does not mean making them safe against rape. It means quite the opposite: that Black women are safe to rape, that raping them does not count as harm and is therefore permissible. It also means that it is not an accident that when Black women say that they have been raped, they are almost never taken seriously, and in many instances, are expected to just get over it (Gqola, 2015:5).

In the same manner that black men lost their manhood, black women have lost and continue to lose their womanhood. We could perhaps liken this to oophorectomy, where women's ovaries and thus their ability to give birth are removed. A castrated woman and man points to a demise of black race and loss of black personhood in totality.

This black man, according to Beale (1979), has been reduced to a non-provider for his family. Lydia Sidise elucidates Beale's point. She chose to have her husband arrested for failing to provide for his family. She narrates her story as follows:

I've never bothered to get to know his whereabouts. This man was like a burden on my shoulders, leaning on me as though he was a baby. I must wake up every morning to go to work for a lazy person. This made me more mad. My husband was not used to making any efforts (Barret, Dawber, Klugman, Obery, Shindle & Yawitch, 1985:138).

According to Biko, this black man has deep-seated anger and resentment, and as the seed of anger grew inside of him, he became an angry man, a patriarch and an oppressor! Ultimately, he has to vent it out somewhere lest it kill him, for he becomes a danger to himself and others. For Biko, his fellow black man and property become objects of this venting. Fanon (1961:17) cites tribes, clans and individuals as objects of this venting. While I agree with Biko and Fanon on this, I am propelled to press further on this point and assert that black women and children unfortunately have

become the recipients of the worst of this venting. An angry, resentful, broken man, patriarch and oppressor presents a site conducive for patriarchy to flourish. Rose Rakhomo, a divorcee, whose narrative also features in *Vukani Makhosikazi*, says:

My husband was too much of a drunkard. This made him violent and he used to beat me up for no apparent reason. I used to have swollen eyes, sustained from beatings. I felt I could not take it anymore. So after five years, I decided to divorce him (Barret, Dawber, Klugman, Obery, Shindle & Yawitch, 1985:138).

This condition of a black man, as portrayed by Biko, eats into the psyche of the black man and arguably, the black woman, eroding their self-esteem. This is evident in escalated incidents of gender-based violence, but ironically, this violence is found in both poor and rich homes. Even in homes that fall in the category of middle class, and those that are well-to-do, this violence meted against women exists. Either way, women are on the receiving end of men's anger.

Not only does a black woman become an object of his anger, she arguably becomes angry too and becomes a danger to herself and others. Kobo's (2018) analysis of pseudo-spirituality of oppressed African women demonstrates how an oppressed black woman can turn into a patriarch herself and oppress other women. She becomes an androcentric vessel that legitimizes her domination by men, a pseudo-agent that fails to speak for and with her fellow woman even in instances where she is granted space in decision-making spaces. Like a black man, hers is a pseudo-spirituality that has also been theologically justified. Like a black man, she also has lost faith in leadership, among other pathologies. She also twists her face in the privacy of her toilet condemning the very same white society that forces her to leave her own children unattended to look after white children, who one day will become racists to her own children.

The analysis of Biko, therefore, is that these pathologies affect both women and men but does it in androcentric language. The same analysis applies to black women and is even worse because a black woman is a conquered species even within black communities. While his androcentric use of language could be justified because of the time and context he was writing in, where there was no development of feminist or womanist discourses, and while he was also born in a patriarchal period, this is not excusable at all. His own personal struggles as an excessive womaniser²⁴ (Mangcu, 2012) point to his entanglement in a web of patriarchy, which is still a problem today in circles of liberation.

Biko's philosophy and androcentric language point to a deep-seated flaw at the level of philosophy that informs BTL. Following from this philosophy, one observes that BTL also adopted this androcentric language in the very first publication by Basil Moore. Moore defines BTL as a situational theology of the black man, not black humanity (1973:5). He further states that BTL is a "passionate call to action for freedom, for God, for wholeness and for man (1973:10). This is probably the rationale behind the weakness of the School and privileging of certain struggles to the detriment of other struggles, as demonstrated in the phases and strands. The reason BTL promoted patriarchy in its own developmental stages and did nothing about it, could be because of this flaw at the philosophical level. One of the contributions of this dialogue is to point out the flaws between philosophy and theology as issues that need attention in the future of the School. As we proceed with the thesis, we thus adopt the use of black humanity, personhood, family and community that emphasize our focus on the coming together of black woman and man.

Biko's insights are further elucidated by Beale (1979), who points to the system of capitalism with racism as its aftermath as the source of black people's miserable lives

²⁴ It is well known that Steve was married to Ntsiki and had affairs with Mamphela Ramphele and Lorraine Tabane. He had children with the wife and his two mistresses. This ultimately led to his separation with Ntsiki, nearly causing a divorce which did not take place maybe due to the tragic killing of Biko (Mangcu, 2012:205). It is not only Steve Biko who had this challenge. Nelson Mandela too was married three times, and the current President of our country, Cyril Ramaphosa, also had to deal with his acts of philandering during the contestation for the position of President in the African National Congress. Our point is far from any moralizing of issues here but points to the inescapable patriarchal pathologies of the black man in his relationship with black women, a spirit of conquering women, looking at them as things to be conquered rather than human beings.

and the underlying psychological problems. This white power structure and capitalism designs a world for black humanity. They take away their land, culture and religion and recreate the black people they desire to have in their world, i.e. subservient blacks. They create patriarchal societies where men rule and are providers for their women, and then reduce these men, taking their ability to rule and provide. In addition, when he is unable to provide for his family, the wife is forced to go and assume another subservient role as a domestic worker in white homes, where she is even exploited economically by being paid virtually nothing and sexually abused by white perverts. This system ensured that black families were dismantled, with wife and husband living separately and children left abandoned as mothers could not stay at home to nurture them; their task was to nurture white people's children.

Therefore, capitalism has dismantled black homes and relationships and ultimately disturbed the ethos of being an African, the harmony that exists between two spheres of life, i.e. the living and ancestors, as clearly articulated by Bujo (1998) in his summary of the ethic of interconnectedness. Bujo avers that all Africans are part of a community of both the living and the dead; the interaction between these two spheres enhances life for both and this interaction purposes to the increase of vitality within the clan (1998:15-16). In *IsiXhosa* culture, we posit, "*belele nje basathetha*", meaning even though our ancestors are asleep, they still talk to us, mostly through dreams where they reveal things to us as a means of protecting or guiding us. Or put differently in Ogbu Kalu's work, "Those who are dead are never gone: the dead are not dead" (2000:54).

By creating spaces for the venom of patriarchy to flourish, capitalism and its constructs of racism, classism and sexism promote the reduction of the vitality of the community Bujo speaks of.²⁵ There can never be life if members of the community are dislocated, thus resulting in homes with a man who has been crippled by such systems becoming a patriarch, exercising rule over his fellow black woman and children who he has failed

²⁵ An insidious example of this reduction of the vitality of the community could be located in the policy of separate development, which dismantled black families through the forced removal of millions of people from their homes and a restrictive urbanisation policy directed towards black African people, implemented through pass laws and influx control measures (Ramphela, 1989; Mamdani, 1996; Vellem, 2014a).

to provide for. Biko then declares black humanity or personhood completely defeated, a point we do not entirely agree with. In fact, while we concur with everything else he points to in his analyses, we however think Biko is 'contradicting' himself by declaring black personhood as "completely defeated", yet suggests this person to be an agent of change. What is the salvation of this black man or black person? It is when we begin to deeply think about this seeming contradiction in Biko's analysis that the rationality of BC and its relationship with BTL begins to make sense.

Spivak (1988) influences our thoughts on the matter as we contend that black humanity is not completely defeated, a paradox well captured by Vellem (2007b:31) as follows: "The subaltern of the world continues unabated with their quest for liberation, no matter how much this quest can be resisted... even if they continue to be the riff-raff of society". What this suggests is that black humanity might be silenced and disempowered, but they can speak: 'oppressed subjects speak, act and know' (Spivak, 1988:276). Though systems and structures that seek to silence them tighten, we argue that they speak in a language that they know, as articulated in the statement of the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT) as "Cry, cry, cry for life, for the courage, for the hope" (EATWOT Statement, 1993:46). Black humanity's cry "denies victory to torture" (:47). Theirs is a language of resistance that we now turn to. Oh yes, this is the heart of BC; it is a philosophy that acknowledges the perpetual loss of manhood, womanhood, anger, distrust of leadership and the impending death of black humanity for as long as the designs of colonialism continue from which one escapes only by being conscious and thus a resister.

2.6. Black Consciousness is good news from a black theological perspective

Biko posits that Black Consciousness opens the eyes of black people. He argues that despite their loss of humanity and personhood, their deep-seated anger, violence and loss of trust in leadership, there is resistance against the oppression of this order, namely, the colonial and apartheid regimes, by blacks. For example, Khabela, to illustrate this point, speaks of the "accommodationist and rebel traditions" as responses to a reality of violent defeat and the dispossession of black Africans (Khabela,

1996:47-76²⁶). Black people struggled in different ways and resisted this colonial order and the apartheid system, and this is where the germ of BC lies. According to Ture and Hamilton (1992:15), it is not uncommon for black people to privately admit their contempt for white people but only feel secure in articulating such feelings in their absence.

Stated otherwise by Fanon:

...the colonized subject is in a permanent state of tension operating within an oppressive and aggressive world. ... but deep down the colonized subject acknowledges no authority, he is dominated but not domesticated... he is made to feel inferior but by no means convinced of his inferiority... (1961:16).

Once this tension breaks into resistance, a conscious decision to reject this order without any timidity, BC becomes a turning point, a *metanoia* to help black man and woman, i.e. black humanity, to reconcile with the self and others, to use Vellem's language, 'to bring him [and her] to sanity' (2014b). This transformed liberated black person is impossible to attain without a comprehensive notion of liberation in terms of faith (BTL), impossible too without addressing the philosophical assumptions of liberation without purging them of patriarchy and androcentric language.

Biko's analysis of black personhood points to the degradation of black humanity. It also points to an anthropological problem that needs to be fixed, where black man lost his manhood and woman her womanhood. BC, which "falls within the existential phenomenological approach to the problem of black existence in an anti-black world" (More, 2017:34) therefore is good news and an attempt to fix the degradation and to restore black humanity. At its core, the destruction of a black person externally derives from Eurocentric modernity, i.e. the colonisation of a black person. It is a type of colonisation that is racist, sexist, economic and religious. All constructs of this colonial wound happen to be transversal, converging at the humanity of a black person with a woman at the very lowest of the dungeons this civilisation may have ever created. The destruction of a black person in relation to the external, toxic forms of human

²⁶ See also how he developed this thought in his doctoral thesis, Khabela, G. 1992. *A Seamless Garment: Tutu's Understanding of the Role of the Church in South Africa*. Unpublished PhD Thesis. New York: Union Theological Seminary.

degradation and the commodification of life destroy not only the being of a black person but also the knowledge systems of a black person, including the epistemological heritage of a black person, including the spiritual heritage of a black person. BC, therefore, as a philosophy, is responding to that total onslaught against a black person.

BC is “irrevocably changing of minds, bodies and soul” (Mkhabela, 2017: xvi). However, it is also important to note that BC will not succeed if it is not comprehensive, as argued in the thesis. More, for instance, cites slavery, colonialism and racism as fundamental forms of oppression that Black Consciousness sought to address or challenge (2017:35). The omission of patriarchy as a form of oppression that affects the identity of black humanity affirms an earlier point about the flaw of the philosophy and a theology that is truncated. Internally, i.e. within the framework of the notions and the rationality of this liberation, when Biko analyses the fault lines and implications of colonisation on a black person, his androcentric philosophy pushes the black woman to the background and the dungeons. Internally, these contradictions have all sorts of implications. The very philosophy that is intended to engage coloniality pushes a black woman out rather than integrate her into its notions and philosophy of liberation.

Foregrounding BC, Biko contends, “... it does not help to see black faces in a multiracial student gathering which ultimately concentrates on what the white students believe are the needs for the black students” (2012:5). Ture and Hamilton (1992) make a similar point in their analysis of colonial politics and speak of the “indirect rule”. They argue, “... the white power structure rules the black community through local blacks who are responsive to the white leaders, not to the black populace” (2012:10). On this, Spivak (1988) critiques Western hegemony and its paradoxical claim to speak and represent while silencing the subaltern. Vellem (2007b:3) states that the core belief of BCM was the white liberals’ inadequacy to represent black aspirations, thus suggesting that blacks had to stand on their own and direct their struggle for liberation. Haddad (2000:151) speaks about giving black women voices and showing them agency. The researcher observes the inadequacy Vellem talks, about as some think others could give black women their urgency. Indeed, Maluleke and Nadar’s (2004:8)

call for blacks to stop expecting non-blacks to author their liberation is in order. They allude to Steve Biko's "Black person you are on your own" to assert that truthfulness of liberation is measured by its ability to self-implicate and self-author.

An important point made by these scholars is that they do not always equate black faces with black representation. Even more so, other faces that are not black claim to represent blacks. A well-articulated notion of blackness, which points us beyond pigmentocracy, is stated by Boesak as follows:

... this blackness we speak of is certainly, among other things, a matter of the colour of the skin, it is also more than merely that, if only because not all who share blackness as colour of skin are also truly black. This blackness is an awareness, an attitude, a state of mind (1977:27).

Stated otherwise by Biko:

Being black is not a matter of pigmentation—being black is a reflection of a mental attitude.... Merely by describing yourself as black you have started on a road towards emancipation, you have committed yourself to fight against all forces that seek your blackness as a stamp that marks you out as a subservient being (1987:49).

Biko, Ture and Hamilton, Vellem and Boesak raise a crucial point that arguably we have not really grasped even today as black humanity. To have black people in leadership structures or any space for that matter because their skin colour is black, is not only ignorance, but dangerous because it does not always imply that they will be committed to the struggles and will be in solidarity with the suffering of black people, and thus adequately represent black aspirations. They also point in my opinion to shortcomings of this philosophy, if blackness is understood to be a culmination of "black as a construct of self-affirmation" (Vellem, 2007b:34).

To restate our question: for the researcher, the problem is how self-affirmation, as blacks, can be achieved when this philosophy denies a black woman self-affirmation in her own right by downplaying her agency in its endeavour for liberation. These

irreconcilable contradictions, by implication, truncate liberation. By defining blackness as a mental state and attitude, black women who are oppressed by their black brothers thus ask: whose mental attitude must liberate us? Whose state of mind is liberating us? Whose awareness? Black womanists suggest black humanity's (that is denuded of patriarchal violence) mental attitude, state of mind, attitude and awareness are all responsive to black aspirations prescribed by blacks themselves.

Another contentious issue that we need to be mindful of in our thinking and application of BC is neutrality amid struggle. Boesak writes, "More particularly: in a situation where there is a constant struggle for justice and human dignity and against structures promoting iniquity, neutrality is not possible. On the contrary, neutrality is the most revolting partisanship there is" (1987:13). What this suggests is that one chooses sides in liberation and stands either with the oppressed or the oppressor. This presents an interesting case of dualism for a black man whose oppressor is a white man, and him being the oppressed, who is also an oppressor to a black woman and child. What happens here is that the black man who has been throttled by white power structure revolts against this system, but as a construct of the very system, while he revolts to its injustice, he perpetuates it by oppressing his fellow black woman, therefore assuming the position of her oppressor. He thus becomes the oppressed and the oppressor, a double jeopardy. The black woman, on the other hand, is a triple victim of oppression. His dualistic nature and her triple and multiple experience of oppression pose threats for black humanity and community. With this, Maluleke concurs:

More importantly, and this is the message also, in order to assist in the liberation of the oppressed, theology must choose the side of the oppressed and as such must be done in solidarity not with the powerful and wealthy, but with the oppressed and the poor. Armed with this orientation, theology will then approach all of its traditional disciplines from the point of view of solidarity with the poor, the oppressed and the marginalized (2006:304).

What comes out of this is that pseudo-representation by blacks, downplay of interlocation of black women, as well as neutrality, pervert the course of liberation, and thus BC becomes our solution to this problem only if it is comprehensive. Another dimension that one needs to be conscious of is that of white liberals insist that the problems of the country can only be solved by an approach that involves both black and white. What is problematic about this integrationist approach is its inability to dispel the inbuilt complexes of superiority and inferiority, with white liberals knowing what is good for black people (Biko, 1987:21). In response to whether he was against integration himself, Biko writes, "If by integration you understand a breakthrough into white society by blacks, an assimilation and acceptance of blacks into an already established set of norms and code of behaviour set up and maintained by whites, Yes I am against it" (:25).

Elsewhere Biko spoke against the assimilation of blacks into an unchanged white world (Lamola, 1989:9). Biko's critique of integration is valid, but its failure to expose the built-in complexes of superiority and inferiority in BC philosophy between men and women, and how women in a patriarchal society have been equally assimilated into an already biased male hegemony, is arguably problematic; hence the call for the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) to be comprehensive in its articulation of liberation also denuded of androcentric language.

BC is good news that erupts when in the tension between an oppressive and aggressive world the colonized subject collapses, a moment when blacks acknowledge no authority but their authority, self-representation and self-affirmation in their lives. BC is good news when blacks begin to make choices and understand that there is no neutrality in conditions of oppression and colonization. BC is good news when blacks become aware and conscious of their rejection to be integrated into the white power structure.

2.6.1. Black Consciousness and the Vision of Black Humanity

Having identified what constitutes a black woman and man thus (black humanity in a racist, capitalistic and patriarchal society) makes a black woman lose her womanhood, and reduces her to a victim that does not only fight a white power structure, but also black power structures. This entails both black men and women; a society which makes a black man lose his manhood and reduces him to a non-provider for his family, and makes him an angry, resentful, patriarch and oppressor; BC heals this situation:

The first step therefore is to make the black [woman and] man come to [herself and] himself, to pump back life into [her and] his empty shell; to infuse [her and] him with pride and dignity; to remind [her and] him of [her and] his complicity in the crime of allowing [herself and] himself to be misused and therefore letting evil reign supreme in the country of [her and] his birth. This is what we mean by an inward-looking process. This is the definition of “Black Consciousness” (Biko, 2012:31).

Fanon, who shares the idea of decolonizing the mind with Biko, also uses androcentric language, which we argued is not excusable as these pathologies include women as well. He articulates Biko’s point as follows:

... decolonization... focuses on and fundamentally alters being, and transforms the spectator crushed to nonessential state into a privileged actor, captured in a virtually grandiose fashion by the spotlight of History. It infuses a new rhythm, specific to a new generation of men, with a new language and a new humanity. Decolonization is truly the creation of new men. However, such a creation cannot be attributed to a supernatural power: The “thing” colonized becomes a man through the very process of liberation (Fanon, 1961:2).

For Fanon, this “thing”, i.e. black man and woman, is crushed into a nonessential state and suggests decolonization and liberation as means of saving them from damnation. Therefore, Biko and Fanon attempt to draw for us measures to bring black humanity

and personhood to sanity. Biko's conscious use of language such as pumping life, infusing pride and dignity into black humanity, and Fanon's of alters, transforms, infuses a new rhythm, creation of new [wo]men, is evidence of an intentional attempt to bring the black humanity into life. Biko suggests life for a liberated black humanity to be that of black consciousness, pride and dignity – arguably key values of black life. “A quest for black pride” is what BC is for Goba (1986:59), and even these attributes and values of black life, arguably, become obsolete if the entire whole, i.e. black woman, man and child and black humanity, is not reconciled.

Fanon makes an important inquisition on colonized people's dignity; he does not talk about dignity without talking about land that is the most essential value that they lost. In addition, for him, this land is central to their dignity, which is not merely an individual entity as it takes into consideration a number of things (1961:9). Arguably, in possession of land, fragments of black humanity take a different form. A person who has lost his land feels the pangs of hunger (Ngugi wa Thiong'o, 2009:57). Consequently, in possession of land, black man is exempted from failure to provide for his family, black women from exploitation in white people's homes and black children from a dysfunctional upbringing. This is a point made earlier on policies of separate development and restrictive urbanisation that dismantled the fabric of black homes and reduced the vitality of the black community.

BC for Biko is also a call back to the past, which was destroyed by colonialism – a point articulated by Fanon as follows:

... colonialism is not simply content to impose its rule upon the present and the future of a dominated country. Colonialism is not satisfied merely with holding a people in its grip and emptying the native's brain of all form and content. By a kind of perverse logic, it turns to the past of the oppressed people, and distorts it, disfigures and destroys it (1963:169).

Fanon exposes the deep pathologies of colonialism that kill the oppressed people by destroying their past, present and future. It must be stated that a person without culture, history, past, and religion is in lethargic sleep. It is epistemicide, genocide and spiritualicide, total onslaught and rupture of the oppressed people that BTL contends with. Employing Petrella (2004), Vellem suggest that overcoming the western civilisation that keeps black people in the same trenches of destitution might not be possible (2017:2). BTL contends that it is impossible to overcome, as will be demonstrated in later chapters of this thesis. What is important is for blacks to live their lives and secure their authority and self-determination.

BC further calls for the rewriting of history as well as instillation of self-love to black people who were taught that Africa is a “dark continent” and everything black and African is evil and barbaric, including their culture, history, past, religious practices and customs (2012:32). Vellem (2014b:3) poignantly calls us to remembering links between Western Christianity and cultural subjugation of black Africans. He alludes to Ngugi wa Thiong’o’s (2009) point on the danger of cultural domination even more than political and economic subjugation “[b]ecause it is more subtle and its effects long-lasting. Moreover, it can make a person who has lost his land, who feels the pangs of hunger, who carries flagellated flesh to look at those experiences differently” (2009: 57).

This exercise of recalling the past means that black conscious people begin to ask questions concerning their history, culture and whole of life that has always been depicted for them. This ‘consciousness’ becomes a new way of looking at these, embracing them and recovering what has been lost. This, however, is not to be romanticized, because as the black conscious humanity attempts to look back into history, past, culture, religious practices and customs, critical questions must be raised. Questions of land, equal distribution of resources, ownership of women, the agency of women among others and the impact of western Christianity on black African cultures and life cannot be ignored. These form part of a ‘totality of black existence’. It is this meaning of BC for the restoration of black humanity and vision that offered a fertile climate for the development of BC.

2.7. The Task of Black Theology of Liberation in the 21st Century

Fanon and Biko assert that liberation is of paramount importance in the concepts of decolonization and Black consciousness, respectively. Fanon (1961:2) argues that a colonized man is restored through liberation, and BC argues that “we cannot be conscious of ourselves and yet remain in bondage. We want to attain envisioned self, which is a free self” (Biko, 1987:50). We have already established that the central thesis of Biko and the BCM is the awakening of the consciousness of blacks towards their own liberation. We have critiqued and put a spotlight on the limitations of the philosophy at its very foundations. It is the awakening of the consciousness that fails to acknowledge the interlocution of black African women; this is given the fact that they are in bondage, not only from white men and women but also from their black brothers, as pointed to earlier in the chapter. If BC is good news, as we have argued, then at the root of BTL there must be good news. This is the work of BTL in the 21st century.

In an attempt to save black personhood and humanity, the question of their faith in relation to their black consciousness, is pivotal. As noted by Hopkins (2000:32), BC, in its theological context, defined ways in which one could gain consciousness of being black. In South Africa, derogatory descriptions were given to them by white Christians. They were called kaffir, “coloured” or “Bantu”, Africans, like their black American counterparts. By accepting “black” as an overarching designation of self-definition (Vellem, 2007b:47), black faith thus becomes good news to black people. Black Theology of Liberation speaks to this as a theology of liberation, “... in revolt against the spiritual enslavement of black people, and thus against the loss of their sense of human dignity and worth” (Moore, 1973: ix). On the edifice of this ‘flawed’ philosophy with a conquering spirit, BC, Black Theology of Liberation was born at the eruption of the good news of BC, when the rupture of the tension created by oppression and self-doubt by blacks emerged.

It is important to understand that colonization, which created a black man *à la* Biko, also had a colonial Christianity, a faith-based construction of a black person. All the ills that we have discussed in the section about “black man,” anger, distrust, and

castration of manhood and womanhood manifest themselves in faith. Forms of theology and faith from within, for some reason, therefore espouse the very tenets of a conquering rationality that is external and killing to a black person. Christianity is thus not a neutral faith; that is why BTL refuses to be neutral in conditions of the aggressive oppression of black people.

Fabella (2000:122-123) posits that roots of liberation are biblical and thus faith is rooted in liberation. The starting point and an interlocution of a theological paradigm of liberation is blackness (Vellem, 2007b:40), earlier defined by Boesak (1977) and Biko (1987) as more than skin colour, but as an attitude, a mental state and awareness. Boesak (1977:26) argues that “in its relation to Black Theology, Black Consciousness means that being black becomes a decisive factor in black people’s expression of their belief in Jesus Christ as Lord”. Goba argues that that the BCM provided a very important context for developing a black theological hermeneutic (1986:68). In fact, Vellem contends “... Black Theology harnessed Black Consciousness philosophy to define a particular consciousness that could be used to liberate black masses from their inferiority complex” (2007b:4).

BTL today responds to race, economics, patriarchy and other constructs that are still prevalent. Boesak (1987:1), Du Bois (1903:165) and Tshaka (2014b:6) are amongst scholars who have argued that race is one of the central problems of the 20th century. Tshaka posits, “...the real issue, which is that of racism and racial exploitation”, is one that even “history was not able to solve” (2014b:6). Ture and Hamilton describe racism as “the predication of decisions and policies on considerations of race for the purpose of subordinating a racial group and maintaining control over that group” (1992:3-4). They further classify racism as overt and covert, i.e. individual and institutional. They argue that while individual racism is fatal, institutional racism is more deadly to black people as it keeps them “locked in dilapidated slum tenements, subject to the daily prey of exploitative slumlords, merchants, loan sharks and discriminatory real estate agents” (1992:3-4).

Sebidi (1986) asserts that racism is neither innate nor natural but acquired and exists as a social construct and thus can be unlearned. Born out of man's rapaciousness, 'competition for scarce resources', he locates the race debate in the context of economic interest and thus a function of capitalist exploitation, and as such, a global problem. Therefore, there is evidence that racism and classism are, arguably, intertwined as stated by Ture and Hamilton and Sebidi. Vellem writes: "The symbolic link between liberation, black and poverty emanates from the factual ontological exclusion and deprivation of the black people from all spheres of life historically and in the current world" (2007b:36). While racism has been a global problem, Boesak (1987:2) declared South Africa to be the most blatantly racist country in the world:

The churches to which we belong have conformed to the patterns of a racist society. The persistent cries of the black people that the church is not consistent with the demands of the gospel of Jesus Christ have fallen on deaf ears (SACC Consultation 1980, in Boesak, 1987:2).

Biko (2012:30) and Moore (1973: ix) observe affinities between white master and black slave for a number of decades in South Africa. Maimela (1986:102) uses the terms *oppressor* and *oppressed*, with the oppressor being the white master and the oppressed the black slave. This state of affairs was affirmed and justified theologically by Moore in this manner:

In South Africa, the Christian Church has probably been one of the most powerful instruments in making possible the political oppression of the black people. "While the white colonists were busy with the process of robbing the people of their land and their independence, the Churches were busy however unconsciously, undermining the will of the people to resist" (1973: viii).

Boesak argued earlier about the theological justification of apartheid which makes the South African situation unique compared to other places. He further articulates this

point by arguing how racism and apartheid was justified in the name of Jesus and rationalised by biblical injunctions and how people justify hatred towards the “other” in this name (1987:90). He avers,

... they betrayed the name of Jesus, for in the name of this Jesus – which is a name, in case you do not know, that spells liberation and freedom and humanity and justice and wholeness and reconciliation and peace – in this name, they have created apartheid. In this name, they break up black family life. In this name, for economic gain and for the sake of exploitation, they create pass laws and influx control laws, and they separate men from their families... In the name of Jesus they stole our land, and they made us strangers in the land of our birth. In this name they pay starvation wages so that our people will remain poor... Our people are poor because the rich are so rich, and our people are because we are consistently exploited and because we are consistently kept poor by a system that needs us to be poor (1987:97).

Boesak’s insights above help us to see how oppression of black humanity intersects apartheid, economics, policies and laws that fragmented black humans, land and impoverishment of black humanity. All of these were justified by the use of the Bible and theology – the same theology, Bible and church that sang psalms on top of female dungeons in the Elmina Castle in Ghana during the days of the transatlantic slave trade.

Moore and Boesak are affirmed by Mosala (1988) when he asserts that the ideology of apartheid derives itself directly from the Bible. He further argues, “The superiority of white people over black people, for example, is premised on the divine privileging of the Israelites over the Canaanites in the conquest texts of the Old Testament” (1988:4). Mtetwa (1998) points out that the manner in which the apartheid government divided South African people was mainly to perpetuate the notion of superiority and inferiority. He further argues that this process was done on a theological basis. He writes “... The domination and subjugation of the indigenous peoples, the suppression of their religions and their cultures, were legitimated and sanctioned by Biblical injunctions” (Mtetwa 1998:69).

The oppression of women has been justified theologically, sanctioned by the church and itself derives from the Bible (Kobo & Mangoedi, 2017). For Oduyoye (1995a:480-481), the church has a tendency to associate itself with anything that oppresses or even questions the true humanity of the other, to the extent of even justifying that oppression and marginalisation. She points to race, class and gender as examples. She further argues that biblical interpretation and Christian theology in Africa have, unfortunately, been used to sacralise the marginalisation of women's experience. Maluleke and Nadar (2002:7-11) bring more meaning to this claim. They narrate Kerina's story as follows:

Whenever Kerina had made an attempt to leave this marriage, the pastor always came up with all the religious reasons why she should not leave. He cited several biblical mandates to justify the abuse i.e. the headship of the male over the female and the lack of submission on the part of Kerina toward her husband (2002:8-9).

Kerina's is one of the many untold stories of experiences of women; some died without speaking, others without being heard. Some relive these experiences on a daily basis, if one looks at the escalating gender-based violence cases flooding our screens every day. Parallel to these, we are flooded by news of pastors; one is currently under police custody on charges of rape and human trafficking. Two of the victims, who are twin sisters, attest, "We were actually pushed to please the man; we were told that God will punish us if we ever say anything against [Pastor] Omotoso. We lived a life full of threats and fear" (Magwaza, News24, 30 January 2018).

Therefore, there is ample evidence on the use of the Bible and theological justification of racism and gender oppression among other oppressions in South Africa, as argued by Kobo and Mangoedi (2017), Moore (1973), Maimela (1986), Mosala (1988), Oduyoye (1995a), Maluleke and Nadar (2002) and News24 2018. What seems to be the problem though is that the interlocation of black African women is downplayed in some of these writings that correctly address the historical oppression of blacks as if black African women's oppression were by association the oppression of blacks in general.

Williams' earlier point on sexism as a construct like racism (1993:83) poses the following fundamental statement to BTL: black theologians argue that racism is a construct and thus commit to not accepting the world as it is but to radically changing it (Maimela, 1986:102). Williams' assertion of sexism as equally constructed becomes a testing ground for BTL. If black women are oppressed and continue to suffer from their black brothers, what this suggests is that the inability to recognise this truth and thus treat racism and sexism as equally challenging to black people is the shortcoming of BTL. If the first source of BTL is the black community (Mosala, 1987:36), when it excludes and downplays the interlocution of women, it arguably ceases to be a community. If its task of reclaiming people from humiliation and achieving black consciousness, black pride and self-determination (Murray, 1979:406) fails to acknowledge the humiliation of black women, it becomes a futile exercise. We now proceed to establish the extent to which it nuances BTL patriarchy in its vision for liberation.

To reiterate our point, BTL has engaged the problem of patriarchy. The first book published on Black Theology in South Africa brings out the oppression of black women as Moore and Ntwasa (1973:25) observe how black women in South Africa suffer double oppression as blacks against blacks and as women. Moore and Ntwasa inform us that BTL recognises black women as interlocutors in the liberation dialogue, to some extent, as evidenced in their assertion that "Black Theology, as it struggles to formulate a theology of liberation relevant to South Africa, cannot afford to perpetuate any form of domination, not even male domination. If its liberation is not human enough to include liberation of women, it will not be liberation" (1973:25-26). Such profound insights already displayed as early as the conception of the school arguably become a sounding board in a patriarchal society as ours today, raising questions on how theories are translated into praxis. In the 21st century, BTL, however, does not succeed in being exonerated from this problem of patriarchy.

In his critique of the concept of power and authoritarianism, a social structure that places certain people over others and subjects those 'others' to the rule of those occupying particular positions within the social structure, Mothlabi (1973:120-121)

contends that this is found equally in political structures and home situations. This finds justification once again in scripture and the oft-cited passage of St Paul where he says the husband is to be the head of his wife (Eph. 5:23). Mothlabi argues that in this context women's capabilities, her leadership skills and wisdom matter less. What matters is the preservation of an established pattern of authority that states that the one who holds the office of husband automatically has authority over the one who holds the office of wife. He further argues that this is reinforced through the characterisation of women as weaker beings whose role is subservient to men.

Mofokeng exposes irreconcilable contradictions in the school where women have been in the forefront of the struggle, yet their oppression has not been privileged (1987:25). "Stated otherwise, Mofokeng seems to suggest that while patriarchy is nuanced in the vision of BTL, the interlocution of women has however been downplayed" (Kobo, 2016:2). Moreover, for that he says, "Black theologians have to hang their heads in shame..." To this effect, Mosala (1987) posits that the extent of the liberation of women in the liberation struggle attests to the success of the struggle. He writes:

Even more importantly, the problem of the "struggle between struggles" makes the question of a black feminist theology exceedingly urgent. The tendency by some struggles to want to subsume other struggles under their aegis is a characteristic feature of "discourse imperialism" under monopoly capitalism. The experience of women and blacks in supposedly socialist organizations is salutary in this regard. Thus, not only is an autonomous black feminist theological discourse a necessity of the objective and subjective conditions of black women's struggle, but it is also a condition of the successful execution of the black liberation struggle. Without such an autonomous discourse of struggle black theology is dangerously truncated (1987:39).

Mosala's use of "struggle between struggles" (Vellem, 2007b:62), what we defined earlier as a 'hierarchy of struggles', implies that in capitalistic-oriented contexts, there is a tendency for some struggles to take precedence over others. As a result, the privileging of certain struggles threatens liberation of others. He seems to suggest, however, that the experience of women and blacks does not have to fall into that trap.

He proposes an autonomous black feminist theological discourse as a necessity of the objective and subjective conditions of black women's struggle, and a condition of the successful execution of the black liberation struggle and a critique of BTL. He further argues that without such an autonomous discourse of struggle, black theology is dangerously truncated (Kobo, 2016:2). Mosala (1988:6-7) demonstrates his commitment by affirming his position with regard to women's oppression and liberation as he interprets the text of Esther using the woman as an interlocutor, unmasking the struggle for liberation of women in South Africa.

Our perspective on the possibilities of seeing the liberation of women requires a distinct set of theories in addition to the propositions of the liberation paradigm. The framework of BTL emerges from these sentiments and its shortcomings. BTL in the 21st century must hang its head in shame if patriarchy is not tackled head-on. The possibility of a harmonious dialogue and collaboration between womanist- and Black Theology in the 21st century must be sought urgently. BTL cannot continue as an anti-communal, anti-dialogue form of black faith.

Maluleke and Nadar's phenomenal collaboration (2004:2-7), which highlights the scarcity of real engagement between female and male black intellectuals, is an example to follow. They reaffirm Biko's warning of blacks who are a danger to the community, the kinds of blacks that have been made to feel inferior for so long to the point where having a cup of coffee with whites gives them comfort. It makes them think they are somehow equals when in reality, they are not. They are dangerous blacks, he suggests, because instead of engaging their fellow blacks to find solutions to their problems, they run to their 'pseudo-equals' (2012:25). This is the point about faith that is not in dialogue with the conditions of black personhood. Christian theologies make blacks accept their inferiority by faith, hence the role of Christianity in conquering blacks.

For Maluleke and Nadar, black intellectuals engage more with their white colleagues than with each other. They cite a number of reasons for this, for example that "the

shortage of Black intellectuals and rarity of black female intellectuals works against the necessary dialogue between black women and males” (Kobo, 2016:2). The context in which black intellectuals operate is still under the control of white hegemony, so the demands of survival and service upon the few available intellectuals, they argue, make it impossible to have space to set their own agendas and engage with one another.

The tendency of even black males to speak on behalf of black women, instead of firstly speaking with them and then letting them speak for themselves, is another point that Maluleke and Nadar point us to. Lack of engagement arguably perpetuates the lie that blacks need whites to save them and hence even they employ Biko’s “Black person you are on your own”, as an appeal to Blacks to talk straight with one another and stop expecting Whites to author their liberation. They assert that true liberation must be self-implicating and self-authored (Maluleke & Nadar, 2004:8). This could be equally interpreted as the perpetuation of a lie that black women need black men to save them.

While this research critiques the devaluing of the interlocution of African black women in BTL, it seeks to move beyond the differences towards a collaboration of both as strong forces for liberation of black humanity. The starting point of this dialogue is an uncompromising rejection of androcentric philosophies and truncated notions of liberation and forms of faith and thus spiritualities that assume neutrality. To develop black hermeneutics, to deal with the ongoing problems of racism and economic exclusion of black people and to debunk authoritarian systems and institutions, blackness is decisively a starting point freed from androcentric language and faith that justifies patriarchy.

2.8. Conclusion

This chapter established that the hierarchy of struggles in BTL internally is problematic. BC (philosophy) freed of androcentric language and BTL (theology) freed of patriarchal theology combine as a transformed form of liberation and spirituality,

good news to blacks. They must be liberated from within in order to deal with external forces, which are Eurocentric, Western forms of life, knowledge, i.e. epistemology and faith, i.e. theology. The word *reason* in the well-known phrase “faith and reason” is used philosophically in this chapter. BTL is faith and BTL is reason. There must be harmony between faith and reason. Any disharmony is dangerous. We have seen that BC undermines the reason of black faith through its androcentric languages and constructs. However, faith is not a construct that is free from any ideology. The destruction of a black person assumes faith that is rooted in ideologies that are not decisively black and philosophies that are foreign and internally androcentric. This produces dangerous spiritualities and ultimately undermines the comprehensive vision of liberation.

Based on the fragmentation and fragmenting of black humanity by external forces, namely, a white supremacist racist and capitalist society, as portrayed in this chapter, it is not logical to use feminism. There is a decisively black philosophy and faith behind the reason we employ womanism, to which we now turn.

CHAPTER 3

A womanist, not a feminist!

3.1. Introduction

In the previous chapter, our goal was, among others, to deal with BTL and its constructs of liberation. As a critique of Biko's use of androcentric language and hierarchy of struggles within BTL, we argued for internal rehabilitation to deal with external forces. Having looked at BC and BTL, we will now examine womanism as a philosophy and as a faith as espoused in Womanist Theology. The occlusion of patriarchal violence by BTL suggests that there is a need for an autonomous discourse to alter the logical goals that originate from the liberation paradigm as suggested in chapter 1.

An autonomous black feminist theological discourse is a necessity of the objective and subjective conditions of the struggle of black women (Mosala, 1987:39). In this discourse, black women theologians vigorously attempt to articulate and contextualize the intersectionality of their gender and race (Mtetwa, 1998:71) in a society described by Biko in the previous chapter as a predominantly white, social, cultural, political and economic context that occludes black women's experience.

The purpose of this chapter, therefore, is to present a compatible dialogue partner, a black woman with a black man in pursuit of black personhood devoid of Eurocentric categories of knowledge, such as the Cartesian ego and the conquering spirit of modernity and colonisation. It also aims to present a womanist perspective that is communal, pro-dialogue, integrative, and constantly in search of its relevance to the interlocution of black women in grassroots and dungeons. The statement of the third Assembly of the Ecumenical Association of Third World Theologians (EATWOT) that must be examined exposes the sets of theories proposed by women. Following that, we look at womanism and its geopolitics of knowledge foregrounded by definitions of womanism by Alice Walker and Chikwenye Ogunyemi. We problematize the contexts

out of which the definitions emerge as they influence womanism as the epistemological agency of black women. We look also at culture as a unique contribution and affirmation of comprehensive liberation in the womanist discourse and how womanists deal with race. We conclude by demonstrating critiques and shortcomings of the discourse.

3.2. Setting the Scene

The insights from the statement of the third Assembly of the EATWOT that captures the complexities in relation to oppression and liberation of women sets the scene for us. It traces back the participation of women from the Global South in various struggles such as that of justice, human rights, and economic and political freedom among others. It points to a shift which saw these women organising themselves as women from Asia, Africa and Latin America and the US minorities to problematize their location as the conquered species by naming the things that they saw as oppressive to them. They also began to critique Eurocentric modernity and began to articulate new paradigms that intentionally responded to questions they were posing as conquered women and humanity in their search for new anthropology (50-51).

In their struggle for justice:

Patriarchy as a system of graded subjugation has been identified and its pernicious roots, which weave into other structures of oppression, have been exposed and targeted for concerted action. Patriarchal structures have legitimized scandalous forms of dehumanization of women and men, and women's right to self-identity and dignity has been violated... The subtle forms of violence women experience cannot easily be articulated but have for centuries been eating into the psyche of women, eroding their self-esteem. This takes various forms – denying to women their right to self-expression out of their own wisdom, which expresses a perspective different from a dominant mode, or rendering women invisible. The oppression of women by patriarchal religion, including Christianity, and the androcentric language and interpretation of scriptures are other expressions of this. The marginalisation women experience in the church is indeed another form of violence against them (EATWOT Statement, 1992:50-51).

The Statement above has been cited at length because it provides for us a synthesis of the arguments intended in this chapter. First, the Statement alludes to issues of identity resulting from a fresh wave by women in the global South naming themselves as women. Second, the specific forms of violence and oppression are then identified. Third, importantly so, the Statement advocates for an autonomous existence and agenda of the liberation of women. Fourth, it further exposes and analyses oppressive systems, and proposes new paradigms, apparently a new anthropology. Lastly, the Statement identifies patriarchy as a specific form of oppression for women that is pernicious and pervasive in other forms of oppression.

From this Statement then, especially in relation to patriarchy, the oppression of women has been justified theologically and sanctioned by the church. This point has been made by Mercy Oduyoye (1995a:480ff) and Tinyiko Maluleke and Sarojini Nadar (2002:7ff), among others. If this is our cue, this Statement inspires the question of a paradigm shift towards a new theology and ecclesiology at least. Lebaka-Ketshabile (1995:49) speaks of a true reconstruction of theology and doing of theology where a new paradigm of consciousness is created. Lastly, the statement propels us in searching for new ways of articulating our faith and theology (Anderson-Rajkumar, 2010:193) and a new way of understanding, what it means to be a church where an autonomous struggle against patriarchy by women who identify themselves as women could be waged. The autonomous struggle for women's liberation is articulated by Letty Russell as follows:

The struggle is basically for a new human being; one that is whole; that moves beyond social stereotypes of masculine and feminine, dominant and subordinate, to an understanding of human sexuality that recognizes that variety of sexual characteristics in each person (1979:162).

This chapter thus explores womanism as an autonomous existence and discourse that attempts to respond to these questions, among others. Our search for what it means to be an autonomous discourse as black women starts with Alice Walker's definition:

“Womanist theology takes its name and guidelines from the oft-quoted definition of “womanist” that Alice Malsenior Walker provides in her *In Search of Our Mothers’ Gardens*” (Weaver, 2001:157). This chapter looks at the evolution of womanism as a philosophy that branches into different disciplines such as spirituality, literature, ethics and theology, and how these are woven together for the struggle of women’s liberation. We also ponder the question of naming and thus exposing politics of naming and interlocution. For this reason, in juxtaposition to Walker’s renowned womanism, we introduce an African contemporary, Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi, to mitigate the politics of location and context in womanist thought. We look at the relationship between womanism and white feminism and briefly between Black and womanist theologies as we set our minds for a later dialogue.

3.3. Womanism and its Geopolitics of Knowledge

As a womanist in South Africa, having also developed a framework within which black humanity intersects with issues of gender in the previous chapter, it is necessary to explain our use of the term *womanism* in this research. We, therefore, briefly look at Alice Walker and Chikwenye Ogunyemi to examine the term within the context of the geopolitics of knowledge.

3.3.1. On Womanism by Alice Walker

1. From *womanish*. (Opp. of “girlish”, i.e., frivolous, irresponsible, not serious.) A black feminist or feminist of colour. From the black folk expression of mothers to female children, “You acting womanish,” i.e., like a woman. Usually referring to outrageous, audacious, courageous or *wilful* behaviour. Wanting to know more and in great depth than is considered “good” for one. Interested in grown-up doings. Acting grown-up. Being grown-up. Interchangeable with another black folk expression: “You trying to be grown.” Responsible. In charge. *Serious*. **2.** *Also:* A woman who loves other women, sexually and/or non-sexually. Appreciates and prefers women’s culture, women’s emotional flexibility (values tears as natural counterbalance of laughter), and women’s strength. Sometimes loves individual men, sexually and/or non-sexually. Committed to

survival and wholeness of entire people, male *and* female. Not a separatist, except periodically, for health. Traditionally universalist, as in: “Mama, why are we brown, pink, and yellow, and our cousins are white, beige, and black?” Ans.: “Well, you know the colored race is just like a flower garden, with every color flower represented.” Traditionally capable, as in: “Mama, I’m walking to Canada and I’m taking you and a bunch of other slaves with me.” Reply: “It wouldn’t be the first time.” **3.** Loves music. Loves dance. Loves the moon. *Loves* the Spirit. Loves love and food and roundness. Loves struggle. *Loves* the Folk. Loves herself. *Regardless.***4.** Womanist is to feminist as purple to lavender (Walker, 1984: xi-xii).

Walker’s four-paragraphed definition captures her central thoughts on womanism. Walker’s first use of the term *womanist* was in 1979 in her short story “Coming Apart,” where she explores womanish acts as a presupposition for a womanist framework – a womanish act she associates with outrageous, audacious, courageous or wilful behaviour. To add one’s voice as well on “womanish” and to act like a woman can also be associated with negative predominant gender roles attached to being a woman. For instance, when girls are taught to act like women, they are expected to be soft-spoken and less assertive, sit up properly and do house chores, among other things (Kobo, 2016:4). In this regard, one may argue, “womanish” does not yield to any form of activism and certainly not showing any “outrageous, audacious, courageous or wilful behaviour”, as suggested by Walker.

Her second use of womanism is in her book review essay, “Gifts of Power: The Writings of Rebecca Jackson,” which reflects her insights on women who love other women and her dissatisfaction with labelling. In the essay, she questions a non-black scholar’s attempt to label something lesbian that the black woman in question has not (Maparyan, 2012:18). The third one is the most famous and the one we refer to in this work where she did an in-depth exposition of this term in her prominent work, *In Search of Our Mothers’ Gardens: Womanist Prose*, which was published in 1984. Maparyan asserts that this four-paragraphed definition of the term *womanist* has stood as the foundation of the development of womanism, which has now become a vibrant theoretical and activist perspective (2012:22).

“Many African-American women theologians gravitated to the use of Alice Walker’s term “womanist” as both a challenge to and a confessional statement for their own work,” argues Townes (2003:160). As one of the senior proponents in the school, Katie Geneva Cannon²⁷ appropriated Walker’s concept as a critical methodological framework to create the term “womanism” as a call for a justice-seeking movement from “brutal cycles of misery and violence” to a promising future” (Yamaguchi, 1998: 256). She comments on several texts written by Walker as follows, “... her texts aid us in our quest and desire to transform patriarchal structures and relationships of inequality within the private and public spheres” (Cannon, 1993b:33).

For Townes (2003:161), Walker’s definition contains the organic and concrete elements of tradition, community, spirituality and the self and critique of White feminist thought, also providing a fertile ground for religious reflection and practical application. Delores Williams is the first to use the term womanist theology in her 1987 work entitled *Womanist Theology: Black Women’s Voices*. She uses Walker’s definition of womanism as a theoretical outline for a womanist theology that consists of four elements: multi-dialogical, liturgical, didactic and commitment to reason and female imagery and metaphorical language when constructing theological statements (Townes, 2003:164). According to Weaver (2001:157), womanist theology takes its name and guidelines from the definition of “womanist” that Alice Walker provides in her *In Search of Our Mothers’ Gardens*.

Evidently, a significant number of African-American womanists’ works pay homage to Walker’s definition of womanism, which is obviously grounded in experiences of women in that context. Walker’s definition has been imported by women theologians in the global South. We are, however, alert to the geo-politics of knowledge even in womanist discourse. For this reason, it is important to note however that some African womanists and Global South women theologians have alluded to Walker’s definition in light of their own experiences, which may not be reflected in other contexts. To name

²⁷ The first African-American woman to be ordained in the PCUSA in 1974 and the first to obtain a PhD from Union Theological seminary in 1983.

a few, Evangeline Anderson-Rajkumar, a Dalit womanist theologian, appropriates Walker's Womanist methodology in light of casteism and sexism in her own Indian context. She, thus, redefines this theory or philosophy of womanism in this manner:

Womanist in an Indian context as that double consciousness which emerges to renounce casteism and sexism as inherently evil to humanity, and stands in solidarity and spirit for justice and equality, regardless. Womanist spirituality is collective spirituality, one that is rooted in community (2010:194).

Sarojini Nadar, a South African Indian woman, a black woman, therefore, appropriates Walker's womanism by highlighting its key features which are its focus on race and commitment to the 'entire people' (2003:14–15). Our point is that our use of the philosophy, methodology, or theoretical lens of womanism is not uncritical. This is the reason why we now turn to a closer examination of the engagement of the Walkerian lens of womanism.

3.3.2. On Womanism by Chikwenye Ogunyemi

While Walker's definition has received much attention, arguably for obvious reasons of her location, she is a scholar from the Global North where power resides. Emerging in the same era as Walker, however, Ogunyemi (1985:72), a womanist literary critic from Nigeria in Africa, arrived at the term independently and was surprised to discover that its meaning overlapped with Walker's definition (1985:72). Her location as an African in Nigeria is arguably the reason her definition of womanism did not receive as much prominence as that of a scholar in the Global North.

For Ogunyemi, Black Womanism is a philosophy that celebrates black roots, the ideals of black life, while giving a balanced presentation of womandom. About this, she says:

It [womanism] concerns itself with the black sexual power tussle as with the world power structure that subjugates blacks. Its ideal is for black unity where every black person has a modicum of power and so can be a 'brother' or a 'sister' or a 'father' or a 'mother' to the other. This philosophy has a mandalic core: its aim is the dynamism of wholeness and self-healing that one sees in the positive, integrative endings of womanist novels (Ogunyemi, 1985:72).

Ogunyemi's (1985) article entitled "Womanism: The Dynamics of the Contemporary Black Female Novel in English" paves way for her thoughts on womanism, which she puts in the following way:

More often than not, where a woman writer may be a feminist, a black woman writer is likely to be a "womanist". That is, she will recognize that, along with her consciousness of sexual issues, she must incorporate racial, cultural, natural, national, economic, and political considerations into her philosophy (1985:64).

In this article, Ogunyemi reflects on her discovery of Walker's definitions which overlapped with hers. In her analysis, she sees Walker as depicting the development of an adolescent girl to a woman. Her critique of Walker finds substance in her observation that African-American womanism overlooks African peculiarities. Arguably, her modification attempts to bring into focus these overlooked African peculiarities (Ogunyemi, 1996:114). A womanist for her is one who recognises the intersections in women's oppressions, namely, race, culture, nationality, economics and politics (1985:64). Ogunyemi's definition of womanism is very helpful for this thesis, as an African who is aware of the African peculiarities that are often left out by scholars who write from different locations. Ogunyemi further asserts: "It is necessary to reiterate that the womanist praxis in Africa has never totally identified with all the original Walkerian precepts. An important point of departure is the African obsession to have children" (1996:133); as opposed to American feminists' view that "motherhood is a cornerstone of patriarchy" (Rigney, 1997:175).

Ogunyemi observes that the second part of the definition where Walker talks about ‘woman who loves other women sexually’ is problematic in an African context where homosexuality is still a taboo. Of course, this should be read in the context of earlier views on the LGBTQI+ questions, but the point is that there are differences in the use of the term no matter what Ogunyemi’s stance is on this matter. It is important for us to explain this matter further. In this thesis, that the issue of homosexuality is taboo is a double jeopardy for women in the South African context as the constitution of the country is clear on human rights for all and therefore speaks against any discrimination. As stated in clause (9.3) on Equality in the Bill of Rights,

The state may not unfairly discriminate directly or indirectly against anyone on one or more grounds, including race, gender, sex, pregnancy, marital status, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, age, disability, religion, conscience, belief, culture, language and birth (The Bill of Rights 1996:3).

There is a sense in which Ogunyemi is correct about homosexuality. As far as the church is concerned, it is indeed still a taboo to openly speak about the LGBTQI+ community. A number of churches, including the UPSCA, recently took positions against its ministers officiating in weddings of the members of LGBTQI communities and they also condemn ordination of homosexuals. The Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) took a decision to allow homosexual marriage and later rescinded it; and Grace Bible Church (GBC) made news when a visiting pastor made homophobic comments that unsettled some people (Zonde, News24, 23 January 2017). In his critique of the relationship between Black and womanist theologies and the Black church, Wright Jr. (2010) posits that womanist theology is not on the radar screen of Black pastors and churches, and womanists’ inclusion of same sex in its intellectual agenda is not congruent to the churches’ agenda that still sees LGBTQI+ as an “abomination to the Lord” (2010:262).

Ogunyemi's African womanism is foregrounded by a conviction that the gender question can be dealt with only in the context of other issues that are relevant for African women (Arndt, 2000:711). BTL also makes a similar point. In his argument against the dichotomizing tendency and abstractionism of traditional theology, Ntintili (1996) asserts that for BTL, life is not divided into sacred and secular spheres, but treats life in a more comprehensive manner. We have argued in the previous chapter for a rehabilitation of BTL from within so that Black and womanist theologies look at life comprehensively, in a quest for liberation of black personhood and humanity.

Ogunyemi's philosophy is affirmed by Oduyoye (2001a:38) who asserts that women's theology is evolving in the context of the challenge to make theology reflect what Christians in Africa understand God to be about. For Oduyoye the African context comprises a whole life (2001a:21) and further argues that to speak of traditional life in Africa is to speak of the community (2001a:34). The work of Madipoane Masenya (ngwana' Mphahlele), a South African womanist biblical scholar, reflects this as well. For both womanism (philosophy) and womanist theology (faith and spirituality), life is a comprehensive unit.

What we have established so far is that womanists are black women advocating for the liberation of women and the whole of humanity. They are "Committed to survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female" (Walker, 1984: xi-xii). Aptly put, "Black women are saying 'no' to racist, classist, patriarchal oppression, and 'yes' to freedom for all Black people. Black women and men throughout the diaspora are saying 'Yes' to richness of Black cultural heritage" (EATWOT Statement, 1992:52). There are convergences between Walker and Ogunyemi's definitions of womanism. Both validate the position of this thesis that for black women the struggle is not with black men, but various intersections of race, class, gender and the whole of life. The commitment to survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female suggested by Walker is telling. Womanism's mandalic core aim is the dynamism of wholeness and self-healing as posited by Ogunyemi is affirming.

Ogunyemi speaks to an African context more than Walker, as she has indicated in her critique. Therefore, the issue of their location is important as it exposes class differences in scholarship that cannot be left unchecked. While womanism, as a philosophy, exposes the nexus of race, class and sexism and other factors affecting women, womanists are separated by location. Thus, class or other factors and a theology developed on the edifice of such a philosophy must be critique itself. In the next section, we further demonstrate the question of location by looking at the African-American and African contexts out of which womanism emerges.

3.3.3. The Importance of Context: African American and African Situations.

BTL and the liberation paradigm of theology in general have emphasized the importance of location in doing theology.²⁸ In his works on coloniality (2007, 2011, 2013) Walter Mignolo speaks about 'colonial difference', which among others suggests the importance of 'a local history of colonial difference'. This means that knowledge understood justly should be related to local histories. For this reason, we pay attention to contexts from which the womanist discourse emanates as they play a crucial role in understanding the notion of womanism, its presuppositions and resources.

"The womanist theology that emerges in the United States is a theo-ethical offspring of the transatlantic slave trade and the Afro-diasporic women shaped in and through that trade and its legacies" (Leath, 2018:2). The transatlantic slave trade created the displacement of African people and thus tensions for example between African-Americans and Africans. Blacks in South Africa are a majority, yet they are a minority in the United States of America. Enslavement created the diaspora, and blacks in the diaspora continued to suffer racism and those who remained on the continent too were colonized and oppressed in their motherland.

²⁸ In the discussions of methodology in BTL, the location of a theologian is problematized. See works such as Boesak, 1987; Mosala, 1988; Maluleke, 2006; Vellem, 2007 etc.

The affinities between slavery and patriarchy, as observed by Harris below, inspire the development of womanism. He writes:

During slavery, Black men and women were dominated by white males and females. The slave master's wife was dominated by the same man who dominated the slaves and when it came to the slaves, she was a partner in the domination. She also controlled the Black body as means of economic production as well as a sexual object. She was an active, complicit beneficiary of the system of domination and oppression (Harris, 2010:81).

Haddad makes the same observation that "slavery poignantly highlighted white women's lack of sympathy and in fact complicity in black women's oppression. When black women were exposed to extreme forms of sexual exploitation by their white masters, plantation mistresses aligned themselves with their husbands over and against black women for economic gain" (2000:146). This observation by Harris and Haddad exposes the external factors that the School has to contend with and it is what differentiates womanism from feminism, as will be demonstrated throughout this chapter.

Those Africans who have adopted Walker's definition, which is of African-American origin, have attempted to appropriate the term *womanism* into their own unique African situations and experiences. This exercise has not been without any challenges. First, Africa is huge and diverse, so through the lenses of culture and religion, which is central in her work, Mercy Oduyoye has managed to capture what is common amongst Africans especially in relation to the oppression of an African woman. Adding her voice, Chikwenye Ogunyemi in her critique of Walker, Ogunyemi observes the absence of African complexities and her 1985 book attempts to bring out these. Second, South Africa on its own is an immensely diverse country with a history of colonisation and oppression brought by the apartheid regime whose remains are still visible, calling for further appropriation. In such a context, one also observes the differences between experiences of white and black women (Phiri & Nadar, 2010:91)

and the role of white women in the oppression and domination of black women as suggested by Harris (2010:81).

Madipoane Masenya (ngwana' Mphahlele) and Sarojini Nadar are among scholars who reflect on the complexities of naming and appropriation in the South African context. While alluding to Hudson-Weems, Masenya (ngwana' Mphahlele) (1995) appropriates the term as a South African Tswana woman and as a Biblical scholar, she comes up with *Bosadi* approach, which will be explored later in the chapter. On the other hand, Sarojini Nadar appropriates this term as a South African Indian woman. She acknowledges its African-American originality and argues that "... while women in South Africa struggle to come up with a term that fits our contexts I am content with using the term womanist" (2003:15). Importation of theory is not unique to womanist theology; BTL emerged also from the very African-American context. Moore writes:

While the catch title "Black Theology" has been imported from the United States into South Africa, the content of American Black Theology has not been imported with the title. This is to be expected for while there are many striking parallels between the situation of the black man in America and South Africa, the differences are almost as striking as the parallels. Thus, what we need to look at is not what "Black Theology" is in its American context, but what it is in South Africa (Moore, 1973:3).

Womanists can possibly take their cue from BTL, as poignantly articulated by Moore, and look at womanism not in its American context, but what it is in South Africa. Ogunyemi's observation on African-American womanism that overlooks African peculiarities could arguably be a further point of contention on this matter (1996:114). By looking at what it is in South Africa, it thus takes into consideration such peculiarities as suggested by Ogunyemi and the entire unique situation in South Africa, one can further argue.

Torfs, in her analysis of Walker's four-part definition, observes how she uses the term *black feminist* interchangeably with *womanist* (2008:18). Ogunyemi's definition had also gone through some evolution. Whether to use feminism with qualifiers such Black and African or debunk it completely has been on the decolonising agenda of South African academics. Perhaps it is now in order to explore the use of terms *black feminist* and *womanist* as an entry point to our discussion on the power of naming.

3.3.4. What's in a Name?

Naming is primary, crucial and specific. It is a question of identity. In the black African context, naming a child is also communal and prophetic. A child is given a name that reveals the parents' hope for their future and place in community. In Ogunyemi's culture, names have meanings, and the expectation is that children ought to live up to their names (Arndt, 2000:721). Consequently, it is a well thought out ritual. Naming is power, power to question the oppressor, and thus a preliminary step in empowerment (Anderson-Rajkumar, 2010:194; Arndt, 2000:721). Empowerment is one of the basic tenets of feminism *and* [womanism] (Butler, Beck-Gernsheim and Puigvert, 2001:119). "We must name and continue to rename" (Cannon, 2006:96). BTL asserts that the function of naming reality is an integral part of the process of creating that reality. "We name and rename as we execute the production of the black theological discourses," writes Mosala (1987:38).

As indicated by Torfs (2008) in her analysis of Walker, her definition makes use of terms *black feminist* or *feminist of colour*, which she uses interchangeably with *womanist*. The rationale is that both "are concerned with struggles against sexism and racism by black women who are themselves part of the black community's efforts to achieve equity and liberty" (:18) Torfs further demonstrates that not every scholar affirms this. For instance, Gqola (1998) observes the revolutionary nature of the ideologies of womanism and black feminism but posits that they are not the same. "Womanism refuses to express loyalty to feminism by calling itself a shade of feminism" (Aniagolu, 1998:98). Gqola notes firstly that the point of difference has been

inflated among South African academics. Moreover, she points to the criticism womanists have received as a result of their “hard-line pro-black position” which is regarded by others as condoning black male patriarchy and thus not advancing women. We will come back to this point when we ponder the relationship between Black Theology of Liberation and Womanist Theology.

Ogunyemi began with ‘black womanism’ where she highlights elements of black separatism with white feminism. She modified her definition to ‘African womanism’ where she attempts to bring into focus African peculiarities” (Arndt, 2000:711) that are neither found with African-American womanists and white western feminists. She cites issues like extreme poverty, problems with in-laws, oppression based on age difference among women themselves and oppression in the marriage institution, both in monogamous and polygamous marriages and religion (in Arndt, 2000:714-15).

From the discussion above, we gather that naming is political, social, cultural and so forth. In naming, we are drawn into various factors posed by varying contexts. As suggested by Anderson-Rajkumar, there are possibilities of renaming, as things change over time and space. We now look at naming among academics.

3.3.4.1. Naming among academics

Katie Geneva Cannon was the first to use the term womanist in the religious disciplines in her 1985 article entitled “The Emergence of Black Feminist Consciousness”. Townes points us to a shift worth noting in Cannon’s 1996 collection of essays, *Katie’s Canon: Womanism and the Soul of Black Community*. She shifts from the use of Black Feminist consciousness to use of Black womanist consciousness as an interpretative principle that addresses oppression, identifies texts that empower – specifically biblical texts – to “dispel the threat of death in order to seize the present life” (Townes, 2003:164).

Madipoane Masenya (ngwana' Mphahlele), a South African biblical scholar, is the one who introduced the term womanist theology to South Africa (Landman, 1995:145). Her analysis of the situation of Black women in South Africa propelled her to differentiate herself from white feminists. She prefers calling Black women who are engaged with liberation issues womanists rather than feminists (Masenya (ngwana' Mphahlele) 1995:152). She alludes to Clenora Hudson-Weems, another prominent figure in the evolution of womanist ideas. According to Maparyan (2012:26), Hudson-Weems' concern was not so much about terminology, but she sought rather to evoke Sojourner Truth's impromptu speech "Ain't I a Woman?" Her 1993 work entitled *Africana Womanism: Reclaiming Ourselves* brought forth her thoughts on Africana womanism. Sojourner Truth, according to Hudson-Weems, reflects on her life struggles as an Africana in the context of forces that are dominating and alienating. Her contention is that Sojourner Truth is a partner in the struggle of her people and by pointing to her class status, Masenya (ngwana' Mphahlele) sees reflections of Black women in South Africa.

Hudson-Weems' preference of the term *womanist* is linked to the specificity of the term. She argues that feminist is derived from female, which can mean anything, including plant or animal species, while the female of the human species is not simply female but is also a woman. We will return to this point later. She further exposes the racist origins of the term *feminist*, which, in her view, render it an inappropriate term for Black women in their unique situation. Maparyan aptly captures Hudson-Weems as follows: "Feminism is okay for white women, she argues, but it will never be adequate for Black women" (2012:27).

Landman (1995:144) observes in a conference²⁹ on feminist theology organized by the Institute for Theological Research in September 1984 how the majority of women who were invited to speak were "surprised to find that they were labelled 'feminists'". She points us to outcomes of the conference, namely, the adoption of a stance of

²⁹ This conference was the first attempt in the South African context to deal with feminism in an academic setting. Secondly, it was intended to link the institutes with global discussions on feminist theology (Landman, 1995:143)

critiquing traditional theological language, advocacy for ordination of women; reluctance by some women to get involved in feminist studies and the adoption of a “common sense feminism” (:143), which is simply an acknowledgement of women in academia. She makes pertinent observations, which arguably call the credibility and revolutionary character of feminist theology into question. She writes, “Feminist theology was not introduced in South Africa by feminists and neither was the ordination movement led by feminists” (1995:148). She sees men’s involvement as purely a political one. She suggests that men are taking up the feminist cause as a way of improving their public image and to police the political side of feminism. She makes a point about agency by calling for women as interlocutors in South Africa to be at the forefront of their feminism. This call is made by both Black and womanist theologies (Manasa, 1973:34; Mosala, 1986:132; Maluleke & Nadar, 2004:8).

A point similar to the one raised by Landman on women’s reluctance to be labelled “feminists” is also raised by Beck-Gernsheim in a dialogue with other womanists under the theme “Gender and Social Transformation”, where she argues that in Germany, younger women, including her students, refused to be called “feminists” because they associate it with their mothers. Their argument, she writes, was “Oh my god, they always talked about being victims and being oppressed, I’m not a feminist” (Butler, Beck-Gernsheim & Puigvert, 2001:125).

Perhaps Anderson-Rajkumar’s (2010:195) assertion about the need to confess and repent of one’s silent participation and consent to the system of sexism resonates very well with these observations. This point on silent participation is also made by Schüssler Fiorenza (1975) where she critiques culture and religion and her analysis of “feminine mystique”, which points to the inferior state of women, their subordination, oppression, silenced voices and so forth. She writes:

... women themselves have interiorized this image and understanding of woman as inferior and derivative. Often, they themselves most strongly believe and defend “feminine mystique”. Since women have learned to feel inferior and to despise themselves, they do not respect, in fact they even hate other women. Thus, women

evidence the typical personality traits of oppressed people who have internalized the images and notions of the oppressor (Schüssler Fiorenza, 1975:607).

She demonstrates how patriarchal societies normalise the inferiority of [white] women to men and how patriarchy ruptures [white] women's psyche. This analysis by Schüssler Fiorenza of women's oppression needs qualification if we take into consideration politics of feminism. Feminists have been critiqued on their biases in their attempt to liberate women. The first question that one should ask herself is, who is a woman? When the framework itself does not include experiences of black women, a feminist epistemology assumes that all women are the same, namely, white and middle class from the first world (Chopp, 1996:120). Their preoccupation with women only has been found to be problematic by women whose worldview and framework nuances patriarchy differently from them (Masenya (ngwana' Mphahlele), 2004; Oduyoye, 1998; Ogunyemi, 1985; Spivak, 1992). While we adopt this analysis, we do so to evoke experiences of black women in a racist and patriarchal society.

As demonstrated by Schüssler Fiorenza, women internalise the image portrayed by a patriarchal society and, in turn, they translate their feelings of contempt to other fellow women who arguably become objects of their hatred. In the critique of Biko's analysis of the black man in the previous chapter, where he argues that the location of the black man in a racist society eats into his psyche and erodes his self-esteem, he becomes an angry and resentful man with deep-seated anger that he ultimately vents on his fellow man, women and property. We argued that the black woman is equally affected by those pathologies that eat her psyche and erode her self-esteem (EATWOT Statement, 1993:50–51). Her situation is even worse because she is confronted with being part of a racist and patriarchal society, a double jeopardy. She also has deep-seated anger and vents it on her fellow women whom she hates, as suggested by Schüssler Fiorenza.

Anderson-Rajkumar and Schüssler Fiorenza's point on silent participation elucidates the point on tensions arising from naming and use of terminology with reference to

both white feminism and womanism. First, as noted, while these are terms of advocacy, some women do not associate themselves with them, to the extent that they label women who claim these terms. Moreover, as pointed out above, to some extent, some women defend patriarchy and are participants in the very systems that oppress them. James (1997), Kobo (2016, 2018a), Landman (1995) and Spivak (1992) are among scholars who critique women's complicity in patriarchy.

In light of these observations, arguably, Townes (2003:164) is in order by asserting that the term *womanist* is confessional as it cannot be imposed but can only be claimed. She further asserts that by claiming it one undertakes a constant self-reflection on how she reflects theologically. This is a point also made by Cannon in her attempt to respond to the question "Must I be womanist?" (2006:96). Cannon asserts that to be a womanist is to consciously identify yourself as one and thus embracing from your own free will a particular epistemological mandate.

3.4. Epistemological Implications for Womanism

The foregoing discussion of the geopolitics of knowledge, location, context and naming regarding the womanist discourse explain the reasons for the choices we make in this thesis. It is evident that naming has and, to some extent, continues to spark much debate in feminist and womanist theories as evident in BTL. Feminism, black feminism and/or womanism, African womanism and white feminism are specific terms, and their specificity constitutes them as affirming names. The modifications and shifts in these names reveal the evolving character of these theories. Important to note also is that these theories are not entirely independent of each other; for instance, their area of commonality is their sex as they are all groups of females. However, their class and race differentiates them as women who have different experiences, oppressions and struggles, a point we will return to when we look at the relationship between white feminism and womanism closely.

If naming is power (Ogunyemi, 1985; Cannon, 2006; Mosala, 1987; Anderson-Rajkumar, 2010; Schüssler Fiorenza, 2011), to declare 'I am a womanist' is, in the researcher's opinion, a conscious reclaiming of the voice and power which has always been held by someone else defining and even knowing what black women need for their well-being. Put differently by Thiam, "black women have been silent for too long... women must assume their own voices – speak out for themselves" (1978:11). Naming is a conscious undertaking; arguably, by naming themselves women, they assume their role as interlocutors and compatible dialogue partners with black men in pursuit of black personhood devoid of Eurocentric categories of knowledge, among other things. They are heeding the call to be at the forefront of their struggle as authors of their liberation, one may argue (Manasa, 1973; Landman, 1995; Mosala, 1986; Maluleke & Nadar, 2004). Schüssler Fiorenza observes, "After centuries of silencing and exclusion from the logical studies and religious leadership, wo/men have moved into the academy, assumed religious leadership, and claimed their religious agency and heritage" (2011:4).

While this portrays a *kairos* moment in liberation of women, the question of classism still lurks for as long as the voices that speak are limited to those in academia; this will be explored as we look at shortcomings and critiques later in the chapter. Having named and thus attained the power of voice, this discussion leads us to look at the autonomous discourse of womanism as a philosophy, its primary source and interlocution and its implications for liberation and the relation between womanism (black feminism as used by Walker) and white feminism.

3.5. Womanism as a Black Philosophy

In the previous chapter, we attempted to examine BC as a philosophy of BTL. We now need to examine what womanism, as a philosophy, entails for this thesis, especially with some key arguments related to faith by Katie Cannon and Mercy Oduyoye. The following insights on black womanism inspire our discussion on this philosophy.

Black womanism is a philosophy that celebrates black roots, the ideals of black life, while giving a balanced presentation of womandom. It concerns itself with the black sexual power tussle as with the world power structure that subjugates blacks. Its ideal is for black unity where every black person has a modicum of power and so can be a “brother” or a “sister” or a “father” or a “mother” to the other. This philosophy has a mandalic core; its aim is the dynamism of wholeness and self-healing that one sees in the positive, integrative endings of womanist novels (Ogunyemi, 1985:72).

Womanism, according to Ogunyemi, looks at black life comprehensively. Like BTL, he asserts that the first source of black theology is the black community itself (Mosala, 1987:36). Womanism’s primary source is black community. A womanist, according to Cannon, is one who values the soul and the well-being of Black community (Yamaguchi, 1998:256). Cannon states that womanists look at this community with the aim of exposing “... collective values that underlie Black history and culture” (Cannon, 1984:180). For her, black women’s “... ideas, themes and situation provide truthful interpretations of every possible shade and nuance of Black life” (1984:187). While a black community is core to the very existence of womanism, Cannon warns against romanticizing it, i.e. the black community. She critiques the sexism evident in the black church through its misogynist preaching and failure to recognize different virtues in the context of survival (Yamaguchi, 1998:256).

Aniagolu (1998:96) alludes to Sojourner Truth’s impromptu speech as a catalyst that brought with it a realization by many black women that their oppression was not the same as those of their white sisters. She argues that white feminism’s failure to recognize and incorporate this fact alienated many women of colour, giving rise to strong activism by black women in Africa and African Diasporas. They were not willing to be assimilated into a western white feminism, hence the birth of womanism. This point is well articulated by Davies and Graves (1986) as follows:

African feminism... acknowledges its affinities with international feminism, but delineates a specific African feminism with certain specific needs and goals arising out

of the concrete realities of women's lives in African societies... (It) examines African societies for institutions which are of value to women and rejects those which work to their detriment and does not simply import Western agendas. Thus, it respects African woman's status as mother but questions obligatory motherhood and the traditional favouring of sons... it respects African woman's self-reliance and the penchant to cooperative work and social organization... (it) understands the interconnectedness of race, class and sex oppression (1986:8).

An important point highlighted by Davies and Graves in their well-articulated concept of womanism is the interlocutor of womanism, i.e. a *black* African woman (added emphasis) and her unique situation, a "double jeopardy" of being black and female and "triple oppression" of race, class and gender. Experience, and in this case that of black African women is fundamental in liberation. As stated earlier by Gutiérrez, experience is core in the theology of liberation in its quest to fight injustice and thus reconstruct a new society. Gutiérrez suggests that any form of liberation must be premised on the experience of the poor and marginalised with the commitment to transform oppressive systems, and we have seen this in BTL.

The philosophy of womanism seeks to reflect on the experience of black women, with womanist theology further responding to the question and meaning of the faith and spirituality of black women in order to eradicate any form of oppression. Mosala (1986:131) also points out the importance of women's experience in feminist theology as that of exposing androcentricism in classical theology, which has been mistaken for universalism. The philosophy of womanism is also deeply about the geopolitics of knowledge; it relates the plight of black women as its interlocutor with power struggles in knowledge between races, locations, commitments and gender struggles. This becomes clearer when we turn to Katie Cannon.

The year 1985 is the period of the formal beginnings of womanist theology as an academic discipline, with Katie Geneva Cannon as the leading exponent, whose article "The Emergence of Black Feminist Consciousness" sets the stage. She says,

“We officially began constructing this womanist house of wisdom in 1985, and as intellectual labourers, we continue working day in and day out so that our scholarly infrastructure is built on solid rock instead of shifting sand” (Cannon, 2006:97).

Cannon (1984:171), a Black womanist ethicist, traces her religious quest and later activism back to her childhood, which exposed her to principles of God’s universal parenthood. This teaching by her faith community created in her an imagination of a social, intellectual and cultural ethos embracing the equal humanity of all people. She bemoans her struggle to reconcile how this principle could not transcend being merely theoretical as she observed divisions between black and white. In her religious quest, she thus sought to reconcile the two irreconcilable binaries of black and white, master and servant, white supremacy and black inferiority and later masculine and feminine (1984). She also struggled to comprehend how white scholars seemed to be representatives of blacks even to a point of interpreting for them their “Black history, Black thought and Black world view” (Cannon, Townes & Sims, 2011:3).

As a scholar, she thus “challenges the hegemonic universalization of Western discourse” (Yamaguchi, 1998:255) as a canon and points out ethical implications of seeing everything through the eyes of the West, especially for black women, her interlocutors. For her, White hegemony and Black inferiority are lies that must be dispelled (Kirk-Duggan, 1998:169). She finds her canon in the literary tradition of African-American women that was cultivated in the context of slavery (Yamaguchi, 1998:255). This point she shares with Emilie Townes, whose childhood and upbringing shaped her as womanist scholar. Townes was nurtured in a deeply black religious context where “language” was valued and where she had to learn at a tender age to survive racism. Like Cannon, her faith community played a crucial role in instilling the message of equality as taught by Jesus (Townes, 2010:30). For Townes, womanist theology is thus “a form of reflection that places the religious and moral perspectives of Black women at the centre of its method” (2003:159). Thus womanist theology is a comprehensive fusion of a philosophy with faith.

For Cannon, the Black woman's literary tradition is rich and comprises of the black community's central values (1984:179). This is where she locates the soul of the black community. She writes, "As we critique the social world of chattel slavery, we catch stunning glimpses into the souls of our foremothers and forefathers who made the treacherous trans-Atlantic journey. We hear the heart-wrenching stories of those who were left behind, and try to disentangle how they kept their humanity from hardening" (Cannon, 2014:175). Townes (2003:160) elucidates Cannon's point; in her analysis of Walker's definition she discerns black history and black women's experiences. She then extols names of powerful women she regards as "exemplars and guides" (:162) for womanist theology: Jarena Lee, Sojourner Truth and so forth. Among the resources she alludes to are Black women's clubs formed in the 1800s by and for women who were active church workers or regular attendees, whose existence was to address racial, economic and sexual exploitations of their day.

One of Cannon's struggles continued as the black woman ethicist in the fraudulent space; this forced her to transcend her blackness and femaleness and draft an abstract blueprint of liberation ethics that did not even include black women's experiences (1987:165). She asserts that failure to conform to this state of doing theology disqualified a black woman to the status of second-rate scholar and exposed her to being misunderstood, misinterpreted and devalued. The task of a womanist scholar is, for Cannon, to focus, describe, document and analyse underlying factors on subjugation of black women, namely, ideologies, theologies and systems of values. A very pertinent question for her is "What theological systems relegate Black women to the margins of decision-making mainstream of American (*African*)³⁰ religious, political and economic life? (1987:170). By undertaking this task, external as well as internal forces are exposed.

Townes (2003) states that the key feature of womanism lies in its evolving character, a notional character by Ntintili, which allows its theological analysis to be interdisciplinary. She further observes the development of womanism in several ways,

³⁰ Added emphasis

namely, an orientation to Black women's survival in an oppressive social order that is classist and racist, and racist frameworks for interpreting and critiquing the role of the Black church; a concern for healthcare; a consideration of Black sexuality; and the issue of work (:159).

From our African perspective, as a starting point to understanding how womanist thought has evolved and developed in academia and in theology in Africa, and South Africa, therefore, we have to briefly map out the African context so as to understand the contextual factors that have shaped its theology. In an African context, it is important to understand theology as an encounter with the West and as a response to mission theology, which was designed to "cope with the European endeavour to Christianize Africa in the context of slavery and colonialization", (Oduyoye³¹, 2001a:22). From this history, we are able to deduce the significant role played by women in responding to this theology, posits Oduyoye, and she further argues that the contribution of African women as a written theological contribution came only from the 1970s. She also validates the point made earlier about the evolving character of women's theology, which challenges theology and faith statements on Christianity to reflect on what the African context and women's experiences bring as a contribution to it. Oduyoye posits, "The primary context of women's theology is that of an effort to make a contribution so that Christian theology in Africa will be a word of both women and men, lay and ordained, teachers and preachers, poets and sculptors" (2001a:23).

The point that Oduyoye is raising above is that it is very important for us to understand that theology in Africa was primarily created to respond to mission theology, the missionary forms of theology, so the preoccupation was to bring out an African theology and to include a womanist voice which reflects how Africans understand God, among other things. Unlike feminism, with white women whose preoccupation was to be equal to their white men, a womanist thought in African meant dealing with gender

³¹ Oduyoye played an integral part in the development of African Women's Theology. 'Oduyoye has worked tirelessly to ensure that women's voices and concerns have been heard...' (Pui-lan, 2004:7).

in relation to other issues that are relevant to African women, namely, world power structure, race, class, ethnicity, culture and more (Ogunyemi, 1985).

Therefore, Africans approach life in a communal and comprehensive way, and womanist thought would therefore be oriented in this framework. Oduyoye speaks of a “whole life for a context” (2001a:23) and further argues that the “sense of community characterizes traditional life in Africa” (:34). To reiterate an earlier point, Bujo (1998) articulates the communal dimension of African life by using the image of an extended family, i.e. the living and the dead. He asserts that those that are living on earth and the ancestors are intertwined, as each existence is dependent on the other. He points to an interaction between these two communities whose goal is to increase the vitality within the clan. In such a community, each has to take responsibility and is expected to behave in a way that enhances life for the whole (:15-16). Furthermore, Oduyoye points to other pertinent factors that constitute an African context, such as the powerful realities of the devil and spirit world in Africa (Oduyoye & Fabella, 1989:38), suffering, hunger, poverty, HIV/AIDS – all these are among the things that can never be ignored. “When African women do theology, they cannot help but reflect critically on all the experiences...” (Edet & Ekeya, 1989:9).

When one has understood the African context above, then everything stems from it. Salvation for instance is best understood in this context. Edet and Ekeya assert that in an African context each member of the community is saved by being part of a community (1989:7). This worldview and social organization speaks to any theology that encounters it, not the other way around, posits Oduyoye (1986:10). She elucidates her point by vehemently critiquing the missionary enterprise to Christianise Africa and the ignorance of the missionaries in not allowing this worldview and social organization to speak to them. She states that missionaries translated their individuality by discarding African community and only focusing on the salvation of the individual (1986:40). Njoh validates the point on cultural imperialism by pointing to Christian missionaries’ denigration of African belief systems and traditional practices. There is also a sense in which they translated their patriarchal values by discarding African customs relating to the institution of marriage, the place and role of women in society,

production and reproduction on the basis of them being antithetical to Christian religious doctrine (2006:4).

3.6. Black Women as Epistemological Agents of Womanism

Women, especially black women, have for centuries been silenced, and their bodies disfigured in many ways. They have experienced subtle forms of violence that ate into their psyche eroding their self-esteem (EATWOT Statement, 1992:50-51). Women have been brought up to be submissive to men as heads of families and this is supported by biblical injunctions, e.g. Ephesians 5:23. They have had their roles defined for them by either white men, white women or black men. Chopp (1996) elucidates this point in her argument about the danger of seeing women as epistemological agents, from a male stream epistemology. She states that to eliminate this danger and to maintain the status quo, women and epistemology are separated, and when this happens, women are sent back to their place, the kitchen and household, to focus on childbirth and child-rearing (Kobo, 2016). Knowledge is left in the monopoly of men who also think on women's behalf. These claims have unfortunately been justified theologically. On this Chopp writes, "Western epistemology and theology together developed the views that women were naturally more emotional and irrational, prone to hysteria and often quite childlike" (1996:116). The theological justification of women's inferiority and oppression has been validated earlier by Oduyoye (1995a:480-481), Maluleke and Nadar (2002:7-11), among other scholars.

The location of women, and especially black women, outside academia, the rationale behind which has been explained by Chopp above, is profound for our discussion. This point is captured well by Schüssler Fiorenza's (1975:613) argument on white male dominance in academia. She observes how white middle-class male clerics and academics dominate theology and, therefore, have transferred their worldview and epistemology to the whole world as universal (Grosfoguel, 2013). She observes the ethical implications of this epistemicide and imperialism on other worldviews,

experiences and epistemologies, especially of women. She argues that the maleness and sexism of theology is much more pervasive than the race and class issue. She makes a powerful observation on sexism and male dominance and patriarchy; she however, downplays race and class in dealing with liberation of women. This has exactly been the shortcoming of white feminism, a point of critique and divergence with womanism, whose central thesis lies in exposing the nexus of racism, classism and sexism. "Recognition of the impact of racism, neo-colonialism, economic instability, and psychological disorientation on black lives, when superimposed on the awareness of sexism that characterizes Black women's writing, makes concern about sexism merely one aspect of womanism" (Ogunyemi, 1985:71-2). This is the reason I am a womanist, not a feminist.

Beale's (1979:375) critique of the white women's liberation movement validates this point. She posits that while black and white women both live under the same exploitative system, their experiences are not the same. She observes the point of difference as being their experiences or lack of experiences of race and imperialism for whites, who cannot then be representative of black women's experiences. Masenya explains the difference in black and white women's experiences by arguing that "The Black woman in South Africa, unlike her White counterpart is always 'bound'" (Masenya, 1994:35). Ogunyemi posits that white feminists have power and privilege that black women do not have; perhaps that is the first thing they should acknowledge. As observed by Harris (2010:81) earlier, they are active, complicit beneficiaries of the system that dominated and oppressed black people. Unlike black women, who have to deal with the fact that they are not white first and all the baggage that comes with it, white women have all the time and liberty to critique and attack patriarchy. Ogunyemi argues that for black women, patriarchy is intertwined with a whole lot of other things. She highlights that ultimately "each sees of patriarchy and what each thinks of can be changed" (1985:69-71).

A crucial point of difference raised by Landman with regard to the two groups of women, she observes "white church feminists" as women who were fighting to simply

gain access to existing structures, while for her, “black women” were fighting to change ecclesiastical structures” (Landman, 1995:144-5). Ramodibe affirms Landman’s observation by asserting “it is impossible to correct, develop, or improve the church, within the same old system, to accommodate women. Women want to change the church and not simply ‘improve’ it” (Oduyoye & Fabella, 1989:15). Therefore, the point is that women’s struggles are not the same, and hence liberation movements cannot be the same, as each focuses on what it sees as priority.

Another point of critique that has shaped womanist thought globally and in Africa is the feminist standpoint that assumes that all women are the same, white middle-class first-world women, and that is the standard set for all women in the world (Chopp, 1996:120). This is affirmed by Arndt, who points to white feminism’s inability to see beyond Western societies and implications for non-Westerners, and in this case African women, who suffer from marginalization (2000:710). Womanists argue that generalisation of women’s problems and solutions by feminists through Western lenses does not reflect the position of third-world feminists or Global South womanists (Aniagolu, 1998:97). This is a point well put by Sarla Palkar, who observes tendencies of white feminists, namely, to universalize patriarchy and homogenize women from the Global South and ignore their contextual differences (1996:20-21).

As stated earlier, Hudson-Weems alludes to the racist origins of the term feminism, which renders it an inappropriate term for black women in their unique situation. This point is also emphasised by Masenya (ngwana’ Mphahlele) (2004b:72) when she asserts that the difference between feminists and womanists is the exclusionary preoccupation by feminists to advocate for women only. Womanists, on the other hand, are preoccupied with advocating for the liberation of women and men taking into account their race, class and gender. Black women have not only been subjugated and oppressed by both white and black men, but also by white women as their employers as “kitchen slaves (Ntwasa & Moore, 1973:25). Masenya (1994) articulates this difference by arguing, “Black feminists, unlike their White counterparts fully grasp the interrelatedness of sex, race and class oppression” (1994:35).

This section attempted to give an overview of the context that has shaped womanist thought in Africa, and therefore South Africa. Women who felt the conviction to embrace and thus employ womanist thought are spread over various disciplines and operate under different names that are specifically a reflection of those scholars' contexts and presuppositions. The most structured body that embraced this thought and succeeded in bringing different voices together, which prioritised liberation of women from oppression, is the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians, which started in 1989 in Ghana but now has different chapters in South African universities across the country. The Circle is a critical and contested space in the academy which grapples with questions of race, gender, and looks at the venom of patriarchy through the lenses of liberation, taking into consideration the experiences of its interlocutors, oppressed women. Some of the scholars affiliated with the Circle, to name a few, are Mercy Oduyoye, Musimbi Kanyoro, Isabel Phiri, Sarojini Nadar, Miranda Pillay, Madipoane Masenya (ngwana' Mphahlele), Christina Landman, Yolanda Dreyer, Musa Dube, Louise Kretzschmar, and Nontando Hadebe. In the section that follows, we will focus on works of two prominent African women scholars who are also members of the Circle.

3.6.1. Mercy Oduyoye and Masenya (ngwana' Mphahlele) Madipoane

Mercy Amba Oduyoye, an Akan from Ghana, has played a pivotal role in the development of an African Women's Theology. "Oduyoye has worked tirelessly to ensure that women's voices and concerns have been heard..." (Pui-lan, 2004:7). Oduyoye's central thesis is best captured as follows:

Liberation of the mentality that keeps women coping with marginalization and repression rather than resisting has become an area of much reflection. Several have turned to the study of African Traditional Religion and Culture as a source of both empowerment and dehumanization of women. Studying this undergirding factor of life in Africa, is required, if the liberating aspects are to be fully appropriated and the oppressive ones exposed and disposed of (1993:209).

Oduyoye argues, “African Women’s Theology is developing in the context of global challenges and situations in Africa’s religion-culture that call for transformation” (2001a:38). She contends that not everything in African culture is liberating; therefore, African Women Theologians do not romanticise African culture but expose elements of patriarchy and further critique both internal and external forces. They allude to a capitalistic system, colonialism, racism, modernism colonialism and Christianisation of Africa. In attempting to critique African culture’s complicity, Oduyoye (1995a:4) points us to one aspect of women’s experience in Africa, where the idea of a free woman evokes negative images. She exposes the flaws attached to the upbringing of Africans who were made to believe that they are complete as women only under the guardianship of men, be it a father, uncle or husband. She writes:

A free woman spells disaster. An adult woman, if unmarried, is immediately reckoned to be available for the pleasures of all males and is treated as such. The single woman who manages her affairs successfully without a man is an affront to patriarchy and a direct challenge to the so-called masculinity of men who want to ‘possess’ her. Some women are struggling to be free from this compulsory attachment to the male. Women want the right to be fully human, whether or not they choose to be attached to men (1995a:4-5).

Oduyoye (1995a:9) says, “I seek the quality of life that frees African women to respond to the fullness for which God created them.” Arguably, she is attempting to evoke positive images of women and further address one of her major concerns, that of an ordering of society that assumes that the concept of maleness encompasses the whole of human being (1986:122). While embracing married women’s roles as mothers and wives, she seems to suggest that whether married or not, they are free to be humans whose call is to live in fullness.

As stated earlier, Madipoane Masenya (ngwana’ Mphahlele) introduced the term *womanist theology* to South Africa (Landman, 1995:145). As a Biblical scholar, Masenya (ngwana’ Mphahlele) is well known for *her Bosadi* (Womanhood) approach

to scripture and African culture. She argues that the *Bosadi* approach, like any women's liberation approach, foregrounds the liberatory elements of the Bible and challenges as well as resisting oppressive ones. She defines her approach as a woman's liberation perspective, which takes seriously the unique experiences of African women in South Africa (Masenya (ngwana' Mphahlele), 1998:277), a point emphasised by Oduyoye and also by others.

One of key features of the *Bosadi* approach is how it exposes the androcentric nature of biblical texts, which then implies its correlation with a hermeneutic of suspicion. It connects women's experiences with the Bible by bringing light to the significance of faith in the life of an African woman. While she critiques the Bible, Masenya (ngwana' Mphahlele) maintains that it is a spiritual resource and views it as a Word of God that transforms life and life situations through faith (1998:278). She observes how most African women identify and are attached to the Christian Bible, which they trust as a source of their hope and liberation (1995:150). *Bosadi* validates this trust as it assists in their quest for liberation as a liberative framework. "A key to womanist hermeneutics is that in order for the message of biblical texts to be liberative for me as an African woman, I must read these texts through my African eyes and not through Eurocentric eyes..." she argues (1995:154-5).

Masenya's (ngwana' Mphahlele) interlocutors are indigenous African women (1995:149), African-South African women (2001:27) who are Zulus, Xhosa, Sothos and so forth. She is specific and describes the difference between black women and African women on the basis that black has been used to include Coloured and Indian women in South Africa. Masenya also interrogates the interplay of sexism, classism and racism in the context of South African women. She critiques sexism in a larger society and sexism from African culture (1998:278). She also links racism to apartheid and exposes aspects of colonialism, segregated and unequal education, a racist political economy and patriarchal traditions (1995:150). She argues that Black women in South Africa suffer exploitation, invisibility and silence. She observes the scarcity of black female theological voices during apartheid and even today in South Africa, as probably linked to, among others, how worthy womanhood is defined (Masenya

(ngwana' Mphahlele), 2010b:1). Drawing from her own experience as a black woman in academia, she contends, "In academe, one's restricted state is felt" (2007:5).

In their critique of Black church, both Oduyoye and Masenya (ngwana' Mphahlele) raise some concerns. Oduyoye (1995b:480-481) points us to how the church deals with constructs of class, race and gender by aligning itself with oppressors and systems that perpetuate oppression and marginalisation of women especially. She notes the use of the Bible in further justifying and reinforcing these intersections of oppressions. For Masenya (ngwana' Mphahlele), in the black church, African women are invisible in leadership, policy making and decision-making structures (2007:4). She posits that women are in constant exile; whether in the private sphere of the home, in the public sphere of work, church and the broader society, she remains an exile, a point made by BTL, as posited by Motlhabi (1973:120-121).

Masenya (ngwana' Mphahlele) (1995) further alludes to Sampson's exposition of the demands of a highly industrialised society and its effects on poor women, how it exploits and marginalises women more than men and how it pushes them to rely on religious symbols and texts, among other things, for their survival (Sampson, 1991:56). This would also explain the centrality of the Bible amongst the oppressed. If religious symbols and texts have a very important social function among the oppressed, as suggested by Masenya (ngwana' Mphahlele) alluding to Sampson, perhaps liberation ought to begin there in order to avoid the very paradox Cannon and Townes earlier pointed us to. If we are to succeed in liberating black African women, if we are to heed Oduyoye's call to free African women to respond to the fullness for which God created them, our tools ought to be liberated and liberating. If black African women are our interlocutors, theology, ecclesiology, and scripture ought to be liberated from its Western hegemony and begin to respond to questions posed by black women. Cannon argues that it is not enough to speak of liberation of women from male perspectives; women must take their moral agency in their own hands, deciding themselves which information or experiences best describes them (Cannon, 1984:168). Womanism is thus epistemological agency of black women.

Another crucial question womanists aid us in responding to, as raised by Masenya (ngwana' Mphahlele) employing Sampson, is that of survival, which has been alluded to by several womanists as one of the key values, among others, for black women. Townes, for instance, learned at an early age how to survive in the context of racism (2010:30). Cannon cites survival as one of key ethical values for black women, others being, to name a few: dignity; home life, its creation and preservation; and attainment of a two-tiered consciousness to reconcile the contradictions experienced by one who lives in a white-dominated society yet sees through its shallowness and hypocrisy (Carey, 1997:271). "Black women have justly regarded survival against tyrannical systems of triple oppression as a true sphere of moral life" (Cannon, 1984:175). Masenya (ngwana' Mphahlele) goes further to identify things that a black woman has had to survive from, namely, dismantling of family structures and insufficient education whereby a girl-child is denied full education (1995:151).

So what womanism seeks to do as it asks questions, as it names and exposes oppressions of women, as it analyses and debunks ideologies and systems that subjugate women, is to free the woman from all of these and herself. It seeks to help women reclaim the power of their voice so that they take their place alongside black men as compatible dialogue partners in pursuit of black liberated and transformed personhood and humanity. In the following sections, we will look at how womanists engage with culture and racism, as they have been shaped by both.

3.7. Culture: a unique contribution to the womanist discourse

African culture has been perceived by some Europeans to be patriarchal and oppressive to African women (Kobo, 2016:1). This perception is still held among women on the Global North. In a recent conference in Louisville, Kentucky, in the USA, two white American Presbyterian women gave a presentation on "Preventing and responding to violence against women and children in Africa". When the researcher engaged them, they conceded that they had been to only a few countries on the African continent to do a study on grassroots women with the intention of helping them.

They did not engage African scholars and in their presentation, they misrepresented Africans and denigrated our culture. The question of grassroots will be dealt with in the following chapters, but the point made is how white hegemony is an external force against African culture and black personhood and humanity. The task to embrace and liberate from it, from these forces, cannot be overemphasised. In the previous chapter, we have also demonstrated how black consciousness calls black humanity to redeem their culture from western imperialism and the colonial matrix of power. Culture, while it is an integral part of an African way of life, has unfortunately been one of the aspects of Africans that has been reduced to nothing by Western forms of knowledge.

Following that, it must be stated that for African women, culture is an integral part of their lives and hence even in theologising, they embrace what is positive, and expose and debunk oppressive forms. Culture is a primary defining feature of African women's theology (Nadar & Phiri, 2010:93). African and South African women scholars reflect on culture in their work. Some scholars (Oduyoye, 1986, 2001; Kanyoro, 2001, Lebaka-Ketshabile, 1995; Masenya (ngwana' Mphahlele) 1998; Edet & Ekeya, 1989) can be counted among the African women whose reflections on culture made a unique contribution to scholarship. Lebaka-Ketshabile observes that theology is enriched by the gender, nationality, culture and socio-economic conditions of African women. They bring their whole, and theology for them should in return respond to their whole (1995:48). African women assert that life for an African and woman is comprehensive, and culture therefore intersects with religion (Kanyoro, 2001). By reflecting on culture, African women validate the comprehensive liberation and epistemology espoused in womanism and how African culture enhances this. It is thus part of the agenda of women in Africa as we look at what it is to be African in doing theology. Womanists, thus, reflect on culture as conscious women asking critical questions. The reflection on culture is an affirmation of womanism as epistemological agency of black women. Womanism knits black humanity together to achieve black, not just female, transcendence (Ogunyemi, 1985:69) and is aimed at dynamism of wholeness and self-healing (:72).

3.8. Womanism and Racism

Both Cannon and Townes highlight that the key for womanist theology is their use of an inter-structured analysis employing class, gender and race. Cannon's work has been enriched by prominent scholars like Hurston (1901-1960), a novelist, journalist, essayist, collector of Black folklore and participant in the Harlem Renaissance, whose works are filled with characters, images and language of Black religion (Lovin, 1989:486). Hurston's work has influenced Cannon's liberationist Womanist ethic, and Cox (1901-1974), a black sociologist whose analysis of racism and capitalism inspired her to analyse racism and sexism in the quest for liberation of women. The central thesis of Cox's theory lies in the argument that the "Capitalist mode of political economy is the essential structural problem of contemporary society" (Cannon, Townes & Sims, 2011:6). Cannon's analysis of Cox aids her in uncovering the functionality of white supremacist racism as the seed and catalyst of a capitalist political economy.

Cox demonstrates how one ought to understand racism, as a reality that has manifested itself throughout history in a capitalist mode of political economy that controls the world. She suggests that white supremacy can be eradicated by transcending capitalism (Cannon et al., 2011:6). "The elimination of a capitalist mode of production is essential to make racism dysfunctional" (Cannon, in Yamaguchi 1998:256). Cox inspires Cannon to open our eyes to the "complexity and philosophy of political capitalism and its thematic kin: imperialism, religious intolerance, and exploitation" (Cannon in Kirk-Duggan, 1998:171).

Cox's analysis of racism and capitalism inspired Cannon to analyse racism and sexism. She thus uses womanism as a theoretical framework to expose the nexus of racism, classism and sexism in the lived experiences of black women (Kirk-Duggan, 1998:169). This analysis is extremely profound and helpful in this work. In looking at the oppression of black women in South Africa, this thesis looks at capitalism as the

root cause as it created a fragmented world that has made it impossible for Black people, especially women, who have been oppressed three times over, to thrive.

Cannon (1987) further observes the omission of black women's experiences in most scholarship and instances where they feature, as distorted or told by whites or men (:167). She posits that this omission is foundationally perpetuating ideological support of conditions and public policies that are oppressive to black women, further reinforcing racist and sexist stereotypes that justify misapprehensions that lock these women into marginal status (1987:167). She argues: "Lives of Black women cannot be fully comprehended using analytical categories derived from white/male experience" (1987:168). This is mainly the argument of womanists, that men are not representatives of women; women can speak on their own! As an epistemological agency of black women, womanism argues, "black women's moral agency must be understood on their own terms" (Cannon, 1987:168).

Cannon and Townes, emerging from the African-American context, alert us to a consciousness of the paradox between scripture, theology and lived realities that is more evident in the binaries of black and white, rich and poor, men and women. This paradox exists in an African context too. Womanism for them, one would argue, is a means by which these are reconciled. In delineating the position of white feminism and womanism, we argue that women are not homogenous, as suggested by white feminism; they are separated by race and class, and that makes sexism and patriarchy only one aspect of womanism. By reflecting on culture, womanists affirm womanism as the epistemological agency of black women. For the liberation of black women to be comprehensive, race and culture is pivotal. Like any theory, it has its shortcomings and has been critiqued, and we shall now turn to that.

3.9. Critiques and shortcomings of womanism

Some of the critiques of womanism are those of class biases, exclusive and elitist ideologies (Maluleke, 2001). Their interaction, or lack thereof, with illiterate and poor

women is fraught with challenges, and arguably weakens the liberation movement. The critique of being “elitist” stands out in both African and African-American contexts and it questions the credibility of womanism in the inclusion of illiterate and poor women. Townes points to Black women’s clubs formed in the 1800s (2003:160) as resources for womanist thought. While appraised for having provided solid foundations for womanist work, their shortcomings do not go unnoticed. They displayed a measure of some elitism concerning class, colour and geographic origin. According to Nokuzola Mndende (1998), womanists are “exclusionary and unrepresentative of real African women” (in Aniagolu, 1998:99), i.e. women that are poor, rural and illiterate according to Western standards, *women that are often either spoken on behalf of or completely excluded* (added emphasis). This, in the researcher’s opinion, is a good question for the 21st century.

Alluding to Foucault, Butler observes that structures produce subjects and regulate them. These subjects are formed, defined and reproduced in accordance with the requirements of those structures (1999:2-3). James uses the notion of ‘limbo’ to affirm this point; she asserts: ‘Women from oppressed peoples routinely find themselves in liberation limbos’ (1997:216). Both she and Butler are trying to demonstrate how women’s issues are often relegated to the peripheries and ghettoised both by insiders and those outside the oppressed peoples. The implications of this for womanist and feminist movements, in general, is that they are products of patriarchal, racist, capitalistic societies and thus are dangerously and deeply embedded in them in ways that make them reproduce the very biases that formed them. This is evident in how racism and class eludes white feminists who claim to be representatives of women. Also evident is how class eludes womanists; this makes liberation and especially of women a very difficult phenomenon, one that requires a conscious undertaking of the intersections and many layers that are often hidden.

Mndende further pointed to the shortcomings of womanism by asserting that the first ignorance is black women downplaying their roots. Her call to black women (traditional society), she argues, is to aid them in actually discovering the “very honoured position women had in traditional society” and the realisation that “the denial of rights to women

was unAfrican” (in Aniagolu, 1998:99). Mndende’s call to ‘black women’s traditional society is in order and very much resonates with the womanist idea. However, to romanticize their roots as well as this society is certainly something to watch out for. Maqagi (1998) critiques womanism for its failure to problematize ‘black impotence’, ‘white patriarchal culture’, and the ‘black man’ (and other important terms) and finds it guilty of generalisations. She further argues that these terms mean different things in different societies at different times and are used in different ways.

Monica Coleman further critiques womanism by positing that “Womanist religious scholars have done very little to address the theological, spiritual, and religious experience of black lesbians and gays” (in Cannon, 2006:98). She calls for breaking the silence regarding the extremely touchy subject of heteronormativity. What Coleman is pointing us to is the question of how far womanist theology as a comprehensive epistemological agency of black women goes in responding to the question of liberation of oppressed lesbians and gays who fall outside the radar of what is considered normal in society. How far does it respond to the trouble of gender?

3.10. Conclusion

In our examination of the sets of theories which are political, social, Eurocentric and anthropological as proposed by women, we assert that through its analysis of class, race and gender, among other issues, womanism is a comprehensive epistemological agency for black personhood. We deduce that womanism is a philosophy that celebrates black roots, African culture, and the ideals of black life, and its primary source is the black community, which makes it comprehensive.

While the philosophy of womanism seeks to reflect on the experiences and epistemologies of black women, womanist theology further responds to the question and meaning of the faith and spirituality of black women. Therefore, the combination of philosophy and faith examined is what we refer to as womanism as we proceed, an epistemological agency of black women and personhood. This combination makes womanists compatible dialogue partners with BTL, as will be explored in the chapters

that follow. Coleman's critique of womanism as downplaying the interlocution of lesbians and gays, however, puts the spotlight on the comprehensiveness of womanism as an epistemological agency of black women. The question of the interlocutor of womanism, who is a woman, further raises the question of who a woman is and what it is that gender theories bring to womanism. We now turn to this theme.

CHAPTER 4

Judith Butler's Gender Trouble and Womanism

4.1. Introduction

This chapter follows on our discussion of womanism as a comprehensive epistemological agency of black women. Its comprehensiveness is, however, in question in light of the critique by Coleman on the downplaying of the interlocution of lesbians and gays. It propels us to look at gender as a construct and ask the question, who then is a woman? The purpose of the chapter is to see if womanism, in dialogue with theories of gender, could help transform the fundamentals of Black theology itself, and womanist perspectives. What is it that gender theories bring to womanism? If the interlocutor of womanism is a woman, and gender is constructed, what is a woman? What are the implications of that on womanism as an epistemological agency of black women? It further distinguishes between feminist Eurocentric perspectives that address the challenge of patriarchy, and scholarship that addresses the trouble of gender and patriarchy.

This chapter evokes Judith Butler's phenomenal work entitled *Gender Trouble*³², whose aim was to disturb ways in which feminist and social theory think of gender (Butler, 2001:4). *Gender Trouble* sets the scene for a discussion on sexuality and gender. Spivak and Butler help us to look at the trouble of gender, which is a construct that is predominantly heterosexual and dichotomises life into binaries of female, and male, women and men. By looking at the Western binaries, we argue that they are foreclosed and arguably, exclusionary, thus creating epistemological disturbance, and must be debunked. We examine norms that safeguard these binaries and decide who and what we are as determined by those in power. We analyse use and misuse of

³² Judith Butler is well known for *Gender Trouble* which assumes that gender is complexly produced through identificatory and performative practices, and that gender is not as clear or as univocal as we are sometimes led to believe (Butler, 2001:9).

power in relation to gender to establish the extent to which it either gives or threatens life or both. Rupture between power, life and knowledge poses ethical risks and therefore has implications on anthropology of black humanity, lived bodies and epistemological agency. Following this discussion and a critique of western binaries and Eurocentric frameworks, the claim of white feminism to represent black women is dispelled. Black women's experiences, on the contrary, are seen as disturbers of Eurocentric epistemology.

4.2. Gayatri Spivak and Judith Butler

While this chapter engages several scholarly voices, our central thesis draws mainly from the work of two scholars, namely Gayatri Spivak and Judith Butler.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak is best known for her overtly political use of contemporary cultural and critical theories to challenge the legacy of colonialism on the way we read and think about literature and culture. What is more, Spivak's critical interventions encompass a range of theoretical interests, including Marxism, feminism, deconstruction, postcolonial theory and cutting-edge work on globalization. ... Spivak has challenged the disciplinary conventions of literary criticism and academic philosophy by focusing on the cultural texts of those people who are often marginalized by dominant western culture: the new immigrant, the working class, women and the postcolonial subject (Morton, 2003:1).

From the quotation above, we deduce that Spivak's critical interventions and theoretical interests include the works on Marxism, feminism and deconstruction, among others. She defies Western epistemology by focusing on the cultural texts of marginalised people who are victims of the very same epistemology and culture. Her contribution to the Subaltern Studies historians has been a critique on the inability of Western theoretical frameworks to represent the histories and lives and, therefore, experience of the disenfranchised in India (Morton, 2003:7). She extends the category of the subaltern to include women to highlight the privileged position of a male

subaltern and thus exposes intersections of class and gender in the oppression of the subalterns (:62).

Spivak is well known for her insistence that feminism is exclusively white and needs to seriously consider the material histories and lives of women in the Third World in its quest for liberation of women (Morton, 2003:71). One of her famous speeches, now published, entitled “Can the Subaltern Speak?”, looks at the experiences of ‘Third World’ women with the central concept of resistance. She argues that acts of resistance of subalterns are in vain simply because the subalterns themselves are not recognised and they are deprived access to the public sphere (Morton, 2003:62,73). This lack of access is for her a political or social position and she refers to it as subalternity, and argues that it affects both women and men. By elevating the subaltern, bringing out their experiences and plight, she gives language to what is foreign to Western thought and feminism. One needs to note that Subaltern scholarship has affinities with the concept *blackness*, the interlocution of BTL. It must be stated that Spivak’s theory validates womanism as an epistemological agency of black women that critiques pseudo-representation of Western epistemology, which she argues is disturbed by experiences of [black] subaltern women. Her defiance of Western epistemology and the insistence that subaltern women’s experiences be our starting point validates womanism that is communal and dialogical.

Judith Butler is well known for *Gender Trouble* which assumes that “gender is complexly produced through identificatory and performative practices, and that gender is not as clear or as univocal as we are sometimes led to believe” (Butler, 2001:9).

Gender Trouble:

Sought to uncover the ways in which the very thinking of what is possible in gendered life is foreclosed by certain habitual and violent assumptions. The text also sought to undermine any and all efforts to wield a discourse of truth to delegitimize minority gendered and sexual practices (Butler, 1999: viii).

Gender Trouble's attempt to undermine any epistemology that renders other epistemologies illegitimate provides for us foundations and possibilities to challenge and deconstruct the Western binaries' forms of knowledge in our quest to liberate black humanity. Butler's mode of enquiry "is committed to beginning from the margins and the marginalized to query the social norms and structures that condition, enable, and animate forms of marginalisation" (Thiem, 2008:8). Thiem looks at Butler's work as an exposition of socially produced and administered ontologies in relation to bodies, subjects and so forth... ontologies that are conditioned by histories of power embodied in social and cultural institutions (Thiem, 2008:9). Butler's insights on the trouble of gender are very helpful for this thesis. She posits that we ought to understand how the terms of gender are 'instituted, naturalized, and established as pre-suppositional'. She further argues that we should trace moments by which the binary system of gender is disputed and challenged, where the coherence of the categories is put into question, where the very social life of gender turns out to be malleable and transformable" (Butler, 2001:12). The central thesis of Butler's work is searching for possibilities of altering or disrupting norms that govern in a manner that threatens life.

The scope of Spivak and Butler's work, which grapples with the intersectionality of class, race and gender, is very helpful for womanism as an epistemological agency of black women. Like womanists, their work exposes this nexus and analyses Western hegemony, cultural imperialism, Western feminism and its exclusionary framework of the subaltern.

4.3. Gender as a construct

One of the crucial questions posed during pregnancy or at birth are the ones pertaining to the sex of the child. Being either female or male each comes with its expectations and disappointments. In patriarchal societies, the birth of a boy-child is celebrated. Boys are nurtured to be heirs from a very tender age. They are held with high regard for their role in carrying the bloodline. The argument on the bloodline has been used against homosexuality. Ringrose, Renold and Egan elucidate this point as follows:

Spha (b) Most parents don't understand it. Parents grew their kids up so that they can build their own families. It becomes difficult for them when they come across a situation where a boy is sexually attracted to another boy there is this perception in our communities that there is something wrong with person who is gay.

Wenzi (b) For me I just want the family to grow, and the family name to multiply.

Sandile (b) If a boy in a family is gay that family is as good as dead. It won't grow, their bloodline will just end there ... Gay boys will not have children which is totally against our culture (2015:200-201).

Primarily, this quotation exposes the patriarchal and heterosexual societies' obsession with having children. The ultimate goal of being is supposedly procreation, thus the roles of boys and girls are defined to feed on this goal. We see here already the translation of sex into the construct of gender. It is a design, and anything that does not contribute to this becomes a disturbance and must be dealt with, i.e. be silenced and in most instances, violently so. Silencing is linked to violence associated with indifference, whether based on race, gender, sexuality, ethnicity or other characteristics and has manifested in many forms.

If we look back, for instance, as stated in chapter 2, South Africa was divided between black and white. Every area was marked in ways that excluded those who did not fall into each category. Today we still witness xenophobic attacks in several parts of the country, with Africans from other parts of the continent particularly being on the receiving end of this ill-treatment. We look at corrective rape, where lesbians are violated sexually with the aim of 'correcting' their sexuality and in some instances, murdered. Chapter 2 made the point of how even churches have built high walls that protect them against those people they regard as different, "sinners". We look at how coming out for the LGBTQI+ has left them homeless, jobless and without a place in society (Butler, 1999), among other things. We have witnessed how the stigma of HIV/AIDS has left others broken, homeless and even church-less. Indeed, we have witnessed how parents have excluded their children when they discovered their

(homo)sexuality and how society deals with the 'misfits', through corrective rape and violence.

Favouring of boys secures this procreation goal and carrying of the bloodline because a boy is the one who remains at home to fulfil the responsibility of carrying the bloodline, while a girl will be married off. This type of society overlooks the detriment of this favouring of boys to girls, who are born and nurtured to be timid, submissive, dependent, and brought up to know that their place is firstly with their mothers who have a responsibility to nurture them to be good wives³³. Second, there's a saying in isiXhosa, "*ingcwaba lomfazi lisemzini*³⁴"; this is ultimately the destination a girl-child is being prepared for at birth (Adichie, 2014; Ringrose et al., 2015; Kobo, 2016).

The section above demonstrates the translation of sex into gender and the fragmented context that shapes the discourse of gender. Following that, we observe the meaning of gender as an intrusion, trouble and disturbance.

Being born a female implies a highly politicized space, a site of struggle and the most subversive place, i.e. trouble: "... debates over the meaning of gender lead time and again to a certain trouble" (Butler, 1999: xxix). Butler's use of Sartre, who speaks of a sudden intrusion, an unanticipated agency that comes to disturb masculinists and patriarchal societies, and de Beauvoir, who posits that a woman in such societies as pointed to by Sartre is a source of mystery and unknowability to men, is helpful in elucidating this point (:xxx). "Clearly if you are poor, black and female, you get it [trouble] in three ways" (Spivak, 1988:537 emphasis added). Black women experience a triple jeopardy of class, race and gender. Black lesbians have it far worse, as sexuality becomes an added trouble to that experience.

³³ For more insights on the irreconcilable contradictions and a dualistic power structure presented and maintained by patriarchal societies, see Kobo (2016). She looks at the bifurcated spaces that children are brought up into and observes how both, i.e. the boy and girl child's lives are violated by such structures. Further, if we look today at the extent of Gender-Based Violence we cannot turn a blind eye to these structures that teach boys that their power lies in masculinity, while taking power from girls by instilling femininity that is equivalent to submission and silence.

³⁴ Literally translated "a woman's grave is in her husband's home". Sadly, in the context of Gender-Based Violence (GBV), this saying comes true when a woman is murdered by her husband, literally 'sending her to her grave'.

As indicated earlier, children are born into a masculinist, patriarchal and heterosexual society. Long before they are aware of what is happening around them, a child is subject to the trouble of sex and gender. Their world has already been defined and decided. Butler's exposition of the terror and anxiety attached to one "becoming gay", fear of losing one's place in gender or of not knowing who one will be if one sleeps with someone of the ostensibly "same" gender, is one of the implications of this defined and decided world (Butler, 1999: xi). There seems to be no way of avoiding this. All children are exposed to gender stereotypes, a situation that can never be fully controlled or stopped (Whitehead & Barret, 2001:18) A child falls into a gender binary, in either one category or the other and there seems to be no in-between or beyond. That implied foreclosure is exactly Butler's cause of disagreement. For womanists, the whole notion of binaries is foreign and problematic, as will be demonstrated later.

4.4. Gender as Epistemological disturbance

Collins posits that "Addictive models of oppression are firmly rooted in either/or dichotomous thinking of Eurocentric, masculinist thoughts (1990:538)". In this Cartesian, dichotomous epistemology and worldview, whose starting points are dualities/binaries between immaterial and material, i.e. mind and body, one must be either black or white, male or female and heterosexual, superior (white) or inferior (non-white, black, non-person). The central thesis of this value system is that one set in the binary relationship assumes a powerful posture over the other and thus results in unequal power relations.

In such a system, to be anything different disturbs the cardinal tenet of the Eurocentric masculinist value system. The African worldview and value systems and thus womanism debunks such dualities (Velle, 2014b), and therefore disturbs Eurocentrism. To reiterate a point made in the previous chapter, Africans approach life in a communal and comprehensive way, and a womanist epistemology is thus oriented toward this framework. The only way the West could conquer Africa among

other colonies was through violence and genocide (Maldonado-Torres, 2007). They had to erase the African way of being and they demonized anything African, including history, culture, religion and customs (Biko, 1976, 1987). Ngugi wa Thiong'o argues that cultural domination is the worst form of domination "[B]ecause it is more subtle and its effects long-lasting" (2009:57).

The binaries, as espoused in Eurocentric masculinist thought, are problematic for womanists in two ways. First, they disturb a comprehensive epistemology. Second, they are vessels of epistemicide and refuse to allow other epistemologies to exist, which is why they need to be debunked. If we fail to do so, the epistemological agency of black women will eternally be silenced.

Experiences of Third World women, according to Spivak, what we in this thesis refer to as the Global South, disturb the Eurocentric value system. She argues that these women's lives are "so complex and unsystematic that they cannot be known or represented in any straightforward way by vocabularies of western critical theory" (in Morton, 2003:7). "They present a crisis in the knowledge and understanding of western critical theory" (Hitchcock, 1999:65). This crisis in knowledge, Spivak contends, highlights the ethical risks at stake when privileged intellectuals make political claims on behalf of oppressed groups³⁵. These risks include the danger that the voices, lives and struggles of 'Third World' women [black men and women, gays and lesbians] will be silenced and contained within the technical vocabulary of western critical theory (Morton, 2003:7 emphasis added). This has been the status quo and we thus argue that the subaltern can speak and will speak, as espoused in womanism.

³⁵ See also Grosfoguel (2013) where he talks about epistemic privilege of white males from five countries, whose epistemologies became the canon and any other knowledge that came from elsewhere, including the Global South, fell under the category of epistemic inferiority. Spivak also laments the preoccupation of what she calls "weak countries" in nationalist conflicts, and asserts that powerful countries are not really much interested in them except to safeguard their interests, which is to restructure their markets and economy in terms of global capital (Chakravorty et al., 2006:61). Both Grosfoguel and Spivak therefore expose the juxtaposition of the privileged and the inferior and the ethical risks that entails.

Butler and Athanasiou's (2013) insights on dispossession are helpful in further articulating Spivak's point. They speak of dispossession as ways in which certain powers holding a certain power over our very survival are at play. Indeed, this raises ethical questions if one looks at how certain human beings have lost their beings, homes, places in society by differing from those powers. Moreover, anything that does not fall in the scope and framework of these 'powers' becomes a disturbance that must be silenced, violently so.

In our attempt to deconstruct Western binaries and epistemology, we employ Butler in her attempt to undermine any epistemology that subsumes other epistemologies as espoused in *Gender Trouble*; likewise, Spivak's quest to "disrupt the codes and conventions of western knowledge and the maintenance of imperial power" (in Morton, 2007:7). Through Butler and Spivak, we validate womanism as epistemological agency of black women to make them compatible dialogue partners. We now proceed to look at binaries of sex and gender to establish the foreclosures, politics at stake and possibilities of disruptions.

4.4.1. Binaries of Sex and gender that must be debunked

In this section, we enter into an ongoing discussion between sex, gender, and the heteronormativity that engulfs them. Hudson-Weems' (1993) preference of the term *womanism* as opposed to *feminism* as stated in the previous chapter sets the scene for this section. She observes that *feminist* is derived from *female*, which can mean anything, including plant or animal species, while the female of the human species is not simply female but is also a woman. De Beauvoir (1973) and Wittig (1993) articulate this point well by asserting that one is not born a woman, but becomes one.

What comes out of Hudson-Weems' observation is heterosexuality and binaries of sex and gender – there is female and male, and the assumption is that female is woman. Heterosexuality and the binaries necessitate that we reiterate an earlier point on the

notion of dualities/binaries as a product of Western hegemony, which is not devoid of unequal power relations evident in gendered human beings, i.e. man and woman, gendered knowledge and labour, among other things. It also comprises violence, oppression, alienation, injustice, exploitation, erasures and distortions of humanity.

Employing Quijano, Lugones (2008) speaks of a 'Colonial/Modern Gender system' and posits, "To think the scope of the gender system of Eurocentered global capitalism it is necessary to understand the extent to which the very process of narrowing of the concept of gender to the control of sex, its resources and products constitutes gender domination" (2008:12). Our use of Lugones amongst other people is pre-emptive of gender trouble, politics, power, norms and a series of contestations. Butler observes that:

The concept of sex is itself troubled terrain, formed through a series of contestations over what ought to be decisive criterion for distinguishing between the two sexes; the concept of sex has a history that is covered over by the figure of the site or surface of inscription. Figured as such a site or surface, however, the natural is constructed as that which is also without value; moreover, it assumes its value at the same time that it assumes its social character, that is, at the same time that nature relinquishes itself as the natural. According to this view then, the social construction of the natural presupposes the cancellation of the natural by the social (1993:5).

Butler's observation opens our minds up to thinking about sex and gender. She suggests that it is not as simple and organised in a linear manner as we might think or be led to think. Rather we ought to look out for a series of contestations, power and norms, that influence how we view things, among other things. Foucault articulates this point when he argues that what must be extracted in order to fathom what could have made them [hegemonic instance, systems, norms] acceptable is precisely that they were not at all obvious, that they were not inscribed in any *a priori*, nor contained in any precedent. For instance, he argues, "It was also not given that desire, concupiscence and individual's sexual behavior had to actually be articulated one upon the other in a system of knowledge, and normality called sexuality" (2007:66 own emphasis added).

If we further look at sex, it is, on one hand, a form of identification, differentiating between being female and male. It refers to the anatomy of an individual's reproductive system and a biological aspect of being and arguably given at birth. Therefore, we are sexed bodies by virtue of being born like that. Feminists argue that sex is given and for the most part, is unalterable (Trible, 1989:280). Gender, on the other hand, they assert, refers to "masculine and feminine roles as culturally perceived". It is constructed within particular societies and theoretically, they argue, it can be deconstructed (:280). Butler (2004) observes that masculine and feminine roles are produced and normalized through gender. This suggests that sex and gender are inextricably intertwined. Trible and Butler suggest that whatever is constructed can be deconstructed! If it excludes and kills, causing an epistemological disturbance, womanists argue, it must be debunked.

Let us briefly go back to Hudson-Weems. She observes that the category of sex applies to both humans and animals. The difference, however, between female humans and animals is gender. You become a female and then a woman, she posits. What is problematic about Hudson-Weems' observation is that it is simplistic and arguably pre-empts political problems. Butler poses a profound question on whether we can refer to a given sex or even gender for that matter without firstly inquiring into how and through what means they are given (1999:9), i.e. look at a series of contestations, as argued earlier.

Hudson-Weems' is an apolitical position when we take into consideration how firstly, the progression or translation from female to woman has been opposed by those who are female but do not identify themselves as women. Butler, for instance, has stated it publicly that she has a problem being a woman³⁶. Feminist theory makes the same observation in its critique of how sex and sexuality are naturally explained. It dispels

³⁶ "But I say it, for you, for us, in public, for the newspaper, but I have to tell you, it is difficult for me. Not because I hate being a woman, but because, for me, there are ideas of what a woman is that I cannot recognise myself in" (Butler et al., 2001:20)

the assumption that “the meaning of women’s social existence can be derived from some fact of their physiology” (Butler, 1988:520).

Butler avers:

If gender is the cultural meanings that the sexed body assumes, then a gender cannot be said to follow from a sex in any one way. Taken to its logical limit, the sex/gender distinction suggests a radical discontinuity between sexed bodies and culturally constructed genders. ... The presumption of a binary gender system implicitly retains the belief in a mimetic relation of gender to sex whereby gender mirrors sex or is otherwise restricted by it. When the constructed status of gender is theorized as radically independent of sex, gender itself becomes a free-floating artifice, with the consequence that man and masculine might just as easily signify a female body as a male one, and a woman and feminine a male body as easily as a female one (1999:9).

Butler’s insights are helpful for our discussion as she exposes political problems of the binaries of sex and gender. She points to the problem of suggesting that gender follows from sex. She posits that gender is a construction that regularly conceals its genesis (Butler, 1988:522). She believes that sexual practice has the power to destabilise gender (Butler, 1999: xi). Her inquisition is to unmask the point where this disruption occurs – the very point that destabilises and deconstructs gender. What we deduce from Butler is that gender is a construct to which we are all accustomed. What is not revealed, however, is the powers and politics at play. “Power appeared to operate in the production of that very binary frame for thinking about gender” (Butler, 1999:xxx). She seems to suggest that gender is political and indeed exposes epistemological disturbance and epistemicide if it has power to exclude those who cannot be subsumed by the systems and norms. She also points us to one possibility of destabilizing gender, sexual practice: whom one decides to sleep with has power to turn things upside down. The implications of that, however, is that those who refuse to be turned upside down kill [and conquer] (Butler, 1999: xxi added emphasis). They kill and conquer knowledge and lived bodies. Therefore, the restrictions attached to these categories are what Butler finds difficult to comprehend. She asserts that what will and

will not be included within the boundaries of “sex” will be set by a more or less tacit operation of exclusion” (1993:11).

What this suggests is that one’s state of being and their performance is predetermined within a particular framework. For Butler, that framework is heterosexual. “... heterosexuality... is also compulsory and it permeates the whole of the coloniality of gender” (Lugones, 2008:12), and any attempt to call it into question is perhaps to lose something of one’s sense of place in gender (Butler, 1999: xi). She speaks to LGBTQI+ communities, whose existence primarily disturbs this framework. Having experienced herself what coming out as a lesbian meant at the age of 16, she knows the fear of losing one’s place in gender, which has arguably kept many in the closet.

As mentioned earlier, fear of losing family, love, jobs and shelter, among others, is indeed a life question which is manifested three times more for black LGBTQI+ communities. They have to deal with being born into a politically incorrect race in a society where whiteness precedes blackness. With the trouble that comes with class, gender and sexuality, being a black lesbian is the worst location ever. Any framework that purposes to liberate ought to consider the politics, including womanism, as suggested by Coleman in the previous chapter.

Butler further observes that we ought to understand the category of sex based on power from which it is wrought (1999:25). She alludes to Foucault, who speaks of this category as a production of a diffuse regulatory economy of sexuality and Wittig’s observation of how the sex category is equated to female and subject to conditions of heterosexuality. She engages de Beauvoir and Wittig on the equation of sex with women, which they argue is also a conflation with sexualized bodies. They argue that women are denied freedom and autonomy because it is purportedly under male monopoly (:27). The observation of these two, which resonates very well with Butler’s presuppositions, is that even the category of sex, like that of gender, is not fixed, and if heterosexual hegemony were to be disrupted, it would cease to exist (Butler, 1995:25). They submit that heteronormativity keeps these binaries intact. This also

suggests that the destruction of the category of sex implies a destruction of sexism. This is a necessary kind of disruption if we also look at Wittig's call for the destruction of the category of sex so that women can assume the status of a universal subject (:27).

What comes out of this section so far is the trouble of a 'colonial/modern gender system', which is exclusionary. Sex is seen as biological and gender as cultural. The problem arises when some argue that gender follows from sex. Others like Butler see this as a restriction that needs disruption if it must include others. Disrupting the category of sex also means the disruption of its biases against women. Butler argues that sex is as constructed as gender and poses the question of whether there is any possibility of different constructions that allow agency and transformation. Another contentious question is whether we can speak of sex or gender without also looking at how it is given and what it is. We look also at the history of each and the history of the duality of both. Has it always been obvious that there would be male and female, man and woman, and that one would be superior to the other, and exercise power in ways that oppress the other? Has this always been obvious? (Butler, 1999). These are gender trouble questions with implications for our womanism, as a comprehensive epistemological agency of black women. We now proceed to look at norms that safeguard the binaries and decide what sex and gender we ought to be.

4.4.2. Norms that safeguard binaries of Sex and Gender

For Butler (1999), the binaries are safeguarded by norms to which societies conform and in this case, those which envisage heterosexuality to be normal. She contends that there are norms into which we are born – gendered, racial and national – that decide what kind of subject we can be. Nonetheless, in being those subjects, in occupying and inhabiting those norms, in incorporating and performing them, we make use of local options to rearticulate them in order to revise their power. She further exposes the dual nature of norms by asserting "we need norms in order to live, and to live well, and to know in what direction to transform our social world, we are also

constrained by norms in ways that sometimes do violence to us and which, for reasons of social justice, we must oppose” (Butler, 2004:206). So what this means is that “women and men exist, we might say, as social norms, and they are, according to the perspective of sexual difference, ways in which sexual difference has assumed content” (Butler, 2004:210).

Butler’s central thesis lies in her position that social norms decide our beings, but they do not decide them once and for all (Butler & Reddy, 2004:117). She argues that we ought to understand how gender terms are institutionalised, naturalized and established as presuppositions. What she desires most is a critical inquiry that will lead to a disturbance of the binary system of gender, a disentanglement of coherence of the categories and their deep entrenchment in social life [a disturbance of a Eurocentric masculinist thought] (Butler, 2001:12 emphasis added).

Having had struggles herself to identify with being a woman and having come out as a lesbian, she proposes the extension of norms from the location of exclusion. Let us briefly problematize her location, which is very important for us as it exposes geopolitics of knowledge. She is a white female, throttled by white patriarchy and heteronormativity. Fortunately, race and class are not a challenge for her. Her strife is a trouble of gender, which white feminism that has been produced by a patriarchal and heteronormative framework does not solve. At this point, she critiques Eurocentrism and an exclusive feminist framework. Her consciousness is very helpful for us because she posits that how norms operate in different locations is pivotal. She validates the point that no single epistemology can represent the whole world. The exposition of race and class cannot be downplayed in a sex and gender trouble discourse as it further exposes power dynamics that are at play. Womanism makes this point.

Butler contends that the point where these systems and norms are alterable, transformed and disturbed opens possibilities for those they have excluded. This is dialogue! She further posits that while we cannot do without them, as they provide for us guiding principles, we cannot, however, accept them without critique (2001:4).

Dreyer also makes this point; she observes that a “humane” society can be created by human beings if the dehumanising status quo is critiqued (2007:1517). Therefore, there is indeed a need to critique, analyse and debunk binaries that disturb the epistemology and agency of those it excludes and subsumes, a task of womanism (Cannon, 1987:170).

Butler (2004) contends that movements that advocate for the liberation of humanity should at least distinguish between norms that enhance life and those that are life-killing. Butler exposes the dualistic nature of norms. Norms can give life or threaten it and, in some instances, they can be both at the same time. Her concern, however, is their jurisdictional nature, which she observes as follows: “What is important is to cease legislating for all lives what is liveable only for some, and similarly, to refrain from proscribing for all lives what is unliveable for some” (2004:8). She suggests that any attempt to critique norms ought to be inclined towards enhancing life, not killing or conquering.

What already comes out of this section is that we are governed by norms that determine who we are and ought to be. However, they do not always serve the purpose of enhancing life, hence Butler argues that they cannot be accepted as divine mandates but ought to be critiqued. A point aptly put by Dreyer is, “In order to open up the possibility of authentic humanity for all people it is necessary to be aware that constructs and social patterns are human creations, not God-given structures” (2007:1517). Womanists thus submit that any epistemological view that excludes the internal logic of black Africans must be subject to a rigorous hermeneutic of suspicion, critique and disruption (Vellem, 2016b:1). It must be stated that BTL generally critiques dualisms, so womanism and the liberation paradigm does not nuance the struggles of women in dualistic terms but rather in a comprehensive understanding of what liberation means to blackness (Kobo, 2018a).

4.4.3. Debunking binaries of Eurocentric knowledge

To reiterate a point made earlier, in our attempt to deconstruct Western binaries and epistemology, we employ, first, Butler's attempt to undermine any epistemology that subsumes other epistemologies, as espoused in *Gender Trouble*. Second, we employ Spivak's quest to "disrupt the codes and conventions of Western knowledge and the maintenance of imperial power" (in Morton, 2007:7). Butler is indeed helpful for us but she does not move beyond the binaries; she simply disrupts them.

Marion Young observes that "Butler successfully calls into question the logic of the sex-gender distinction, yet her theorizing never goes beyond these terms and remains tied to them (2005:15). She looks for points where they can be destabilized but looks for alternatives within the framework (Butler, 2001:6). She remains within the Western frameworks but critiques them. Young, on the other hand, demonstrates that it is possible to move out of the binary framework. In her critique of sex/gender distinctions, Young (2005) employs Toril Moi, who posits that indeed, binaries are problematic and exclusionary and proposes the framework of existential phenomenology, i.e. lived bodies as an alternative category to gender (:15). For Young, 'lived body' brings together historical, social, racial, and gender sexuality as a unit.

While womanism affirms Young, it also takes into consideration a lot of issues that constitute the agency of the black woman whose lived body differs from any other body, including white women's lived bodies. As an epistemological agency that is comprehensive, which enhances African culture and many other life concerns for African women, womanism posits that no western framework can represent this unique contribution by black African women. Lugones' (2008) critique of Anibal Quijano's framework of coloniality of power elucidates this point. She expands and complicates Quijano to develop a critique of colonial/modern gender system, a system she posits as venomous for black humanity and proposes that it must be rejected so that the focus is on communal relations.

It must be stated that the binaries disturb the epistemological agency for black women and humanity. Spivak helps us to disrupt western knowledge and go beyond the binaries. Just as BTL proposes the kraal (Vellem, 2007b), womanism proposes the symbol of the circle as the framework as an alternative to Eurocentric masculinist dualism and binaries of knowledge systems. In a circle, things are interconnected, intersect and are relational. We proceed with that view to look at relationships between power, life and epistemology.

4.5. Power, life and knowledge

To reiterate a point Butler made earlier, categories of sex, gender, and desire are effects of a specific formation of power. For her, political agency cannot be isolated from the dynamics of power from which it is wrought (1999: xxv) and the formative effects of social norms (Thiem, 2008:86). In her critique of norms that safeguard the binaries, she posits that as they are inherited from one generation to the other, their power is revised. For her this power appears to operate in the production of that very binary frame for thinking about gender (Butler, 1999: xxx). This then raises profound questions pertaining to configurations of power that construct these binary relations. Butler (1999) contends that 'this power' ought to be critiqued at its foundational level. She employs a Foucauldian paradigm of genealogical critique that investigates the political stakes in designating as an origin and cause identity categories that are the effects of institutions, practices, and discourses with multiple and diffuse points of origin. The task of this inquiry, she asserts, is to problematize phallogocentrism and compulsory heterosexuality as defining institutions. By decentring the defining role of these institutions, this inquiry arguably disrupts the normative (: xxxi).

How are we to understand power? Is it ultimately domination? Is it life-giving, a threat or both? Foucault (2007:66) seems to think that power does not have to be understood as domination, mastery, fundamental given, a unique principle, explanation or irreducible law, but rather he suggests that it be considered in relation to a field of interactions. He argues that power ought to be contemplated in a relationship that

cannot be dissociated from forms of knowledge. He further states that we should be on the lookout for its association with a domain of possibility and reversibility (:66).

Foucault's line of thought here resonates with Butler's (1991, 2001). Her central thesis, as stated earlier, contends that social terms decide our beings, but they do not decide them once and for all. Nothing is stable and fixed in Butler's thinking; there ought to be a point of disruption. In looking at gender, she critiques a regulatory operation of power that naturalizes the hegemonic instance and forecloses the thinkability of its disruption. For Foucault, identification of the acceptability of a system cannot be dissociated from identifying what it makes it difficult to accept. In his analysis of Kant's thoughts on critique in relation to Aufklärung, even knowledge and reason have their own limitations. One can know or reason up to a certain point and furthermore, Foucault argues, there exists more than one knowledge or power (2007:60-66). This observation by Foucault debunks the conquering spirit of the West and affirms the dialogic stance envisaged in this thesis. The first realization is that there are epistemologies and powers, and neither of those is universal.

Alluding to Anibal Quijano, Lugones (2008) brings another dimension on how we can understand power, which is very helpful for our discussion. Quijano speaks of a global 'Euro centered capitalist power', which, like all powers, is constructed in relations of domination, exploitation and conflict as humans struggle over control of their existence in a capitalist society. This form of power is located around the axes of "the coloniality of power" and "modernity" (Quijano, 2000:342). He further argues how struggle over control in the domain of sex and gender is organized around these axes.

While Foucault's presupposition is power in relation to knowledge, Lugones in her analysis of Quijano critiques the very notion of knowledge as gendered at conception. (2008:11). She also goes further than Foucault's argument that power ought to be considered in relation to a field of interactions by naming those interactions as domination, exploitation and conflict. Lugones is, in that regard, helpful for us. Her insights elucidate the central thesis of this chapter, which attempts to expose the

intersectionality of class, race, gender, Western hegemony and all forms of imperialism.

What we deduce from this section is that, first, nothing is fixed, whether norms, knowledge, reason, or power. Secondly, we ought to look at them rather as, arguably, series of contestations. Lastly, we must look out for points and moments of their alteration and disruption and possibilities of their reversibility to include those it has excluded. The contradictions posited by Foucault and Lugones help us to see power as both life-giving and as a threat to life. We now move on to ponder on the relationship between power and life. The insights of Vellem's analysis of Wright Jr. cited below are helpful in our attempt to critique and understand power as life affirming:

... the Greek words for power (*bia*) and life (*bios*) reflect the essential affinity between life and power. Power is basic to life. Without power, there cannot be any life. Institutions transacting ultimate social goals must dare to be power-producing repositories. These power-producing repositories are enablers, facilitating human growth toward fulfilment. Hence *The Imago Dei* in the human being must reflect God's power, His majesty and His might. Our point is that power is life-giving (Vellem, 2007b:313–314).

This quotation exposes the notion of power as life. Wright Jr makes a pivotal point, namely, that, the Greek words for power (*bia*) and life (*bios*) reflect the essential affinity between life and power. He further locates institutions that transact social goals at the center of human life as power-producing repositories that enhance life. Butler's critical inquiry exposes how the institutions that are meant to enhance life can also produce power in ways that threaten life. We deduce from Vellem's analysis that indeed, power, at its core, is life-giving, yet the same power if unchecked can be deadly. Moreover, once one attains the level of normativity against the other, the relationship between power and life is ruptured (Kobo, 2016).

Rupture between power and life manifests itself in violence that many have witnessed. Butler (1999: xx) cites a few examples where this rupture and violence can be seen. First, is the case of an uncle who had an anatomically anomalous body, who instead of being embraced by friends and family was sent to some institute. Second, she reflects on how her coming out of the closet when she was 16 years old led to a miserable life of lost jobs, lovers and homes, an exclusionary reception that dominated society. She further observes the extent of rupture in those who have failed to approximate the norm and as a result paid dearly with their lives. She points to the fear that has resulted in others living fake lives. Fear of losing one's place in gender, which has kept many in the closet and in misery (1999: xi). She looks on the implications of this violence on life of the 'other'.

In this context, to deconstruct, denaturalize and disrupt norms becomes more than a desire to play with language; broken bodies as sites of death present a desire to live, to make life possible and to rethink the possible as such, she asserts. On this, she then poses the question: "How must we rethink the ideal morphological constraints upon the human such that those who fail to approximate the norm are not condemned to a death within life? (Butler, 1999: xxi). This has implications for womanism which has to grapple with questions of structures and institutions that disturb the agency of black women and humanity – structures that violate black lived bodies. The question we can pose is: how can these epistemologies and bodies live and breathe without being subject to delimiting forms of power, imperialism, violence, and disturbance?

The exposition of this life-threatening power and the ethical risks for the less powerful is pivotal, but also how its power is revised through discourse, i.e. through grammar, cannot be overlooked. Deconstruction and denaturalization call for disruption of grammar through which gender is given. Butler contends that grammar is not politically neutral and further states "learning the rules that govern intelligible speech is an inculcation into normalized language, where the price of not conforming is the loss of intelligibility itself" (1999: xix). Whitehead and Barret (2001) make the same point; for them, ideologies of gender, men and women are inculcated through discourse (:17).

What this points to is the authority of a sovereign power at play. Language feeds, safeguards and revises this dominant power structure from which it is wrought.

Employing a Foucauldian discourse analysis, Whitehead and Barret expose politics of grammar. They contend that male supremacy and power inequalities become legitimized through discourse, i.e. everyday language where power is exercised and resisted. Discourse is a means by which humans get to know themselves as either man or woman, they argue (:20). They write, "Discourses are, then, more than just ways of speaking, for they send highly powerful messages in terms of knowledge, what is seen as 'truth', and in respect of how individuals should behave in given locales" (2001:21). Discourse is epistemology, they suggest.

Butler affirms this point by arguing that a discourse that imposes restrictions on gender binaries whose framework is exclusive as we have argued, regulates power to normalize the hegemony associated with the dualism and to subvert any possibility of the its disruption and disturbance (2004:42-43). Alluding to Irigaray, Butler puts it as follows:

[T]he substantive grammar of gender, which assumes men and women as well as their attributes of masculine and feminine, is an example of a binary that effectively masks the univocal and hegemonic discourse of the masculine, phallogocentrism, silencing the feminine as a site of subversive multiplicity (Butler, 1999:26).

Butler (1999:26) further posits that, for Irigaray, "grammar can never be a true index of gender relations precisely because it supports the substantial model of gender as binary relation between two positive and representable terms". This translates to the the positioning of men as strong, rational and disciplined as opposed to women who are fragile, emotional and undisciplined, as affirmed by Hekman's (1990:17) argument on how maleist ways of seeing the world are emphasized and validated through dominant discourses.

What we observe in this section is that firstly, gender, norms, systems are constructs whose acceptance depends on various processes where they are legitimized, regulated, naturalized and normalized and as they are transferred from one generation to the other, their power is revised through grammar and discourse. While they govern societies, they are not an end in themselves, hence a call for their critique is proposed. What lies at their foundation is the issue of power which is regulatory, but not mandatory nor mastery, power which is life giving yet prone to abuse and violence but understood better in relation to 'a field of interactions' and certainly associated with forms of knowledge and arguably gendered knowledge as argued by others.

Foucault points us to another dimension of power, namely, its relation to knowledge (2007:71). He argues that the functionality of knowledge rests on its exercise of power. Earlier, he posited that there is no one power and one knowledge. In thinking of power and knowledge, one must be open to a domain of possibility and reversibility (:71) and thus 'thinkability of its disruption' (Butler, 2004). Butler also connects the question of "who and what is considered real and true" to knowledge and power (2004:215). A nexus of knowledge-power has to be described so that we can grasp what constitutes the acceptability of a system, norm, gender, sexuality and what makes it difficult to accept its arbitrary nature in terms of knowledge, its violence in terms of power, in short, its energy (Foucault, 2007:61-63, own emphasis added).

Butler, Spivak, Foucault and Lugones, amongst others, teach us that we are governed by norms, systems, thoughts, power and knowledge. They make us who we are and ought to be and are naturalized and normalized through discourse and thus their power is revised. They, however, are not an end in themselves, they are not obvious and thus open to possibilities of being altered and disrupted. If we adopt this thesis as our framework, we then proceed to following sections and attempt to ponder the rupture between power and life and the ethical risks posed at those who are less powerful by the powerful, among other things, and how these have a bearing on being human and black humanity, a question for womanism and BTL.

4.6. On Being Black and Human

What will and will not constitute an intelligible life, and how do presumptions about normative gender and sexuality determine in advance what will qualify as “the human” and the “liveable”? In other words, how do normative gender presumptions work to delimit the very field of description that we have for human? What is the means by which we come to see this delimiting power, and what are the means by which we transform it? (Butler, 1999: xxiii).

Butler’s quotation above alerts us to a series of contestations in understanding the very notion or category of human, which is highly politicized and a site of struggle, like the category of woman. We cannot talk about humans and not raise questions pertaining to power, norms, life, exclusion and violence. Butler further cautions us when she poses the question of who and what constitute a human with reference to the exclusion of the “other” in the categories of the human simply because they do not accept the modes of reasoning and justifying “validity claims” that have been offered by Western forms of rationalism among other things (2001:22).

Butler’s earlier critique of the norms becomes important when we also look at who and what a human is. These norms prescribe how we ought to understand being human. While norms are good, their problem is, however, power relations, where the selected few have power to legislate for all lives what is liveable for some. She posits that power cannot be separated from the question of who then “... qualifies as the recognizably human and who does not” (Butler, 2004:2). While she makes this observation, she sees the human category “as not captured once and for all (:13). For her, the category of human is exclusionary at core and any attempt to rearticulate it would be to start from those it excluded (2004:13). The excluded, according to Butler, can speak.

To reiterate a point we made in chapter 2, the “oppressed subjects speak, act and know” (Spivak, 1988:276). They continue with their quest for liberation, no matter how much resistance they get (Vellem, 2007:31). Butler, Spivak and Vellem’s insights

expose the agency and spirit of resistance of those the Eurocentric value system regarded as non-humans, the wretched of the earth (Fanon, 1963), according to the powers that decide who and what a human being is. The fact that these wretched ones co-exist with the 'politically correct' ones is indeed evidence that nothing is stable, even the categories of human and gender (Butler, 1999:23). To further develop Butler's thesis, the fact that they indeed coexist is evidence that there are possibilities for an evolution of a different type of what human beings can be, one that is not defined by those currently in power. Their ability to speak, i.e. agency, destabilises the category as defined in Western forms and presents trouble for the very structures of power, as envisaged in womanism as epistemological agency of black women and humanity.

Being human is political and clearly determined by the powerful. For Lugones (2008) there is only one way of being human, that is, Eurocentric. BTL has made this critique in its framework where the starting point is the oppressed and the marginalized, therefore non-persons³⁷. Fanon (1952) speaks of a zone of non-being, which is a location of non-beneficiaries of colonization and apartheid, i.e. the majority of black people and women in South Africa who are poor and in the same trenches of destitution even in a democratic country. This is a condition created by systems of the powerful which began with the transatlantic slave trade and the continuation of the groans of broken bodies of black African people and women in the Global South up to the end of apartheid continuing to this day. Therefore, being human is circumscribed at its very foundations when certain people struggle to live and breathe.

Williams and Biko have earlier alluded to this model of being human by locating it in society that is a typical manifestation of a bifurcated value system, where one set in the binary relationship assumes a powerful posture over the other and thus results in unequal power relations. This value system that justifies and preserves unequal distribution of resources translates or rather defines what it is to be human and has dire implications for those on the bottom of the world power structure, i.e. powerless, black, African people and especially women and lesbians. Dare poor, black African

³⁷ The liberation paradigm argues that the non-person is its interlocutor (Boesak, 1977; Gutiérrez, 2007; Vellem 2015a).

people and women hope in such a society that expects them to deny their Africanness and blackness to be fully human? A society that equates Africanness and blackness with slavery, subjugation, being poor, and less human? These are questions raised by BTL and womanism.

In our pursuit of understanding who and what human is, Cone points us to the question of religion. Religion, according to Cone, offers a way for black people to find hope. He posits, “Religion is the search for meaning if your life has no meaning in this world” (2011:18). Religion undoubtedly shapes humanity in many pervasive ways, but the question is whether this space can indeed produce hope or pseudo-hope for black people. Can we talk about religion and theology, without looking at the dynamics of power from which it is wrought? Clearly, we cannot do this in a South African context, as mapped in earlier chapters, with works that portray the history of South Africa as a history of oppression (Moore, 1973; Boesak, 1977; Maimela, 1986; Vellem, 2007b; Tshaka, 2014b). The oppressions were justified by religion, theology and thus, the Bible. To reiterate Mtetwa’s earlier statement, “... the domination and subjugation of the indigenous peoples, the suppression of their religions and their cultures, were legitimated and sanctioned by Biblical injunctions” (1998:69).

Boesak, Maimela, Moore, Mosala, Mtetwa, Vellem and Tshaka, among others, give evidence that the Bible/theology can be used to oppress, as it has been used by white people to oppress black people in South Africa. Such a truncated reading of the Bible propels us to pose the question how should Africans theologise and read the Bible then on the question of being human? Alluding to Cone (1975:8), Mosala (1987) asserts that BTL’s task is to ‘recognise “God’s word” to those who are oppressed and humiliated in this world’. The black ‘excluded’ ‘non-humans’, are interlocutors of BTL and their experience of oppression and exploitation provides the epistemological lens for perceiving the God of the Bible as the God of liberation (Mosala, 1987:3). Oppressed Black women, on the other hand, are interlocutors of womanism, and their epistemology and perception of God as their liberator is also shaped by their experiences.

We note the Bible's loss of credibility if we attempt to appeal to scripture on the question of being human. While many biblical texts affirm human beings as created in the image of God, how the same Bible was used by the powerful to oppress cannot be downplayed. The EATWOT statement further elucidates this point in the quest for new anthropology, a new way of understanding what it is to be human (1992:50-51).

The Eurocentric bifurcated view of humanity, among other things, has dire implications and poses ethical risks for black humanity. Can we then expect the same hegemonic Western frameworks to enhance the life of black humanity and women? We proceed to look at white feminism, which has always positioned itself as representative of women and how it either nuances or excludes black women's experiences.

4.7. 'White' feminism

To speak of 'white' feminism is to respond to questions such as "how it plays, what investments it bears, what aims it achieves, what alterations it undergoes" (Butler 2004:180). It is to indicate that there are other feminisms. While feminism has always been a universal term, the critique that led to the emergence of other feminisms, such as African feminism and black feminism, makes it necessary to be more specific in this work. The pervasive cultural conditions which universalised men's experiences and voices, in the process marginalising women and their experiences, call for the development of a language that adequately represents women, argues Butler (1999:2). She further observes the culture of universalism, which places man as the representative of all humans and how feminist theory debunks this myth by creating a new paradigm that prioritizes women's agency and presence in the universe. She exposes, however, the possible flaw of this paradigm if it excludes the concrete lives of women (Butler, 1988:523). Butler's observation is a question posed by black women and their experiences to white feminism. Can they indeed represent their concrete lives that are different to theirs? What do feminists mean when they talk about woman? Is a woman the same for feminists and womanists?

4.7.1. Women as subjects

The category of woman, which is arguably the subject of feminist theory, is according to Butler a contested space that can no longer be understood in stable or abiding terms. She critiques the very idea of a category of women as suspect and points to the political representation assumed in this category as controversial (1999:2). She finds the very idea of subject itself problematic because it needs to be qualified first before representation can be considered (Butler, 1999:2). Employing Foucault (1980), she analyses juridical systems of power that produce the subjects whom they later represent. She analyses him at length in the following way:

Juridical notions of power appear to regulate political life in purely negative terms – that is, through the limitation, prohibition, regulation, control, and even “protection” of individuals related to that political structure through the contingent and retractable operation of choice. Nevertheless, the subjects regulated by such structures are, by virtue of being subjected to them, formed, defined, and reproduced in accordance with the requirements of those structures (1999:2-3).

Butler observes that:

If this analysis is correct then juridical formation of language and politics that represents women as “the subject” of feminism is itself a discursive formation and effect of a given version of representational politics. In addition, the feminist subject turns out to be discursively constituted by the very political system that is supposed to facilitate its emancipation. This becomes politically problematic if that system can be shown to produce gendered subjects along a differential axis of domination or to produce gendered subjects who are presumed to be masculine. In such cases, an uncritical appeal to such a system for the emancipation of “women” will be clearly self-defeating (1999:3).

She further cautions that the inquiry should not be on representation of women but rather how the category itself is “produced and restrained by the very structures of

power through which emancipation is sought” (:4). Butler’s analysis exposes foundational problems of feminist theory. The very use of notions of subject and category is suspect, and points us to several arrays of foreclosures that arguably render white feminism as a movement exclusionary at its core. If we employ Foucault, Butler and Spivak, the implication is that the cardinal tenets of ‘white feminism’ are a product of Eurocentric masculinist thought, earlier argued to be ‘dichotomous’, imperialistic and exclusionary. The implication, therefore, is that the woman who is arguably white, as a subject of feminism, regulated by capitalistic, racist, masculinist, individualistic structures that produce and define her, cannot be representative of all women, especially black Africans. This is the critique of womanism (Masenya (ngwana’ Mphahlele) 2004). Ogunyemi posits that white women have power and privilege that black women do not have, and as a result, they have all liberty to “concentrate on patriarchy, analyzing it, attacking it, detecting its tentacles in the most unlikely places” (1985:69). She argues that the difference is what each sees and makes of patriarchy. While for whites, it is linked to real world power, for blacks, it is a domestic affair that comprises of a wide range of issues (Ogunyemi, 1985:69-71).

Furthermore, the singling out of women as a subject itself points to the individualistic and bifurcated worldview of the West, and this raises problems for African women whose worldview is embedded in community and interconnectedness (Bujo, 1998). As argued earlier, African women do not operate in dichotomies, as their world is a unit. African epistemologies and lived bodies comprise a whole life as the context of African women’s theology, which is crafted in the midst of ongoing life in Africa, comprised of political and economic subjugation and cultural domination (Oduyoye, 2001a). Contrary to the traditional Western dichotomizing tendency, women’s issues are only part of a broader sphere. Aptly put by Edet and Ekeya (1989:3), African women’s lives are situated in the realities lived by all of Africa’s peoples – women and men. The political problem of women as the subject of feminism is further elucidated in the following section.

4.7.2. Political problem of feminism

The use of 'women' as a category in the hegemonic Western framework has referred to white women only and their experiences, excluding women of colour and their experiences. The critique of womanism is that whiteness and white women are not equivalent to universal. It posits that to speak of women, we must take into account varying contexts, the intersections of race, class and gender, among other things. The socio-economic, cultural and political biases must be unmasked as also argued in earlier sections of the thesis. In the section, we look at women as a unitary category, women as oppressors and universal patriarchy as political problems of women as the subject of feminism.

4.7.3. Women as unitary category

Butler avers:

Apart from the foundationalist fictions that support the notion of the subject, however, there is the political problem that feminism encounters in the assumption that the term women denotes a common identity. Rather than a stable signifier that commands the assent of those whom it purports to describe and represent, women, even in the plural, has become a troublesome term, a site of contest, a cause for anxiety (1999:4).

Butler's observation above points to several critical questions posed at feminisms, namely, who and what is a woman? Who and what defines her? Butler asserts that "If one is a woman, that is surely not all one is" (:4); there are other factors to consider; for instance, gender is relational and intersects with race, class, ethnicity, sexuality; it is political, cultural, and historical, among other things. Separating gender from the political and cultural intersections in which it is invariably produced and maintained thus becomes an impossibility, she asserts (:4-5). This is a profound question when one looks at an African woman's identity as presented by Oduyoye as an African women's dilemma, which exposes the question of an African woman's image as perceived by herself, her fellow African man and the rest of the world (1998:109).

Spivak further dispels the myth of speaking of women as a “unitary category because of its failure to acknowledge the global political and economic framework of first-world imperialism (in Butler, 2004:228). Beale (1979:375) critiques the white women’s liberation movement by arguing that in as much as they are both women living under the same exploitative system, there are certain differences. She further states that any white group that does not have an anti-imperialist and anti-racial ideology has absolutely nothing in common with the Black woman’s struggle. Any idea of a new world, even for women, is that which is non-capitalist. White feminists who have benefitted from capitalism in their attempt to represent all women, cannot do justice if they fail to self-critique themselves. They need to ask themselves in which ways they have contributed to keeping black women in the same trenches of destitution as observed by Harris in the previous chapter.

4.7.4. Universal Patriarchy

Another profound political observation made by Butler (1999) is the association of the universal basis of feminism with the notion of universal patriarchy. Butler’s critique of universal patriarchy validates the question posed earlier on whether a woman is the same for white feminists and womanists. What is problematic about this blanket approach is that it conceals things that it refuses to see. By using women to mean all women, for instance, all races, classes, cultures, politics, and epistemologies among other things are represented by the dominant class, race, culture, politics, and epistemology. In the process, other races, classes, cultures, politics, and epistemologies are erased, concealed, discarded, along with their lived bodies. Therefore, this tendency to universalise is political. Another powerful observation by Butler is how in cases where dominant powers consult other powers which they do not fully recognise, they do so to co-opt them into their own frameworks (:5).

By singling out ‘white’ women as subjects of feminism, a ‘white’ feminist framework, which is a product of a capitalistic, racist structure, then arguably deals with white women’s issues. In cases where they have attempted to consult other contexts, the

aim was to find validations for their own presuppositions, argues Butler. This observation is more than profound to dispel the myth of feminism as representatives of black women. One of the shortcomings of Western feminist frameworks has been its inability to come to terms with its racial and class biases. In addition, this position has made white feminism flawed and has received a lot of criticism from other feminist and womanist scholars (Beale, 1979; Landman, 1995; Ogunyemi, 1985; Arndt, 2000).

If we look back at how the black man is defined in one of the earlier chapters, his position in a capitalistic, racist society, one that renders him a non-being, we are able to locate the black woman as well. If the black man was oppressed by his white master and madam, i.e. double jeopardy, for the black woman, it became a triple jeopardy as his angry black man became a danger to his black woman. Therefore, if white women are to embark on the journey to emancipate women, they have to deconstruct their idea of women. They have to be prepared to see women in their kitchen servants and have to account for their role as oppressors of other women. If one looks at the South African context, the possibility of this pseudo-representation disappears when we look at our history and the differences between experiences of white women and black women.

4.8. Black women's experiences as disturbers of Eurocentric epistemology

Spivak's earlier observation is that experiences of Global South women are a disturbance to the 'Eurocentric masculinist thought'. She argues that these women's lives are "so complex and unsystematic that they cannot be known or represented in any straightforward way by vocabularies of western critical theory" (in Morton, 2003: 7). The feminist framework excludes these experiences and these women. "... the presumed universality and unity of the subject of feminism is effectively undermined by the constraints of the representational discourse in which it functions," suggests Butler (1999:4-6). Moreover, to incorporate these experiences into this existing framework is fraught with challenges.

The assimilation of black women in a structure that is foundationally racist and exclusive would be a misnomer. Their emancipation calls for a framework that is structurally designed and presupposes their experiences as pivotal. The experiences of black African women bring a distinctive perspective on social reality, one that could not be subsumed under any of the existing frameworks, i.e. white feminism (Jaggar & Rothenberg, 1993: xii). This work argues that a womanist framework is in order as it is an epistemological agency of black women. Hooks (1989) is in order when she argues that there is a need of a feminist discourse that attempts to respond to “a wide variety of issues in Black life” (:56).

Womanism takes into consideration a wide variety of issues that constitute the agency of the black woman whose lived body differs from any other body, including white women. Part of those issues are black men who have lost their manhood in the capitalist, racist society. As an epistemological agency that is comprehensive, which enhances African culture and concerns itself with many other life concerns for African women, in addition to sexism, womanism posits that no western framework can represent this unique contribution by black African women.

4.9. Conclusion

In this chapter, we attempted to see whether womanism in dialogue with theories of gender could help transform the fundamentals of Black theology itself, as well as womanist perspectives. Indeed, the gender theories of Butler and Spivak, among others, are helpful. The extension of categories of human, women, and even norms that govern those categories contribute to this discourse. The question of who a woman is remains important because then black lesbians cannot be excluded from womanism. Their exclusion truncates liberation as much as the exclusion of black women in BTL. Therefore, there is a sense in which these theories alert us to internal factors even in women’s movements and discourses that are exclusionary. The disruption of binaries is important for womanism as they undermine comprehensive liberation. They are an expression of total colonial systems of knowledge and thus

disturb the epistemological agency of black women. By looking at black women's experiences as disturbers of Eurocentric epistemology, we posited that therefore no Western framework could ever be representative of those bodies. We submit that this is a lie. While theorists like Marion Young negate the Western binaries, we argue that even the alternatives that they are proposing are not adequate to address African culture, black lived bodies and epistemology. We maintain that binaries are a disturbance, but propose a circle as an alternative to the fragmented epistemology and worldview of the West. Gender from a womanist perspective is African, comprehensive and interconnected. There is a relationship between gender, power, and life. In a circle, which follows in the next chapter, the main objective is collaboration towards black transcendence. "A circle is about community" (Oduyoye, 2001b:97).

CHAPTER 5

A Womanist dialogue with the grassroots

5.1 Introduction

So far, we have examined what Biko's 'black man' in relation to colonization suggests about the destruction of the humanity of the oppressed. The destruction of a woman is similar to that of a black man. We adopted womanism as a decisively black and comprehensive term that expresses the combination of philosophy and faith in our reflection on the struggle of black women. We have also argued that gender is best understood as epistemological disturbance. Violence occurs when norms seem to subjugate life, when there is a negative rupture between power and life. Some of the key issues we discussed included the critique of binaries, the relationship between knowledge and power and the importance of interactions of the struggle for life pointing to the comprehensive commitment and liberation by womanism in South Africa. With these insights, how does a womanist dialogue with the grassroots communities without appearing to be an anti-dialogue exponent in conditions of black women's impoverishment?

In dialogue with Sarojini, Maluleke and Oduyoye's insights on issues of methodology in an encounter with grassroots communities, this chapter purposes to look at how other black women could appear as conquerors of black women rather than dialogical partners for the affirmation of their lives. If there are different black theologies, the assumption of this chapter is that there are different models of womanism too in relation to their connectedness with the grassroots and the methodologies that are employed to respond to the plight of a black woman. Our engagement with the grassroots, following the work titled *Life-Enhancing Learning Together* (LELT) (2016) is intended for the construction of liberation and life-affirming knowledge, and we highlight the dilemmas related to this commitment.

Our major question is: how do we engage with the lived experiences of black women? This is based on a self-critical reflection on the challenges of the Circle and our participation in the proceedings of the conference hosted by the Centre for Public Theology at the University of Pretoria in conversation with West African women, from the Women's Wing of the Christian Council of Nigeria. We look at the implications of these questions and dilemmas on womanism as a comprehensive paradigm of the liberation of black women and humanity.

5.2. On the Dilemmas of Dialogue with the Grassroots for a Womanist

Let us first explain what the dilemmas faced by a womanist could be in light of the discussions observed within the circles of the Circle, the Tshwane Circle Chapter (TCC) in particular. According to the minutes³⁸ of the TCC of 5 April 2017, a possibility of a seminar is discussed. The record of the minutes among other issues states:

Leomile, Morakane and Dorothy have been tasked to deal with the logistics of the seminar in terms of hosting and being in touch with the women groups either in Tembisa, Atteridgeville and Mamelodi. The aim of the seminar is to introduce the Circle to women at the grassroots. The meeting agreed that the seminar should be interactive (2017:2).

Two important things could be immediately observed here. First, it is a seminar that is to be held, and the minutes qualify the shape of the intended seminar as one to be interactive. The purpose of the seminar, our second point, is to introduce the Circle to women at the grassroots. It seems the qualification of this seminar for this declared purpose recognizes that a particular shape, an interactive mode of the seminar, might be suitable for the grassroots. One question came to mind as this matter was discussed: Is the seminar itself the best way of introducing the work of the Circle to

³⁸ TSHWANE CIRCLE CHAPTER MEETING, Minutes of the Circle meeting held on 5 April 2017 @ 10:00 Rm 09-103, TvW, Unisa

the grassroots? In the minutes³⁹ of the 25 May 2017 of the TCC, the following is recorded:

The Chair gave a brief background to help the sisters who were not in the previous meeting understand how the idea came about and that the aim was to introduce the Circle and to connect with women at the grassroots. She explained the responsibility given to Leomile, Morakane and Dorothy to deal with the logistics of the seminar and to get in touch with churchwomen's groups in either Tembisa, Atteridgeville or Mamelodi (2017:2).

What emerges here is an important aspect with some clarity: "the aim was to introduce the Circle and to connect with women at the grassroots". The desire to be connected with the grassroots is undeniably good and immediately suggests an admission by the TCC that there may have been no connection yet with the grassroots in Tembisa, Atteridgeville or Mamelodi townships around Pretoria. This is a question for us and if this connection is to be achieved, how do we then do it as womanists? One important source for us is the correspondence sent to women who are members of churches in the grassroots by the General Coordinator, dated 17 July 2017⁴⁰. Among others, the correspondence says:

In its commitment to ploughing back into the local communities, the TCC has decided to conduct a seminar in one of the local townships here in Pretoria during the month of August. The main aim of the Seminar is to allow academic women to dialogue with fellow church women, especially those who take keen interest in God-talk (theology) and Bible interpretation on one of the burning issues of our time, that is, gender-based violence. The Seminar seeks to address the following questions among others: How may church women respond to of Gender-Based Violence in our day? How may we read the Bible informed by the challenges faced by women and children in present day South Africa? Which role may women believers in our churches play in addressing this particular challenge?

This correspondence clearly says the TCC has decided on a mode of engagement, to conduct a seminar. The TCC is not deciding with the local communities about the

³⁹ TSHWANE CIRCLE CHAPTER MEETING, Minutes of the Circle meeting held on 25 May 2017 @ 10:00 Rm 2-13, UP

⁴⁰ See appendices.

mode of engagement and its commitment to plough back into these communities, it seems. The aim of the seminar is also clear: it is to allow “academic women to dialogue with fellow church women.” *Dialogue* is the key word for us as this thesis wrestles with this concept and meaning, without appearing to be succeeding. The correspondence from the General Coordinator also makes an important suggestion, the agenda. It seeks to establish how many church women respond to Gender-Based Violence, their reading of the Bible, meaning the hermeneutical questions and their possible role in addressing issues that trouble women in these contexts.

There are critical questions for us. The mode of engagement, the agenda, the aim to be in dialogue as “academic women” with the grassroots, the target of women i.e. those who are interested in theology and the Bible and more importantly, the desire to be connected with the grassroots.

These questions arise from the difference in approach when we conducted our field study. The programme of the Centre for Public Theology included one important item for us: Immersion into grassroots communities. It is this concept of immersion which shaped our engagement with the grassroots we learned about. This entailed going to these communities to listen, hear and see without an agenda. It is this clear contrast which shapes the question about the dilemmas a womanist faces all the time, a commitment to unlearn our academic constructs in connecting with the grassroots. Could foregrounding the purposes and intensions of the TCC have been the desired approach, we ask ourselves?

The book *Life-Enhancing Learning Together* (LELT) (2016) emerges from the space that envisions the creation of new epistemologies or paradigms to assist communities to construct knowledge in ways that are liberative. This work thus problematizes knowledge by critiquing forms of knowledge that are oppressive and conquering to the grassroots communities. It exposes various oppressions that intersect in the fragmentation of humanity by critically analysing theologies, spiritualities, economies, politics and technologies, among other things, and posits that new epistemologies and

methodologies are needed. This work further looks at forms of knowledge that ought to be rediscovered and cultivated in order for these communities to be liberated as academics are liberated too in their encounter with these communities.

One of the envisaged purposes of LELET is the creation of an “organic, relational, and holistic cosmo-vision” (2016:20). In order to achieve this, it attempts to debunk cognitive approaches that are abstract, dualistic and the spirit of conquering that undergirds them. It proposes a praxiological methodology (Oikos Sophia-Praxis) that is comprehensive and expressed through immersion that privileges the experiences of the marginalised in the construction of knowledge. The experiences of the indigenous communities and their epistemologies, therefore, are new epistemologies that must be enhanced to decentre the western forms of knowledge and their spirit of conquest. As a faith discourse, LELET presents a transformative expression of Christian faith that is relational, dialogical and one that is representative of Christians from these indigenous communities.

The records of the TCC, the intention to introduce the Circle to the said communities and the official correspondence to the women do not seem to suggest a praxiological methodology of engagement. This is the question this chapter seeks to engage with in the light of the rupture of the experiences of women in South Africa. Our goal is more to discover how this rupture continues to question our liberation notions and dialogical models that could lead to the opposite, if the experiences and epistemologies of the grassroots are not accorded a central place in the development of liberation knowledge. In encountering and in attempting to connect with the grassroots, there will be dilemmas that should be overcome as there are methodical questions at stake.

5.2.1. An Encounter with Grassroots: Methodological Questions at Stake

In one of his articles, titled “Theological interest in AICs and other grass-root communities in South Africa” (1996), Tinyiko Maluleke exposes the question of the relevance and need for theology even today. He observes the “double-edged

uncertainty” about whether theology is relevant to ordinary people and whether they in turn need it. To this effect, Maluleke’s work is an attempt to respond to the question of how grass-root theologians engage in interpretations of their chosen realities. Maluleke suggests caution about the texts that may not be innocent and exposes the use of Bible and theological justification of oppression of blacks. Following that, he exposes the fraudulence of theology and religion in their encounter with “people of the grassroots”; the missionary enterprise is a good example. He proposes an analysis and scrutiny of the validity and worth of the very notion of “theological connection to people”.

Furthermore, methods (interviews, questionnaires) employed for the task of connecting with people ought to be analyzed and objectives evaluated, he suggests. Importantly, the very instruments or methods and methodology, especially the preferred observer-based research methodologies which allow the researched to speak for themselves, for instance inspired by the humility and genuine modesty of the researchers, have a bearing on the outcome of the research.

Maluleke makes use of the study of AICs by predominantly white male scholars (political problem in research) whose interest was not on the AICs but rather on them and their churches, hence the lack of focus in the research itself as a typical example of the pseudo-connection with the grassroots. As a response to some white male scholar’s critique of absence of black scholars to study and write their own accounts of church life, faith and history, Maluleke points to a number of factors such as the discrimination of the past, finances and so forth. He makes a pivotal point, namely that not all blacks were interlocutors of black theology, or even AICs for that matter. The lack of engagement between white academics and black academics tells of this fraudulence, where white researchers, especially male scholars, choose to bypass black academics and black theologians to engage with grassroots and other liberation theologies.

The insistence on the scrutiny of theological connection to people, the grassroots, is important. Being alert to methodological questions in an encounter with grassroots, the experience of the oppressed, are core in the liberation paradigm, but there are mistakes we need to look out for and need to constantly attempt to deal with this dilemma. The aim and purpose of the encounter and methods one uses should also be under scrutiny if we are to remain true to our commitment as scholars of liberation. There are dilemmas, methodological questions, dangers and fraudulent discourses in our quest to connecting with the people and the grassroots in particular.

5.3. The Circle's Vision for Encounter with Grassroots

Mercy Oduyoye, the founder of the Circle, summarises the story of the Circle beautifully in her own words below:

The story of the Circle of Concerned African Women theologians, like all circles, began with a single point, which then disappeared. A solitary person does not make a community: therefore, a circle is about a community. Also, as the proverb goes, "if one tree braves the storm alone it falls". So when one lone woman went into theological field and found herself alone among men, she had no choice but to seek other sisters to join her so that together they might brave the challenges of being a woman theologian in one's own faith community. The story of the Circle is that of an "I" who becomes "we". This therefore, is not an objective story: it is being told by the very initiator of the Circle (Oduyoye, 2001b:97).

Oduyoye's is a groundbreaking story of women in theology in Africa. She tells of how she found herself in a male-dominated space, and how forming a community of other women scholars was her means of survival. Oduyoye displays this in her own story; "community" is arguably the heart of Africa. The Circle started in 1989 in Ghana, and it has spread to different African countries and has different chapters in South African universities in the 21st century. It continues to be a space of reflection for women, black and white, in a quest for the liberation of women. It exposes patriarchy from different

positions, personal experiences and contexts. Most important is the question of the “I” that becomes a “we” in the insights above. This is deeply dialogical in our view and a matter to which we should constantly return within the Circle, both from within and with our external dialogue partners.

Isabel Phiri⁴¹ summarises the introduction to the Circle by highlighting the aspect of communal theologising where women gather to reflect on religion, culture, politics and socio-economic issues affecting them. She posits, “The Circle seeks to build the capacity of African women to contribute their critical thinking and analysis to advance current knowledge using a theoretical framework based on theology, religion and culture. It empowers African women to actively work for social justice in their communities and reflect on their actions in their publications,”⁴² (2009:106). With regard to membership and type of theology, she states that the Circle has always been inclusive, even though diverse in terms of class, race, culture, nationality and religion (:106). It has been the Circle by African women from the African continent and in the Diasporas who thus reflect theologically on their diverse experiences of patriarchal oppression both in the domains of religion and in society.

The Circle, according to Phiri, is a diverse community of women that embraces differences in academic disciplines; for instance, if one looks at the Tshwane Chapter led by Madipoane Masenya (ngwana’ Mphahlele), we have Biblical scholars, practical and systematic theologians, missiologists, scholars from the College of Education and other disciplines. Some of these academics also serve in churches as ordained pastors, pastors’ wives and members of women’s associations. We remain, however, an academic enterprise, a location which has its challenges. Phiri (2009) identified four major challenges faced by African women in academia that are helpful for our discussion, namely: (1) redefining the identity of African women theologians; (2) promoting more women to study theology and be on permanent staff; (3) inclusion of

⁴¹Isabel Apawo Phiri is currently an assistant general secretary with the World Council of Churches (WCC). She previously served as the WCC’s associate general secretary for Public Witness and Diakonia. She is the former chair of African Theology in the School of Religion and Theology at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. From 2000 to 2007 she was the General Coordinator of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians.

⁴² These are the objectives of the Circle as reflected in the Circle draft constitution, 2007.

African women's theology in the theological curriculum; and (4) collaboration with male theologians. We engage these four challenges using Maluleke (1996) as our dialogue partner.

First, in redefining the identity of African women theologians, the question of who the interlocutor and what the location of an African woman theologian is, has according to Phiri haunted the Circle from its inception. It was, however, resolved that there would be two levels, as clearly articulated in the draft constitution⁴³. So, the Circle is an academic community of women and perhaps as an interjection, is unlike BTL, which emerged from the pews in the struggles for liberation. As an academic enterprise, it thrives on research, writing, presenting and publishing academic papers on religion and culture through the eyes of African women (:108). If we are following Maluleke, the question of the grassroots cannot escape us. What does an encounter with the Circle entail for them? Perhaps Maluleke's critique of the Circle will shed more light. He is one of the scholars who has critiqued it as being 'elitist' and ideologically exclusive. He believes that Circle women belong to a higher class and in South Africa specifically, it has become white-dominated over the years; it does not foreground these differences overtly and boldly and thus displays an ideology that denies difference (2001:248-249). Interlocution in doing liberation theology is inescapable.

Maluleke is amongst Black theologians who have pointed to the importance of liberation of black women and has co-authored papers with womanist scholars and shares his convictions even in conversations with them. The location of the Circle as a purely academic enterprise confined to the academic halls has a bearing on this observation. That the majority of women in the Circle are white speaks to the problem of race and the invisibility of black women in academia. Elsewhere Maluleke, in

⁴³ The 2007 draft constitution of the Circle recognises the two levels of African women theologians when it states: "The membership of the Circle shall be individual African women theologians who are committed to research, writing and publication. A woman theologian shall be defined as women who have studied religion and/or theology and religion at university departments, schools or faculties of Religious Studies/theology or in faith-based theological institutions. A woman theologian shall also include a woman of faith from other disciplines who share the concerns of the Circle (Phiri, 2009:106).

collaboration with Nadar (2004), has raised the issue of scarcity of black scholars, especially black women in academia. In their critique of challenges facing Black intellectuals, they argue that one of the major problems is that there is a shortage of black intellectuals, especially black females in the very location of the Circle in the academy.

Maluleke also exposes the contradictions of what the Circle says it is and what it is in reality. It defines itself as inclusive, but he observes the dominance of white women and suggests that there could be other power dynamics in varying contexts. Mndende (1998) makes the same observation as Maluleke. She asserts that they are exclusionary and unrepresentative of real African women. Maluleke and Mndende's critique is, to some extent, a true reflection of the women's movement's failure to self-critique and caution about the class biases and shortcomings of the Circle. The Circle, at its core, is inclusive and community-oriented according to Oduyoye, and this should always be kept in mind. This, however, is a methodological question.

As a response to this critique, there have been initiatives to expand the work of the Circle by taking it outside the academic halls to churchwomen in the pews, as shown in the TCC minutes and correspondence above. While the initiatives are commendable, the Tshwane Chapter reflects these dilemmas and methodological questions. The objectives of theological connection to people and methods employed for the task of connecting to people must not be left unchecked. The aim of the seminar, second, the mode of the presentation "papers", third, the development of the theme, were an exercise done by academics. The presenters' 'dialogue partners' as reflected in the programme⁴⁴ certainly reflect an elitist ideology at play in grassroots communities. How could this situation be reversed? A request may be made by Circle women to be hosted as compatible dialogue partners who go to grassroots women to just listen and learn, indeed listen and learn from "real African women"; the illiterate, according to Western standards (Mndende, 1998), but the "subaltern" (Spivak, 1988) and the "riff-raff of society" (Vellem, 2007) whose experience should be at the centre

⁴⁴ Tshwane Circle Chapter Seminar Programme attached in appendices.

of the construction of liberation knowledge. Masenya says that the black woman in South Africa is among the “most exploited person in community” (1994:37). She observes that “the average Black South African woman is a domestic or farm worker.

Domestic workers are the most exploited working group in South Africa” (:37). The invitation to the church women does not say anything about domestic workers but rather makes this troublesome qualification: “academic women to dialogue with fellow church women especially those who take keen interest in God-talk (theology) and Bible interpretation on one of the burning issues of our time, that is, gender-based violence.” Which church? Which theology? Which Bible? More importantly, the domestic workers who may not qualify as part of these “church women”, the very interlocutors identified by Masenya (ngwana’ Mphahlele), are not explicitly included.

Sarajini Nadar, in her article co-authored with Mutale Kaunda (2017) titled “Enough beads strung by the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians Exploring new agenda for Circle Theology”, puts on the possible new agenda of the Circle the role of grassroots women as something that needs attention. “The gnawing question of how grassroots African women who are not trained in academia fit within the Circle remain” (2017:353), Nadar and Kaunda argue. They also reflect on Isabel Phiri’s pragmatic proposal to “re-think its (the Circle’s) mission and vision” as a response to Maluleke’s critique. They argue that while this response is important, Maluleke’s critique opens up an opportunity for the Circle to problematize the role of the intellectual and scholar in work that engages religious and cultural norms in a quest for gender equality (:353). This work also critiques the decline in communal theologizing and proposes new themes that the Circle could reflect on, such as masculinities and queer theories. Maluleke, Nadar and Kaunda’s critique alerts us to biases that cannot be left unchecked and the need to self-critique even in spaces that claim to be liberative, the Circle being no exception.

In our critique of BTL in chapter 2, for instance, we identified how in one of the strands, namely the Black Solidarity-Materialist Strand, a comprehensive conceptualisation of

oppression is given. However, even that has its flaws if it fails to define the place of the marginalised, the grassroots, by overlooking the androcentric philosophical content of the liberation it espouses. There is no doubt that class eludes theologians, including women theologians, and it undermines a comprehensive liberation of women. Masenya (1994) makes a vital point for us: “The issue of class oppression also becomes an almost insurmountable problem for a Black (woman) in South Africa, for in this country class and racial discrimination go hand in glove” (1994:36). The issue of class undermines the aims of the Circle, which are to “Empower African women to contribute their critical thinking and analysis to advance current knowledge. Theology, religion and culture are the three chosen foci, which must be used as the framework for Circle research and publications” (Lugazia, 2017:355).

To return to Lugazia’s point nonetheless, we now should examine one of the aims of the Circle: to “Empower African women to contribute their critical thinking and analysis to advance current knowledge.” The key words for us are empowerment, African women and knowledge. Empowerment does not suggest that scholars or intellectuals are representatives of all African women and have all the knowledge to be listened to. While they have knowledge, the ‘illiterate’, according to western standards, our foremothers, grandmothers and mothers, who in the white power structure have always been on the bottom, are African women. They are embodiments of the very culture which is one of the three *foci* of the Circle. They are knowledgeable too and can speak for themselves.

That is the essence of communal theologizing which the Circle has to be constantly cautious about (Lugazia, 2017:355). In other words, as Oduyoye explicitly states above, dialogue in the Circle means the disappearance of the “I” in favour of the making and creation of the community and thus the challenge for us in the Circle to become a part of the community of the oppressed women with our elitist status diminishing, especially in our engagement with the grassroots.

Brigalia Bam, the chairperson of Thabo Mbeki Foundation, in the 2018 International Women’s Day lecture and panel discussion under the theme “Reclaiming feminism”

held at Unisa, responded to some of the insights of the lecture and questions posed by the audience. As a panelist, she suggested a shift from the podium. She proposed that we do away with podiums and dialogue (in a circle) as women and with men. A question was posed by a girl from one of the high schools in Pretoria on what reclaiming feminism might mean for them as girls who study with boys and if it implied that they should be nasty to them. Pumla Gqola suggested that at times, girls must be nasty to boys so as not to create the narrative that girls are soft, sweet and weak. Brigalia Bam also responded to that question and suggested that in reclaiming feminism, women should be aware that there can never be a women's world alone. God also created men.

The focus therefore should not be on reclaiming feminism as a flight from men, but rather a community that enhances life for both. Going to the grassroots to introduce the TCC without dealing with issues of class, the location of the Circle among academics, let alone the choice of conversation partners as "church women" without any explicit allusion to domestic workers, all point to the dilemmas of connecting with the grassroots. We need to examine the second point.

Second, the promotion of black women to be appointed to academic positions is ongoing but also explains how the Circle is located in academia – promoting more women to study theology and be permanent staff. One of the major challenges the Circle purposed to combat was the invisibility of women in academia (Grant, 1979). This is still very much a challenge in South African universities. Phiri observes the interrelation between women who study theology and those that teach theology. The former is tied to churches' resistance to ordination of women, and as a result, very few women have been endorsed by their churches to study theology. This also has financial implications and as a result, very few women are able to make it through. The latter is influenced by the link that was made by missionaries between the study of theology and ordained ministry (Phiri, 2009:111). Therefore, the work of the Circle has been influential in unmasking these biases and challenging churches' ideologies and stereotypes.

Third, the inclusion of African women's theology in the theological curriculum, i.e. "The need for mainstreaming gender in theological education is a global one and has been well articulated by a number of theological conferences and scholars" (Phiri, 2009:113). The Circle has played a significant role in promoting gender studies in theological curriculums as a means of exposing the structural injustices in the church, academia and society against women. To reiterate an earlier point, a gendered approach in Africa is not a single unit that deals with issues of women, but it is comprehensive in approach and is cognizant of the entire African context, i.e. how Christianity came to Africa; the cultural, social, and religious imperialism of the West. This aspect of our situation in South Africa, especially the ongoing discussions on curriculum transformation, is an important contribution the Circle should make.

Fourth, of the points raised by Phiri, collaboration with male theologians is important. "African women theologians in theological education are aware that the success of engendering the theological curriculum is connected to their collaboration with African male theologians in the academy and the churches," (2009:115). African women have always understood that they cannot speak of liberation in isolation as women, they need our African brothers to walk with us. Therefore, whenever there has been an emerging womanist voice, it has been to add another dimension, not to dispel and disregard a male voice that is crying for the liberation of black people. That is the central thesis of this work.

The Circle has arguably been a space where womanist thought has evolved in South African academia. It is important to highlight that in a diverse context, like that of Africa and South Africa, womanist thought has been named differently by different people; some call themselves African Women Theologians, Womanists, African/Black Feminists and so forth. The challenges that have been raised by Phiri above are helpful in understanding how African women do theology and how their context shapes their theology. The question is: "How do grassroots African women who are not trained in academia fit within the Circle?" (Nadar & Kaunda, 2017:353). The implications for womanism as an epistemological agency of black African women are that if it adopts a circle as a framework, as opposed to binaries, which we have deconstructed in the previous chapter, it must recover and resurrect the very essence of the Circle and

womanism's methodology, i.e. communal theologizing and constructive ways of being community.

We have begun our conversation with a self-critical engagement of the dilemmas that the Circle or a womanist faces in relation to the task of connecting with the grassroots. We demonstrated that connecting with the grassroots is a deep methodological question and problematized the role of an intellectual woman, class interests and ultimately, the circle as a symbolic and pivotal concept *à la* Oduyoye for an "I" that becomes a community for a womanist. In the section that follows, we take the discussion further on the dialogical journey with the grassroots texts of women, essentially to distinguish a different approach we followed in our research in 2016.

5.4. On Dialogue with Broken African Women's Bodies in Democratic South Africa

In this section, we harvest from the conference⁴⁵ with the theme: Broken Bodies, Patriarchy and African women. We look at issues that bring out the intersectionality of the oppression of black African bodies and glean from the lessons from the immersion of participants and some the theoretical analyses that emerged from the Conference.

5.4.1. Lessons from the immersion of the participants

The Conference used a methodology of immersion into the context of South Africa and the experiences of black women. The process of immersion is a method that seeks

⁴⁵ In pursuit of the research for our PhD work, upon receiving the request to host a number of women from Nigeria, we agreed that we would use this opportunity for the PhD work. So this Conference hosted by the Centre for Public Theology in conversation with West African women from Nigeria was our project that will still continue guided by the methodologies used by the Centre for Public Theology in encounters with the grass roots. From the 30th of June to the 2nd of July 2016, we hosted about 20 women (the National Executive Council Members, some were ministers, deaconess, elders and lay) from the Women's Wing of the Christian Council of Nigeria and a number of great minds in South African academia at the University of Pretoria. The Women's Wing of the Christian Council of Nigeria (WOWICCN) is an arm of the Christian Council of Nigeria which is made up of about 14 different denominations. Membership, though not exclusively, is mostly for married women between the ages of 32 up to 60 years and is representative of all the regions of Nigeria. The general objective of the ecumenical conference was to create a space for dialogue between women from West Africa and South Africa on the brokenness of bodies of African women and ramifications of patriarchy in the 21st century.

to follow Paulo Freire's seminal work, *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Freire's theory was used by the BCM and women's movements in South Africa. We began the conference with social analysis through an immersion process. Some of the ideas associated with Freire include the understanding that liberation is ongoing and the importance of the animation arising from the lived experiences of the poor and the oppressed, animation or inspiration that springs out of the 'dungeons' of impoverishment. The well-known "See, Judge and Act" methodology within liberation circles uses immersion as a process for seeing for the researcher and to enter into deep dialogue that might have to change both the researcher and the marginalized. Immersion is commonly used by ecumenical movements such as the WCC, CWM and WCRC. In January 2018, we also participated in a similar process in Accra, Ghana, as part of the delegation and visit to Elmina.

Therefore, we went to the Apartheid Museum, the Hector Peterson Memorial, Mandela House and the informal settlement of Stoffel Park in Pretoria. By visiting these sites, we embarked on a journey of the history of subjugation, racial segregation and oppression of black people and thus broken bodies in South Africa. The visit to the Apartheid Museum avoided telling the story of South Africa to participants by allowing them to see it for themselves and begin to grapple with grasping and understanding our history of oppression and brokenness. Tears were shed by some participants as they were beginning to plunge themselves into this history of broken bodies while others identified with this history, connecting it with their own in Nigeria. There were South Africans too who were seeing the Apartheid Museum for the first time.

The Apartheid Museum was a walk back into a history that claimed many lives of black people, a journey into the brokenness of black people and black women. The first thing that struck our guests were the signs saying 'Whites only' and 'Non-Whites' at the entrances. These signified the racial and class classification that was the order of the day in South Africa prior to 1994 and, to some extent, even today. The locations (townships) where many poor and broken bodies, i.e. the non-beneficiaries of such a system, black men and women, the interlocutors of BTL and womanism, reside up to this day, is telling. In his critique of the South African situation post-1994, Boesak

posits, “we have deleted political and social apartheid from our statute books, yet not from the political, economic and social life of the nation” (2014:422). He further locates women post-1994 and argues that they are “ravaged in all forms, physically, emotionally, psychologically” (:422). One does not need to go to any museum to see what bodies of these women can tell. Broken bodies of African women post-1994 are a sign of the 21st century; we submit that womanism knows, feels, sees and understands this better!

As we walked together, certain incidents, as portrayed in the pictures hanging there, stood out for our Nigerian guests; pictures of people being physically removed from their homes and relocated elsewhere against their will. The implementation of the policy of separate development was designed to separate black families but also guaranteed that they were never reunited. Pictures of broken black bodies of men and women who were brutally shot during protests, where they were fighting for their human rights in a country where such rights never existed, were also some of most fascinating to the participants and the most commented on. The police shooting of protesting Marikana miners on 16 August 2012 in Lonmin Mine, post-1994, cannot be forgotten, especially by women who are mourning in agony as they witnessed the brutal killing of their sons, husbands, fathers and brothers by the police shooting (Kobo, 2018b). Broken bodies that continue to break, one could argue, was the experience that came out of the immersion process and visit to the Apartheid Museum.

As we approached the exit of the Museum, we saw pictures that portray the transition into our democracy in South Africa. These were pictures of people standing in long queues for the first time in 1994 to vote for their president, pictures of the first black democratically elected president of the Republic of South Africa, Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela, his successors, and the new flag of South Africa; playing in the background was our South African anthem, “*Nkosi sikelel’i Afrika*”. It must be stated that the demise of Winnie Madikizela Mandela has disrupted this history and the story depicted in the museum. Zenani Mandela Dlamini, Winnie’s eldest daughter, gave a speech at her funeral that forces us as South Africans to take another look at the history of Nelson Mandela without Winnie Madikizela Mandela. She avers:

Much of what my mother has been constantly asked to account for is simply ignored when it comes to her male counterparts. And this kind of double standard acts also to obscure immense contribution of women to the fight for the emancipation of our country from the evil of apartheid. ... I hope that the rediscovery of the truth about my mother helps South Africans come to terms with the pivotal role that she, Winnie Nomzamo Madikizela Mandela, played in freeing us from the shackles of the systems of terrorism and white supremacy known as apartheid (Dlamini, *Mail & Guardian*: 14 April 2018).

The absence of Winnie is also evident in Mandela House in Soweto, whose mission is to provide an effective, efficient and meaningful experience to all visitors, informing them of President Nelson Mandela's story (Mandela House⁴⁶). Surely, being Mandela's wife is not only what Winnie was in this country, we argue. It is telling of the kind of society where women fight for freedom and men get the recognition. A society that arguably denied us a black woman president, if one looks at the role Winnie played while most men were either in jail or in exile, including Nelson Mandela.

Zenani posits:

I truly believe that it is worth repeating that long before it was fashionable to call for Nelson Mandela's release from Robben Island, it was my mother who kept his memory alive. She kept his name on the lips of the people. Her very appearance – regal, confident and stylish – angered the Apartheid authorities and galvanized the people. She kept my father's memory in the people's hearts (Dlamini, *Mail & Guardian*: 14 April 2018).

The story of Winnie is that of many black African women who were only seen as "adjuncts to men, rather than historical protagonists in their own right" (Bowie, Kirkwood & Ardner, 1994:1). She was erased from the history records only to be redeemed at death. Is the death of Winnie a resurrection for us as women? The researcher finds Zenani's tribute redeeming! Indeed, it must be recorded in history that

⁴⁶ <http://www.mandelahouse.com/>. Date accessed, 27 April 2018.

there would have never been a Nelson Mandela without Winnie. This struggle was not for men only; there were women too! The life and death of Winnie is a reminder to black women of their place because nothing has really changed. While Winnie was still alive, Kimberley Yates gave a womanist critique of the demonising of Winnie as a ploy to erase her from the history of the struggle. She exposed close affinities between patriarchy and the subordination of women who fail to conform to societally accepted and designated roles (1998:98). Yates suggests that in a patriarchal society, power is a man's domain. Consequently, Winnie Mandela was aspiring to what in reality belonged to men and society would not allow it.

The sin of patriarchy continues to manifest itself as it is perpetuated by women themselves. One of the speeches made by Angie Motshekga, the former president of the African National Congress Women's League, was that South Africa was not ready for a female president (Ngubane, The Public news Hub: 10 October 2013). The ignorance of women who were at the forefront of the struggle with the likes of Winnie is appalling. South African society is still racist and patriarchal except that violence has become more subtle and safeguarded by women themselves. Is the death and dying of black African women's bodies an insurrection? This is the question of the 21st century. But there is more. The immersion process as we have just shown in the story of Winnie Madikizela Mandela was an experiential text of the struggle of women deferred. The very Apartheid Museum and our exit from this oppressive system leads us to welcoming men as we go out of the museum, not women, not Winnie Madikizela Mandela and others.

We concluded the immersion in Stoffel Park, an informal settlement in Mamelodi in one of the townships in Pretoria. Townships, informal settlements and rural areas are locations of the interlocutors of BTL and womanism, the poor and the riff-raff of society in many ways. In Stoffel Park, we met with a group of women in the Presbyterian Church run by a Korean missionary and pastor, the Rev Samuel Kim. We had a conversation in a circle where women narrated their stories of brokenness and how the government was failing them through lack of service delivery and security, a cry of many in the democratic South Africa (Boesak, 2014; Vellem, 2016a).

Below are brief summaries of narratives that demonstrate the death and dying of black bodies of women in Stoffel Park:

One participant is an unemployed single parent of four children. She has been living in informal settlements most of her life. Like many poor and unemployed citizens in our country, she is dependent on social grants offered by the government. She is a woman who does everything and tries her utmost best to play both parental roles to her children. To top up the social grant, she uses her hands to do people's hair and at times gets recruited by certain company reps to sell various products. She posits that "it is not easy being a woman" and further states that she is surviving not living. She also points to violence as one of their everyday challenges in this informal settlement. "Every morning, I thank God, trusting in God, everything that happens, I place my life in God's hands", says the participant.

Another participant is also a single parent to four children, and widowed and disabled. She has lived in informal settlements since 2008 and is also dependent on social grants. As children are growing, her responsibilities require her to find other means of income. She laments that "it is not easy to live in an informal settlement with her disability and there are facilities to support her". She, however, has to work even if she is not well because her children expect her to take care of them. She prays to God for providence and puts her trust in the Lord.

Another participant's struggle is different from the two. She is a married woman and is employed by the church. Her husband is employed as a supervisor in the Fidelity Guard Security Company. Her cry is, however, violence and lack of security in this informal settlement. She states that when her husband is at work at night, she puts her trust in God (Notes taken personally on the 30th of June 2016).

The three stories above expose or animate our thoughts to many different struggles of black women in South Africa. They range from single-parented homes, absence of husbands and fathers, unemployment, poverty, disability, insecurity and violence. All of them explicitly say something about God. The confrontation of a womanist with

these lived experiences raises deep questions. What does an understanding of God that is not in harmony with these lived experiences suggest about violence, disability, insecurity and many other ills in our society? Edet and Ekeya lift up these experiences as 'deepest theological experiences'. They write:

The domestic rituals that revolve around the mother and her children are the traditional woman's deepest theological experiences. Her performance of these rituals is itself a theological statement. It is statement of faith in the one God manifested in traditional religion as in Christianity. It is a statement of human dependence on constantly staying in touch with God and of the sanctity of covenantal relations (Edet & Ekeya, 1989:10).

These are the kind of experiences that cannot be comprehended by hegemonic Western frameworks, as stated in the previous chapter. White feminists do not understand the struggles of black African women, and this does not mean that their insights are not helpful for these struggles. This does not also mean that they may not express their commitment and solidarity with these struggles. They can be helpful with methodological caution. For as long as some approach others from a position of certainty and arrogance, dare black women care to be understood by white people? In our opinion, this is doubtful.

Our point is that there is something in the immersion process we can learn as a methodological approach to connect our theology with the grassroots as womanists. Visiting the Apartheid Museum, which was our first experience, helped paint a picture about the bigger context in which the degradation of black African lives is in South Africa post-1994. The text of this museum is troubling, as we have already spoken about the absence of Winnie Mandela in Mandela's house in Soweto and the links we have also made about the Marikana Massacre. This immersion confirmed our question in this thesis, the relegation of black women's struggle for liberation even in South Africa post-1994. How present are the three participants in the country that is liberated today? Is our democracy androcentric and our faith in it ideological? The participants

spoke, we went to listen to them and did not give them an agenda. We were confronted with lived experiences.

5.5. The Lived Experiences of black African Women for Theological Connection with the Grassroots

Our preoccupation with the question of dialogue so far has been inspired by the critical questions that arose from the TCC in relation to the methodology we attempted to use in our field work at the grassroots. We share the desire and constant interaction with the grassroots and for us, the question of methodology and consciousness of our status as academic women is of great importance. If we were to make some choices, the LET approach and indeed Paulo Freire's teachings, especially the latter's relationship with BC, would inspire our own approach in an endeavour to connect with the grassroots. To diminish conquering effects, an academic should be alert to the fact that they could be critiqued for any approach taken in dealing with the lived experiences of the impoverished women. We have already made the point that there are distinguishable models of doing Black Theology, different notions of liberation, harder questions of the relationship any philosophy and theology could have with spirituality. We need to further explain what the meaning of the lived experiences are for a womanist.

In the language of *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, the lived experience must animate an academic if we recall the idea of animation. Animation could mean inspiration, being fired up, a 'spirited' encounter, and thus spirituality too. Enrique Dussel explains this very well when he employs the term "face-to-face"⁴⁷, with *face* signifying "what appears of the other, his or her corporeality and his or her "fleshly reality" (1988:9). The face-to-face encounter of persons and their experience of one another constitute them as relational, and thus as neighbors, suggests Dussel. If one person faces or experiences, for instance, poverty, brokenness and the struggle of the other, their

⁴⁷ Dussel's face-to-face is inspired by "The Lord spoke to Moses face to face" (Exod. 33:11) (1988:9). One also has to keep in mind the fact that the Exodus is central to the liberation paradigm.

encounter becomes that of solidarity. Following Oduyoye's "I" that becomes "we", face-to-face thus collapses the "I". We should always be alert to the alternative epistemology, vision of life and paradigms the victims of oppression black women point us to rather than bring their lived experiences which constitute the philosophy of blackness to our own philosophies, especially Western Eurocentric systems of knowledge. As academics of BTL, we must be alert to the danger of using these lived experiences as tools for middle-class ideologies and cultural perspectives (Mosala, 1989:191). A womanist approach we seem to choose is one that is constantly subversive in academia, and subversive in systems of knowledge in favour of the victims of oppression.

To illustrate this point, we attempted to combine the discussions of the scholars and grassroots women at BD Yanta, a congregation of the UPCSA in Tembisa Township for a dialogue. We were able to get churchwomen in the congregation and from other denominations such as the Methodist Church of South Africa (MCSA), the Presbyterian Church of Africa (PCA) as part of our dialogue with our Nigerian sisters. Uzoaku Williams, the National Secretary of the Women's Wing of the Christian Council of Nigeria added some insightful dimensions to map the Nigerian context to help us understand how the context influences gender relations.

Williams highlighted the fact that Nigeria is a patriarchal society too. Her presentation therefore looked at patriarchy and gender inequalities in Nigeria. She first critiqued the impact of African cultural traditions on interpretations of gender roles. She argued that the imbalances in gender roles, as practiced in communities, including those of faith, located women in the kitchen and barred them from public spaces. She posits that in Nigerian society, men are only seen as the leaders in the church; women, whether capable or not, are merely regarded as followers.

A point is made by Mothlabi (1973) who argues that there is a social structure that is justified by biblical injunctions, which suggests that men are superior to women. This manifests itself in various situations, including home and church. Williams observes

ways in which this imbalance manifests, through unequal distribution of power, control, discrimination, objectification, physical, emotional and spiritual abuse and the use of the Bible to justify these abuses. Kobo (2018a), Maluleke and Nadar (2002), Mosala (1988) and Oduyoye (1995a&b) are among scholars who have made the point of the justification of women's oppression by church and Bible. On this, a fellow Nigerian woman from the pews said, "The church has failed to show love," citing different forms of abuse women suffer from in the church, affirmed Williams (2016b).

What we deduced from her presentation and through engagements with our Nigerian sisters is that there are convergences between our contexts. Ours are patriarchal societies and perhaps one of the contributions of the womanist dialogue is to ask the question whether African societies have always been patriarchal. By posing that question, we begin to interrogate the assumption that African culture is patriarchal (Kobo, 2016) and the suggestion that Western culture is thus an ideal. By posing that question, we become aware of the external force and the presence of the West in Africa. We expose the affinities between the west and subjugation of Africans manifested through western Christianity, civilization, modernity and discovery of the new world.

As we do so, we remember that we have always had religion, as posited by Biko, that "We believed in one God, we had our own community of saints through whom we related to our God, and we did not find it compatible with our way of life to worship in isolation from the various aspects of our lives (Biko, 1976:42). The implications of the encounter of the West with Africa resulted in the colonisation and enslavement of many black Africans and especially women. The West imposed their dualistic worldviews on a communal-oriented value system that debunks binaries. This encounter led to the killing of many, and the eradication and denigration of anything African (Kobo, 2018b; Oduyoye, 2001a; Njoh, 2006; Shani, 2014) — the fragmentation of black humanity.

The presentation from our Nigerian sister set the tone for our conversation with churchwomen. We then listened to personal stories and experiences of broken bodies by South African women that steered the conversation to another level, changing the mood to a more somber one. We concluded those in a round table with churchmen and clergy in dialogue.

An elderly divorced woman, mother of three children and a leader of a women's association in the Presbyterian Church of Africa (PCA), narrated her story in her isiXhosa mother tongue. We made use of the services of a translator for the benefit of our Nigerian guests. Her brokenness stems from her experiences in her marriage. She told us that her husband was a drunkard, and they quarreled a lot about different things. She developed stress and cited a few stress-related incidences where she could not function well because of her state of mind. Following that, she lost her job as a domestic worker, and this had a huge impact on her and her family, especially because she never got support from her husband, who later abandoned her and went to his place of birth in the rural areas.

Black South Africans have two places that they call home. There is a home in urban areas where one is employed and a home in rural areas where one was born. This was not by choice but is one of the creations of a ruthless system with policies that forced men to leave their place of birth to work in the mines. There are policies of separate development and restrictive urbanisation that fragmented black homes and humanity. Interestingly what we see in this story is a reversal.

The Sindanis resided together in an urban area, but later the husband left this place to return to his birthplace, where his umbilical cord is buried, and where his ancestors are. So, this system and policies uprooted black Africans even in cases where the family resided together; the longing to be united and reconciled with *ikhaya and ubuhlanti* remained⁴⁸. He was obviously going back to be restored, if one takes note

⁴⁸ *Ubuhlanti* is a site regarded with high esteem among amaXhosa. The umbilical cords of children are buried in the kraal and introduction of the living and the dead, i.e. ancestors, is performed there. *Ubuhlanti* was a site of economics in a traditional Xhosa home; the size of the kraal and number of cattle was a sign of wealth and good welfare (Kobo, 2016: 4). It is, according to Velle (2007:321), a point where every fragmentation that exists in a household is restored,

of his drunkenness, which was because of brokenness. This points to a struggle of a black man and woman, as posited by Biko in chapter 2. The fragmentation is foundational in these policies. They began to drift away and ultimately separated, and she assumed the responsibility of single-handedly raising three children, a fragmented family. She further narrates that her circumstances made her a teary woman, but she had to pull herself together for the sake of the children. However, she posits that God gave her strength and granted her courage to go on even though, at times, she was tempted to drown her sorrows in liquor.

The stories of Mrs Sindani and those cited in chapter 2 are a reflection of an average black home, which is a site of struggle in South Africa post-1994. They expose the depth of the fragmentation in a black home. This is a story of many black African women; some of these women never got married and had to raise children alone. Her case is that of a woman who had to survive abuse in marriage, divorce, economic struggle, a multiple jeopardy. It is not surprising that an oppressed person will be disturbed mentally; as demonstrated in earlier chapters, oppression eats up the psyche of the oppressed. Hence, you will find others resorting to liquor as an escape. It is also not unusual to find women from such contexts turning to church as another escape. The researcher has demonstrated elsewhere the pseudo-spirituality of oppressed African women, for whom prayer is an escape route. In that work, reference is made to a liturgical practice where women gather to pray for their pain and suffering as something that will be dealt with in the next life (Kobo, 2018a).

One of the most touching moments came from the story told by an ordained minister of the UPCSA, narrating her pre- and post-ordination experiences. Her narrative affirms our earlier contention that the UPCSA is a patriarchal denomination (Kobo, 2018a). To reiterate the point made earlier, one needs to look at the post-ordination experiences of women in the institutional church, e.g. the UPCSA, as a vital, necessary critique of the weakness in the struggle for women's liberation and deep-

as it is 'the habitus' of the living dead who hold all spheres together responsible for the satiation and security of 'ikhaya. The loss of *ubuhlanti* dislocates an African (Kobo, 2016).

seated roots of patriarchy in church structures. The following statement sets the scene for her narrative:

It crashed to the floor, breaking into an explosion of pieces. Beyond repair. My favourite mug, now being swept into the trash. One would perhaps say, “You should have been more careful,” or I would mumble those words to myself. In the midst of a hurried cleaning frenzy, I’d lost my grip. So telling of real life. “Just glue it, Mom,” my kids would say. But it would never be the same. The damage was done (Ngebulana, 2016:1).

These were the opening words of Ngebulana’s narrative as she literally dropped a mug on the floor and it crashed into pieces. The powerful symbol of a broken and shattered mug drew us closer to her own brokenness. As we were still in shock about what we saw, she then posed the following questions, “Have you ever felt that way? Broken? Shattered? Set on a shelf? Tossed aside? Or thrown away?” She further argued that in most instances, trying to fix or restore a broken cup was too much work. In addition, the alternative is to “just get a new one”. Another way of dealing with broken things is to hide them away, she writes. “Don’t let anyone see the broken flaws.” She, however, chose to break the silence and narrated her story of brokenness which for her felt like a reopening of the wounds that have been inflicted upon her by the church. She, however, comforted herself with the following isiXhosa idiom, “*Ithumba liphila ngokugqajuzwa*⁴⁹, Squeeze the pus out of the abscess to cure it (Ngebulana, 2016:1).

She shared some of her experiences of brokenness in church as a black ordained woman. One of the things she pointed out as a challenge was dominant gender roles — the perception that only men are called to be ministers. This at times was perpetuated by fellow women. She also expressed how being an ordained woman exposed one to oppression from men, old and young, and women equally. She avers:

⁴⁹ An idiom often used to comfort those who are in pain or hurting, and to assure them that that it has to hurt before it gets better.

There are times when I will be addressed “*Tat’ umfundisi.*” That alone does not make me feel accepted as a woman minister. Though I am wearing a dress or a skirt but people who are expected to be “*umfundisi*” are males, and I never saw a man wearing a dress or hear them calling the male ministers in cassocks “*mam’ umfundisi*” because of the dress he would be wearing. This simply conveys a message that even the women don’t appreciate us as female ministers (2016:3).

Ngebulana’s is a story shared by many women in the ordained ministry. Some stories and oppressions vary but hers is affirming. In breaking one’s own silence, I reflect on my own journey as equally challenging. In the year when I was due for probation, from the group of eligible candidates, which was predominantly male, I was the last to be placed in a congregation. I have observed that up to this day, it is more difficult to find a congregation for a woman than it is for a man. This speaks to one of the challenges that confronts us as women; Sibeko and Haddah have pointed to others in chapter One.

The main issue is that the UPCSA is a patriarchal denomination. This manifests in different spaces, i.e. the acceptance of ordained women by the church in general, but also by women. It is one thing to ordain women; their acceptance is another. The issue of socialization and naming, among other things, our pre- and post-ordination experiences are untold stories that expose how even church can play a role in breaking black bodies that continue to bleed up to this day. The question for the researcher is whether ordained ministry is a call to break black women’s bodies. Is it an atonement?

From the title of Mrs Mangxila, a school teacher, Presbyterian woman and a member of women’s *manyano* ‘s presentation, ‘Negative Impacts of Patriarchy in black Christian women and the body brokenness it has caused’, one is able to see from the onset the affinities between patriarchy and brokenness of black ‘Christian’ women. One observes her use of ‘Christian’ women, not ‘African’ women as suggested in the theme. This observation stems from continuous tension between being African and

being Christian. It exposes the Christian missionaries' endeavour to "Christianize Africa in the context of slavery and colonization" (Oduyoye, 2001a:22), and the denigration of African belief systems, traditional practices, customs, the place and role of women in society (Njoh, 2006:4). Vellem (2014b:3) calls us into remembering affinities between Western Christianity and cultural subjugation of black Africans. Oduyoye, Njoh and Vellem expose this tension of a people who had to lose their history, culture, and religion, i.e. their dislocation, in order for them to be Christian.

Mangxila pointed us to culture, which she associates with patriarchy as one of the causes of the wounds that African women suffer from. She points to a number of issues that intersect in the oppression of black 'Christian' women – the struggles of black women in church who are subjugated on the basis of gender, as suggested by Williams even in the Nigerian context. She exposes the negative aspects of African culture translated to church contexts. She observes the internalized inferior state of women which makes them translate their feelings of contempt to other fellow women as demonstrated by Schüssler Fiorenza in chapter 3.

Mangxila also points to the question of land, over which, culturally, women did not have rights or ownership. Yet land, she argues, is an important aspect of our identity and origins as Africans. Our brokenness, therefore, she argues, is also because of our dislocation from land by the colonizer and patriarchal cultures. Fanon (1963) and Ngugi wa Thiong'o (2009) make this point in the second chapter on the loss of land as loss of dignity and humanity. African culture, like any culture, has negative aspects and is, to some extent, patriarchal. This cannot be downplayed but rather needs to be exposed and dealt with. Many people have been silenced and excluded in the name of culture. Gender roles and location of women in the kitchen and men in the kraal have affirmed this negativity in our culture (Kobo, 2016). Culture, on the other hand, is said to be "African women's unique contribution to women's theologies" (Lebaka-Ketshabile, 1995:48) as demonstrated in chapter 3. This unique contribution demands that we affirm ourselves as Africans first, a mission that has proved to be a difficult one; to teach a person who has been taught all their life to hate themselves is difficult. A womanist framework calls us to that task of self-affirmation and critique of negative

aspects of our African culture. Those negative aspects that are life-denying need to be interrogated. Mangxila further states: “It is a known phenomenon that our bodies as women are made tools of communication by our male counterparts”. Relationships, for instance, between African men and women and African women’s bodies are spaces for that life-affirming dialogue. We need to begin to talk about positive masculinities as opposed to men seeing women’s bodies as objects of pleasure.

The interaction between an academic and the lived experiences of everyday people is what we have attempted to present at length in our immersion process. The convergence between the plight of an African woman in South Africa and Nigeria, the experience of dislocation from home and the brokenness of women all share an important aspect: feeling. Yes, the interaction with these experiences make an academic feel, sometimes even creates a rupture between what an academic may think and what they may feel in these experiences. If we succeeded, then our point is that these feelings animate a rupture whose response is solidarity but more so, epistemological and paradigmatic assumptions that break womanism away from Eurocentric systems of knowledge.

5.6. Black African Women Bodies that Matter

The Circle, which we have discussed, shows that for black women bodies are important and they matter. These bodies speak and theirs is a unique contribution to epistemology. Womanism is that framework that enhances the epistemological agency of these lived bodies. As demonstrated above, the Circle provides a space for these bodies to speak. Bodies and wombs of third-world women are arguably sites of the struggle, contested spaces, surveilled sites and texts (Henderson, 1991; Anderson-Rajkumar, 2010; Segalo, 2016).

Butler posits that to problematize the matter of bodies may entail an initial loss of epistemological certainty, a loss, which she argues, signifies a shift in political thinking.

She writes, “This unsettling of ‘new matter’ can be understood as initiating new possibilities, new way for bodies to matter” (1993:30). Looking at bodies, therefore, requires a loss of knowing what is unknown by those who are privileged. This suggests for white feminism a loss of their whiteness and for males a loss of their androcentric constructs. It also calls for humility as one embarks on a journey of discovery, yet it is a journey of plunging, solidarity and liberation. We look first at the problem of bodies in general, and secondly, we look at white bodies as different to black bodies.

Lastly, we look at reflections of black bodies, patriarchy and African women, i.e. social analysis, conceptual analysis and experiences, as narrated by women themselves. Rajkumar-Anderson (2010:200) asserts, “The contour of a female body has often been posed as a problem to the masculinized body/mind”. She further calls us to remember the role played by the Church Fathers – Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, Origen and the most cited in our times, Paul the apostle, to name a few – who demonized female bodies as an escape from dealing with their own understanding of sin, the body, and sexuality. Locating the problem in the feminine other was an escape, she argues (:200). She further observes that their notions of gender and sexuality reveal the depth and history of the process of masculinization. She avers:

The message that comes back powerfully is this: it is not the vulnerability of the female foetus, the womb of a woman, the body of the woman that emerges as the focus of the masculinized world. Rather, it is the power of the womb as a potential threat to subvert sexism that is considered dangerous within and for a patriarchal society. Violence against women, especially those targeted on the wombs and bodies of women, should be seen as ways of driving women and men back into respective boundaries of patriarchal power to conform to the identity and maintain status quo (Anderson-Rajkumar, 2010:204).

Rajkumar-Anderson observes that women’s bodies are not as fragile as perceived in a masculinized world. She suggests that the only way to keep a woman’s body in check and within the masculinist framework is to break it and silence it. This justifies rape, sexual harassment, abuse and exploitation. Otherwise, a liberated woman is an

affront to patriarchy. The lie that males must rule has to be protected at all costs. So for power to be maintained, there must always be broken bodies and powerlessness. In the name of civilization, modernity and democracy for that matter, bodies of African women are subverted and broken. Sanders elucidates this point when she argues:

The transnationality illiterate student might not know that the worst victim of the play of multinational pharmaceuticals in the name of population control is the woman's body...; that in the name of development, international monetary organizations are substituting the impersonal and incomprehensible State for the older more recognizable enemies-cum-protectors: the patriarchal family (2006:3).

In order for the white patriarch, her white madam, and black man to remain in power, bodies of black women must remain in the dungeons. Otherwise, ethical systems cannot be reconciled and her liberation disturbs the world order. It is also in the name of Jesus that this lie is maintained. Oduyoye exposes the tendency of the church to associate itself with anything that oppresses or even questions the true humanity of the other, to the extent of even justifying that oppression and marginalisation using the Bible (Oduyoye, 1995a:480-481). EATWOT statement (1992) gives nuances to this justification: "The oppression of women by patriarchal religion, including Christianity, and the androcentric language and interpretation of scriptures are other expressions of this. The marginalisation women experience in the church is indeed another form of violence against them" (EATWOT Statement, 1992:50-51).

Therefore, if Rajkumar-Anderson's thesis is correct, to respond to the question of whether women's bodies matter: they do matter! Even black women's bodies matter! "Black women's bodies have been degraded, demeaned, demonized, and locked into an oppressive gaze of so-called normative beauty created in opposition to us" (Cannon, 2007:23). Nevertheless, black women's bodies matter! Their powerful powerlessness disturbs the powerful. There is, however, a difference between white and black women's bodies. This point is well articulated by Alice Walker as follows:

It occurred to me that perhaps white feminists, no less than white women, generally, cannot imagine that black women have vaginas. Or if they can, where imagination leads them is too far to go. However, to think of black women is impossible if you cannot imagine them with vaginas. Perhaps it is the black woman's children, whom the white woman – having more to offer her own children, and certainly not having to offer them slavery or a slave heritage or poverty or hatred, generally speaking: segregated schools, slum neighbors, and the worst of everything – resents. For they must always make her feel guilty. She fears knowing that black women want the best for their children just as she does. But she also knows black children have less in this world so that her children, white children, will have more (1984:373-374).

Walker's powerful statement dispels any possibility of white feminism as representative of black bodies. It also dispels notions of universal patriarchy, the dichotomies and the singling out of women. It speaks to class and race differences and everything else that has made it impossible for white feminism to fight for liberation of all women. By women, white feminists refer to white and do not imagine black, broken and dying bodies as women and bodies that matter. In her study of Luke 24:1-12, Jennifer Leath observes close affinities between womanist theology and the dying bodies of what Katie Cannon calls the "hyper (in)visible". By using this term, she expresses ways in which "Black women's bodies are extremely visible insofar as they are bodies suitable for oppression, suffering and extermination, but are ignored, erased and non-existent insofar as they are part of a human community suitable to participate in every level of human engagement and discourse (Leath, 2018:2).

What we discern for this section is that bodies of black and African women are sites of struggle, contested spaces, surveilled sites and texts. They are a problem to a Eurocentric, masculinist and racist establishment. They are subverted, broken and dungeoned to maintain power imbalances. They are suitable for oppression, suffering and extermination. However, there are close affinities between womanist theology, i.e. epistemology, and these bodies. This takes us to the section where we trace the fragmentation and dungeoning of black personhood and humanity in the transatlantic

slave trade out of Ghana, followed by narratives of ruptured broken bodies of women in South Africa post-1994.

5.7. The Genesis of the Struggle of African Women

The dungeoning of black humanity started at Elmina Castle in 1492. Elmina depicts the colonization of black humanity and violence against black women in the dungeons of this castle. One has to look at the location of black Africans in the dungeons of this castle: spaces where they were kept that were never cleaned until they had to exit the castle through the gate of no return to cross the Atlantic and never set their feet on African soil again. The location of black African women was the worst, as they were just below the Dutch Reformed Church. They were kept there and only cleaned when they were taken to be raped by the governor and sometimes the guards (Kobo, 2018b). This relationship between the church and the oppression of women has continued to this day.

Lydia Kompe, a wife, mother and trade unionist, whose narrative also appears in *Vukani Makhosikazi* (1985), articulates this point well. Looking at her three roles, she asserts, it is "...not the easiest combination. To be black and a woman in South Africa poses problems enough" (Barret et al., 1985:97). In sharing her experiences as a trade unionist and being the only woman among men, she states, "It was a real problem, but I learned to live with it. I felt inferior all the time, maybe because we African women are taught to think that we are inferior to men" (Barret et al., 1985:104). Lydia's story and those in chapter 2 of the two black women from *Vukani Makhosikazi* reflect an average black home, arguably a site of struggle, in South Africa then and, to some extent, today. They expose the depth of fragmentation in a black home; how capitalism creates monsters out of husbands, fathers and arguably, mothers and children. This is the struggle of black humanity.

Vellem's allusion to proponents of the "rebel tradition" à la Khabela points us to other insidious forms of the dungeoning of black African women. Nontetha Nkwenkwe, a South African woman who was a religious leader, a seer and prophetess, who promoted unity among black Africans (Vellem, 2014a), and Queen Nzinga of Angola, a great patriot, stateswoman, leader and diplomat, a military and political strategist, who defied colonised power by dropping Ann, her supposed "Christian" name chosen for her (Vellem, 2015a), all indicate the harrowing experiences of black women. These two women not only disturb the Western hegemony through resilience, but further expose how colonial powers respond to black resistance. Their very existence, being and experiences, crack the skull of Eurocentric male hegemony. Experiences of Third World women are an affront to such a value system; their lives are "so complex and unsystematic that they cannot be known or represented in any straightforward way by vocabularies of western critical theory" (Morton, 2003:7). Vellem argues that Nontetha's resistance, for example, against submitting to psychic-cultural domination of the West resulted not only in her incarceration, but also in her committal to mental hospitals.

Nzinga had to pretend to be dead as an escape from the wrath of colonial powers. In addition to Nontetha and Nzinga's is a story of Queen Mother Nana Yaa Asantewaa⁵⁰ of Ghana, who is admired and revered for standing up against British colonial rule and protecting the sacred ancestral Golden Stool, a dynastic symbol of the Ashanti Empire. She also challenged the racist and patriarchal society and was exiled to the Seychelles, where she later died.

We purpose to make one important point here. The genesis of the struggle for black women in a value system that cannot be adequate to explain in the vocabularies of our androcentric theologies, philosophies and Western critical theories is traced from the history of the transatlantic slave trade.

⁵⁰ For more on Queen Mother Yaa Asantewa follow the links: <http://nanayaaasantewa.de/who-is-nana-yaa-asantewaa/>, <http://dangerouswomenproject.org/2016/07/22/yaa-asantewaa/> and <http://www.blackhistoryhero.com> visited: 3 February 2018.

5.8. Conclusion

What has come out strongly in the thesis so far is that any conquering spirits, whether internally or externally, are not accepted. In this chapter, a point has been made that in accepting that BTL has somehow created a hierarchy of struggles among black people or women, the same could be said of womanists. We have argued that a womanist theologian in the 21st century must be aware of the dilemmas and methodologies that are at stake in dialogue with the grass roots. Any denial of the dilemmas is fraudulent. In chapter 2, we addressed the question of speaking on behalf of as an attempt to debunk any suggestion that the subaltern (Spivak, 1988) cannot speak. Any theology of connecting with grassroots must be aware of this. After all, connection with grassroots has recently been an area of reflection in the debates of the Circle (Nadar & Kaunda, 2017).

Following the philosophy of dialogue by Dussel, Oduyoye and the Coloniality School, the transformation of “I” into “we” is an eradication of the Cartesian “I” that conquers. “The ‘I’ of the Cartesian ego is not capable to comprehend to the plight of a black person who cannot be the ‘I’. The epistemological roots of the Cartesian ego are asleep to black pain” (Vellem, 2017:6). Philosophically speaking, the eradication of the Cartesian “I” is thus not a superficial eradication of the “I”, but the eradication of the spirit of conquering, all elements of exclusion and a mind-set of conquering and colonising.

What Oduyoye says must never be taken for granted and at face value for we cannot have a “we” by co-opting others, but rather by coming face-to-face with one another’s struggles and lived experiences (Freire, 1970). Whenever one encounters grassroots people face to face they become a “we” that is in solidarity. We learn together. The whole proposition of walking together is animated by the experiences of the poor who already offer alternatives for us to decentre. We cannot remain in the West if we are part of the grassroots. Hegemonic Western frameworks, and even elitist circles and womanism, cannot comprehend the kind of inspiration we find when face to face with the lived experiences of the grassroots.

CHAPTER 6

Walking together to the Promised Land: a Womanist dialogue with Black Theology of Liberation in the 21st Century

“Womanist theology is not a branch of Black theology, nor is it a substitute for Black theology. Womanist theology is black theology.” (Wilmore 2004:70)

6.1. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to explore possibilities of Womanist and Black Theologies collaborating as strong forces for the liberation of Black humanity. These possibilities must primarily arise from the deep thesis developed in the preceding chapters, having demystified and critiqued the androcentric perspectives of BC and BTL and clarified the type of womanism that might assist in our quest for the liberation of black personhood. This is a womanism that stands face to face with another's struggles and lived experiences. This chapter identifies the tenets of the journey and walking together of a black woman and man. Furthermore, this chapter asserts that this journey may not be possible without altering BTL at the metaphysical level. The story of a fragmented black community, the black and lived experiences of black men and women and the entire community has been narrated throughout the thesis and sets the scene for this chapter.

Following this is the dialogue inspired by the following points, namely, the rehabilitation of philosophical content of BTL, theology and its affinities to colonialism, patriarchy and racism as fragmenting factors and black women's bodies as epistemological disturbance, suggests that womanism cannot take its language from feminism. We posit that these points precede the dialogue between BTL and womanists, who then look at the following themes: white South African academia and the alien fraudsters, African culture, patriarchal violence and womanism, Black humanity, Patriarchal violence and BTL, Womanists and BTL walking together, Womanist Theology is Black Theology, Walking together to the Promised Land.

6.2. The fragmented community of Black humanity

Thlagale exposes the affinities between blackness and the fragmentation of black humanity as follows:

The symbolic value of the word 'black' is that it captures the broken existence of black people, summons them collectively to burst the chains of oppression and engage themselves creatively in the instruction of a new society (Thlagale, 1985:126)

Thlagale's quotation is profound and helpful for us as it captures aptly the situation of black people in South Africa. He traces the fragmentation of black humanity ontologically. Black people are oppressed by virtue of being black. Vellem has also suggested that there are close affinities between being black and being poor (2007b:36). Their humanity as a whole is built on the thesis that to be black is to be a non-person, a *non-being* as nuanced by Fanon (1952), who speaks of the zone non-being, which is arguably a location of black humanity, especially women. .BTL has long argued that the interlocutor of the liberation paradigm is the non-person, that is, the black man and woman (Boesak, 1977; Gutierrez, 2007; Vellem, 2015a).

The ontological negation of black bodies as subjects of being postulates blackness as an antithesis for humanity, as suggested by Lerato Mokoena⁵¹ (2016) in her presentation at the seminar⁵² that focused on theoretical analysis of broken black bodies. Puleng Segalo⁵³ (2016) made the same point too, by positing that to be black in an anti-black world is to be non-human, and they both suggest that by non-human, this means that your ontology is negated completely to the point of no return. Segalo nuances being black as synonymous to being oppressed and exploited to a point

⁵¹ Lerato Mokoena, a Doctoral candidate and Research Assistant at UP, took the dialogue to another level with her Afro-pessimistic view which critiques the performance of the world and thus its positioning of blackness

⁵² The seminar at the University of Pretoria, also part of the conference on 'Broken Bodies, Patriarchy and African women', sought to give a conceptual analysis of broken bodies by scholars and students. We had several presentations, a panel and engagements. A few of the presentations whose insights inspire this work have been selected.

⁵³ Puleng Segalo, head of research and professor at UNISA, gave a powerful presentation and reflection on black women's bodies.

where one lacks the very basics to live, food, shelter and education. Blacks were employed to do hard labour but did not get paid enough to sustain themselves; People were removed from their homes and families were separated. She recalls the segregation in South Africa where physical boundaries were set and marked with boards: “Blacks only” and “Whites only” (Notes taken personally on the 1st of July 2016).

If the ontology of black people as subjects of being is negated, and black bodies are oppressed on the basis of them being blacks, following Spivak, this suggests that the ontology of black women is triply negated (1988:82–83). “Clearly if you are poor, black and female you get it in three ways” (Spivak, 1988:537). William demonstrates this point in the following manner:

I wonder which of the many oppressions in my femaleness and in my blackness weigh the heaviest on me. Which of the many liberations do I thirst for most? Do I thirst most of all to be liberated from my colour, from my class, my ignorance of my tradition, from economic domination? (1990:24).

The quotation above illustrates the triple and multiple negation of black women and further exposes the intersections of domination of black humanity, race, class, gender and constant flight of blacks from themselves and their traditions and culture. It must be stated that this fragmentation that we see was justified theologically and scripturally. Their broken existence is thus a question of being, life, faith and spirituality that is fragmented. The fragments are an antithesis of the traditional African way of life as articulated by Benezet Bujo (1998), who observes the strong relationships between the living and the ancestors that Africans had for the purpose of enhancing life. There is also the role that each member of this community had to play to sustain this interconnectedness, which is further articulated by Steve Biko when he argues that “We believed in one God, we had our own community of saints through whom we related to our God, and we did not find it compatible with our way of life to worship in isolation from the various aspects of our lives” (Biko, 1976:42). Biko posits that

Africans had a religion which was not abstract but fused with other areas of life; it was a way of life. Kanyoro elucidates this point as follows:

In the African indigenous thought system, culture and religion are not distinct from each other. Therefore, culture and religion in Africa embrace all areas of one's total life. There is no sphere of existence that is excluded from the double grip of culture and religion. The presence or absence of rain, the well-being of the community, sexuality, marriage, birthing, naming children, success or failure, the place and form of one's burial, among others, all come under the scope of religion and culture (2001:36-37).

Oduyoye (2001a) makes the same point that "The traditional way of life is closely bound up with religion and religious beliefs in such a way that there is a mutual interdependence of religion and culture" (:25). Following Bujo, Biko and Kanyoro and Oduyoye, we argue that traditionally religion for Africans is a way of life. Paradoxically, the arrival of missionaries and thus the spread of Western Christianity in South Africa led to a dismantlement of African religious symbols and culture and thus the fragmentation of their whole existence. The sacred relationship between the living and the dead and sanctuaries have lost their place in the life of an African black child. These practices were regarded as a barbaric and could only be saved by the civilization of the West. Kalu (2005), Maluleke (1995) and Oduyoye (1986) are among the African scholars that critique the missionary enterprise to Christianize Africa and the myth that Africans had no religion before their encounter with the West.

For Kalu (2005), missionaries attempted to mute African spiritual resources of biblical theology. Oduyoye (1986) observes that they introduced a foreign value system to Africans by focusing on the salvation of the individual as opposed to transformation and salvation of communities. The Christianisation of Africa was built on a myth that Africans had no religion prior to the arrival of the missionaries, and were thus saved by white people's religion (Kalu, 2005; Maluleke, 1995; Mndende, 1994 and Oduyoye, 1986). Maldonado-Torres' (2014a) insights are helpful as he exposes the intersectionality of religion, race and forms of imperial power in the context of discovery and conquest. He exposes the rationale of the West for suggesting that Africans had

no religion as a ploy to conquer and enslave them. He also observes the affinities between their indoctrination with Western Christianity and their subservient role as good slaves (2014a:638-9).

Biko, Oduyoye, Maluleke and Kalu and Kanyoro's insights are helpful for us to decipher the position and reality of black man, woman and humanity, 'perceived' as barbaric, uncivilized, savage and religion-less. Their writings, decades apart, are also informative because of the arguments of white liberals that express our inability as black people to move on. How do we move on when the more things change, the more they remain the same? Hayes further asks, "Why would a people oppressed, terrorized, and dehumanized for centuries by alleged Christians yet confess Jesus Christ as Lord – the same Jesus they were told affirmed their enslavement and dehumanization?" (Hayes, 2010:17). In the following section, we reflect on the points of dialogue between BTL and Womanism and its implications on black humanity that is fragmented.

6.3. Dialogue

As indicated in the first chapter that introduces the methodology of this thesis, among other things, and as demonstrated in the previous chapter, dialogue is a key motif of this thesis and takes place at two important levels. First, there are internal levels within the Black community, which include: Womanist theology and BTL, womanism and BC and ultimately, the philosophy of theology of black liberation. Secondly, there are external levels about dialogue that include the problem of BTL and Eurocentric categories with its constructs. The previous chapter saw us into another dimension of the dialogue internally: a dialogue with the grassroots and methodologies that are at stake. Our definition of dialogue as described throughout the thesis is inspired by works that critique the idea of universalism which occludes the unique experiences and epistemologies of the people on the periphery (Dussel, 1995; Alcoff & Mendieta, 2000; Mendieta, 2003). That takes place at two levels, within the School where black women's experiences and epistemologies are omitted and externally, where black humanity as a whole is subjugated and excluded by the West, the empire and the

conquerors (Mendieta, 2003). The previous chapter also exposed the danger of occlusion and omission of epistemologies and experiences of the grass roots, the periphery of the peripheries.

Our dialogue is further inspired by the African symbols of the circle and kraal that represent the community and the collapse of an “I” for a “we” (Oduyoye, 2001a). In this chapter, the dialogue takes place in the circle and the kraal between BC and womanism (philosophy) and BTL and Womanist theology (faith). We suggest the following as points of dialogue that we now turn to, namely the rehabilitation of the philosophical content of BTL, theology and its affinities to colonialism, patriarchy and racism as fragmenting factors, and black women’s bodies as epistemological disturbance. All these points suggest that womanism cannot take its language from feminism.

6.3.1. Points of dialogue between BTL and Womanism

The thrust of the thesis is the fragmentation of black humanity, which can be traced from colonialism, the discovery and conquest. We have demonstrated throughout the thesis how black bodies have been deformed and how their ontology, as subjects of being, has been negated. We have also demonstrated the exclusion of their existence in Western epistemology, faith and value systems. We have exposed the intersections of race, class and gender in the life of a black person. We have also pointed to the history of oppression in the South African context, the apartheid system and its racist constitution, racist and sexist policies such as homelands, forced removals, separate development and pass laws, designed to fragment black humanity and to ensure that they systemically remain fragmented. However, this fragmentation could also be traced to the philosophical level of BTL.

BC is a philosophy that informs BTL, and we have argued at length that it is a flawed philosophy that uses androcentric language. We have demonstrated in the second chapter how Biko’s use of “black man” in depicting the situation of black humanity is

problematic. We further observed how the pathologies that he identified in the black man are equally applicable to a black woman who is not only oppressed by the white power structure but also throttled by black power. We have demonstrated how black woman and man have lost their humanity in the hands of colonizers; how their faith and spirituality was sucked out of them by these systems, leaving them as empty shells; how these have damaged their psyche and led to self-hate, anger and resentment.

Therefore, if we are going to have a dialogue with our black brothers, the first critique is at the level of philosophy. There cannot be a philosophy that is androcentric and patriarchal. BC cannot look at issues that affect black humanity in a dualistic way. We must fix this first. How can it be good news in its disintegrated state? How can it liberate blacks from mental and psychological bondage, as suggested by Vellem (2007b) if it is in patriarchal bondage itself? Is Biko not contradicting himself when he asserts that it is impossible to be conscious and remain in bondage, when he is in bondage of patriarchal violence? How can it introduce black value systems to the black mind when this does not speak to black women's minds and black women's value systems? How will it succeed in opening our eyes as a collective when it has occluded the collective to only mean black men? How is BC enhancing "a reality that embraces the totality of black existence" (Boesak, 1977:26) without black women? In calling black humanity back to the past and rewriting of his/herstory, is it not perhaps calling people to a rewriting of a fragmented his/herstory?

Womanism is a philosophy of the whole of black humanity and is against a patriarchal philosophy of BC, which informs BTL. "...Black Theology harnessed Black Consciousness philosophy to define a particular consciousness that could be used to liberate black masses from their inferiority complex" (Vellem, 2007b:4). It must be stated that consciousness is core to the paradigm of liberation at the level of BC and womanism as philosophies that inspire BTL and womanist theology, respectively (Cone, 1975, Vellem, 2015; Kobo, 2018a). Therefore, we cannot have such contradictions in the School. If we do not fix this, the implication is that BTL's response to the fragmentation of black humanity will be truncated, as we have demonstrated in

the previous chapters. Therefore, womanism proposes a rehabilitation of the philosophical content of BTL, which will contribute to an epistemology that is comprehensive as a point of dialogue. It also contributes to faith and spirituality that is comprehensive.

BTL, however, has become aware, as we have demonstrated, how it nuances patriarchy in its theological vision. From its first publication, it has pointed to the oppression of black women as something that cannot be accepted. As the School progressed, this was reinstated as a concern by scholars like Mosala (1987), Mofokeng (1987), Mtetwa (1998), Maluleke (1997, 2002, 2004) and Vellem (2007, 2014, 2015). Even Tshaka (23 March 2018), and Boesak (9 November 2017) have reflected in recent conversations on this matter. However, even that has not suggested that there have not been flaws in BTL demonstrated in the manner in which it continues to exclude black women's bodies and experiences. BTL must know that there cannot be a theology of liberation without the broken bodies and lived experiences of faith of black women. Womanism and BTL can only dialogue on philosophical content of faith that is devoid of patriarchal violence and fragmentation.

We must remember the links between Western Christianity, theology, imperialism and colonialism in Africa. Theology in Africa has been defined in the previous chapters as a response to the Western intrusion, the missionary enterprise. The researcher has argued elsewhere that mission has been understood as an activity performed by missionaries and settlers jointly (Kobo, 2014b). One cannot separate the arrival of the gospel in Africa, the settlers and fragmentation of black humanity, loss of land, traditional customs, African culture, and sanctuaries. There are also close affinities between slavery, subjugation of blacks and the translation of Western Christianity in Africa, as suggested by Oduyoye (2001a:22). She further observes how the Christian religion instilled in Africans hope in the world to come and faith that is otherworldly. In an attempt to dissuade them from resisting their subservient role, this religion taught our people that it is okay to suffer now and have no land, because there is a promise of a paradise to come, where none shall lack anything, and everything will be made right in Christ (Oduyoye, 1989:37).

The same religion and theology justified the commodification of black lives in Elmina Castle. The inscription of Psalm 138 on the walls of a Dutch Reformed chapel that was located above a female dungeon is telling of the kind of venom this racist and patriarchal faith brought on black humanity as a whole. A theology and religion justified apartheid in South Africa, a system that subjugated and impoverished black humanity and ensured that the black woman is at the bottom of the economic ladder. There is no way then that BC and BTL can elude this patriarchal violence. We walk together with our men in the world that is life-killing and anti-black. BTL, as “a model of theology that is embedded in the depths and actualities of oppression” (Vellem, 2015b:3) must offer what it promises; it must liberate black humanity as a whole; but only together with womanism.

The same theology of the West focuses on the individual and not the community, as espoused in the value system of Africans. The Western binaries of knowledge, life and faith result in unequal power relations, as we have argued earlier in the thesis. The ethical implication of operating in binaries is that anything that falls outside them is a disturbance. An African value system and whole existence have proven to be that disturbance which has led to epistemicide, genocide and spiritualicide and thus fragmentation of black humanity. We debunked those in the previous chapter and proposed a circle. However, even the kind of circle that we envisaged is not an elitist circle that is still trapped in Western binaries, as demonstrated by Maluleke in the previous chapter. There cannot be a circle that is detached from its interlocutors, black women from grassroots communities. That too needs to be fixed.

We also posit that womanism cannot take its language from feminism. We have demonstrated the inadequacies and pseudo-representation of Western feminism of the bodies and experiences of black women. The black woman’s body is a disturbing phenomenon in the West. Her ontology as the subject of being is doubly negated. She does not exist in the West and thus her existence is an affront and an intrusion. She does not have epistemology and religion, according to the West. The situation of the black lesbian is far worse. We have found it unethical to entrust the representation of a black woman and her body with her lived experience to Western feminism. We are

aware of the privileged position white women hold in society and their active participation in the oppression of black humanity. We posit that a black woman's body and lived experiences are an epistemology of their own and cannot be co-opted into any Western framework. Even those that critique the Western binaries, for example, Butler and Young, cannot help her. Womanism is a comprehensive epistemological agency of black women and humanity within the framework of BTL.

We assert that the bodies of black women must trouble black men, if we are to proceed with the dialogue. Black men must come face to face with black women's bodies and lived experiences. They can no longer speak about black humanity without the lived experiences of black women, black gays and lesbians. These bodies and lived experiences are sources and epistemologies in themselves and must be recognised as such. However, it is not only bodies that are problematic; gender is trouble, and BTL needs to deal with what it means to be a man and woman if gender is constructed and the implications of that for the School and its agency for black man and woman.

As womanists, we propose these points as foundational in our walking together. We proceed to further demonstrate these points as we now look at South African academics as the location where Black and Womanist theologies exist as 'alien fraudsters' and further look at the two as proponents of the message of liberation of black humanity and faith; we posit that the invisibility of black women in academia is a problem of both BTL and womanism.

6.4. White South African academia and alien fraudsters

In the previous chapters, we alluded to the location of women outside academia, especially black women, while there is still a huge gap between men and women, with white males still dominant, as posited by Schüssler Fiorenza (1975:613). We argue that black women are even less visible. The dominance of white males is an even bigger problem because of the manner in which they have transferred their worldview and epistemology to the whole world as universal. The ethical implications of this

epistemicide and imperialism on other worldviews, experiences and epistemologies, especially that of black women, cannot be downplayed.

Maluleke and Nadar's (2004:7) insights on the involvement of Black intellectuals in white spaces inspires our discussion. They argue that black intellectuals, scholars and researchers function as alien fraudsters in a white academic form. They argue that Black and women participants in the agency discourse need to be cognizant of the fraudulence of their power, the fragility of their agency, as well as the possibility of their subtle abduction into a discourse of control (2004:13). What Maluleke and Nadar firstly confirm is that South African academia is predominantly white and male. Secondly, the agency of the oppressed discourse has been owned and appropriated by white scholars who saw themselves as black people's spokespersons. Black scholars enter into an already biased discussion, which has the power to defuse or dispel. BTL was and is, to some extent, confronted by this even today, as explained by Ntintili as follows:

When Black Theology emerged, most white theologians ignored it thinking and hoping that it was just a passing fad. However, it did not pass away. Instead, it grew rather phenomenally and diversified into different strands. What was tragic was that with race exceptions, they continued to ignore it. Rather they chose to dialogue with Latin American liberation theology and with different strands of Asian theology than with Black Theology. They also engaged in other machinations in an attempt to silence Black Theology-machinations ranging from total rejection to selective co-option (1996:2).

Maluleke, Nadar and Ntintili, among others, expose various tensions and the nexus of race, class and sexism that existed and to some extent, exists up to this day in South African academia. These tensions have had a huge impact on agency discourse and the development of (or lack of) Black scholarship in South Africa. Nadar (2009) further exposes these tensions when she points to the academic sphere as one of the places where feminist biblical studies, *feminist and womanist studies* struggle (emphasis added). She writes:

Before we even begin the “real” discussion we have to convince our audience – usually white men (although not exclusively) not just that our scholarship is legitimate but that it is needed. Therefore, the task begins. We have to explain concepts like feminism, patriarchy, and androcentricism ad nauseum even before we can begin the hermeneutical task that lies before us (2009:141).

If we take into consideration what Nadar is saying here and her earlier assertion on the struggle of South African women in coining a term that fits “... our contexts...” (Nadar, 2003:15), we arguably get a sense of both internal and external struggles and an indication of an array of continuous challenges posed at womanists and black theologians alike today in the South African context.

Another contentious issue that has been continuously raised by Grant (1979) is the invisibility of black women in academia; this is also a huge challenge in South African academia. To reiterate the point made by Maluleke and Nadar (2004) on the scarcity of black scholars, especially black women in the academy, they posit that there is a shortage of black intellectuals, and female ones are an even bigger rarity. This remains the question of the 21st century, which has emerged twice in a period of two weeks in seminars organised by the Department of Christian Spirituality, Church History and Missiology at UNISA. Some of the explanations were either that black women were less interested in being scholars and preferred to serve in church, or the dominant narrative that theology is for church, which makes people, especially women, shy away from academia. What did not come out strongly in those explanations is the fact that arguably both church and academic institutions are patriarchal.

Nevertheless, Phiri (2009) comes to our rescue and confirms this point by exposing affinities between theology and ordination as one of the teachings of the missionaries, which has been contested by other churches who still refuse to ordain women. This results in few women being endorsed and supported financially to enrol for theology. If one looks at the partnerships that faculties of theology have with churches, one is able to appropriate the same rationale in the appointments made by such faculties.

Phiri (2009) adds to our discussion by citing four major challenges faced by African women in academia which inspire our discussion, namely: redefining the identity of African women theologians; promoting more women to study theology and be on permanent staff; inclusion of African women's theology in the theological curriculum; and collaboration with male theologians. These we have dealt with in the previous chapter.

For dialogue to take place between BTL and womanism, the first thing to note is that the scarcity of black intellectuals and invisibility of black women in academia weakens the black discourse and humanity because it suggests that in their absence, other people think, speak and write on their behalf. The voices, epistemologies and agency of black humanity is silenced. Black men cannot be satisfied with their presence only in the academy; the absence of black women should disturb them. They need to look out for their sisters so that they come to speak for themselves. BTL needs to understand that even in their blackness, they cannot be representatives of or even spokespersons for black women. In the issues raised by Phiri as challenges for African women in academia and those that Wright Jr. highlighted earlier (about the absence of womanism in the radar of the church among people who have access and are already in the church), it is their task to unmask the biases and challenge churches' ideologies and stereotypes. There can never be liberation of black humanity without these remedies.

We now proceed to further demonstrate the need for dialogue in looking at African culture, patriarchal violence and womanism as an important conversation within the School.

6.5. African culture, patriarchal violence and Womanism

We have argued in chapter 2 that one of the tasks of BC is to open our eyes to recover what we have lost, namely religion, land, culture and history, among other things, from Western imperialism and the colonial matrix of power. Biko calls for the recovery of black humanity, who were taught that Africa is a "dark continent" and everything black

and African is evil and barbaric, including their culture, history, past, religious practices and customs (1987:31). Vellem (2014b:3) poignantly calls us into remembering links between Western Christianity and cultural subjugation of black Africans. Ngugi wa Thiong'o exposes the danger of cultural domination, which is even more than political and economic subjugation (2009:57). In our "quest for black pride" (Goba, 1986:59), African culture has to be redeemed and recovered.

The researcher (Kobo, 2016) has argued elsewhere how Europeans continue to perceive African culture as patriarchal as if there is any culture that is devoid of patriarchy, including Europeans cultures. They even suggest that as African women, our men oppress us (:1). In the previous chapter, we have reflected on the pervasiveness of the perception recently by women in USA. Interestingly, what they are failing to acknowledge is white patriarchy that led to the emergence of Western feminism, as demonstrated in earlier chapters. They are failing to connect how their patriarchy poisoned the whole world, including black humanity. They are also ignoring the fact that their imposed value systems, epistemologies and faith itself was infused with racism and sexism. They are failing to see all of these pathologies pointing back to them. For them, the problem is African culture and patriarchy. This is primarily because of their dualistic framework that fails to connect life and its complexities and their tendency to hide their biases behind universalism. Grosfoguel (2013) has made a point about the tendency of the West to hide behind universalism. He asserts that white men hide behind the notion of objectivity; they speak from no position to hide their biases. If you engage them from a certain position, they cry particularity, claim objectivity and justify their superiority (2013). BTL posits that one must disclose their location and assumptions upfront (Vellem, 2017:1), and that is a struggle for the West. They have been in a position of power so long that they were convinced of their lies as ideal standards for the world (Biko, 2012; Ture & Hamilton, 1992).

In our quest to recover therefore we must reaffirm that African culture is an integral part of the lives of black humanity. Black African women, in theologising, embrace what is positive, and expose and debunk oppressive forms. They are not oblivious to black and African patriarchy; they analyse it, hence the dialogue. Culture is a primary

defining feature of African women's theology (Nadar & Phiri, 2010:93). African and South African women scholars reflect on culture in their work, as demonstrated in the third chapter. These include Mercy Oduyoye (1986, 2001); Musimbi Kanyoro (2001); Libuseng Lebaka-Ketshabile (1995); and Madipoane Masenya (ngwana' Mphahlele) (1998), to name a few. Their reflections on culture made a unique contribution to scholarship.

The centrality of African culture in womanism and therefore its analysis exposes the patriarchal violence that disturbs the harmony of black humanity, an issue that needs to be fixed by BTL. Womanists reflect on culture as conscious women asking critical questions on the recovery of land, religion, history, and culture among other things, which have always been under male domination. We cannot proceed with dialogue unless we recover our fragmented culture. African culture must be comprehensive and life-enhancing. Its recovery is the task of both African women and black African men, we posit. While the reflection on culture is an affirmation of womanism as epistemological agency of black women, it presents compatible dialogue partners in a quest to knit black humanity together to achieve female and black transcendence as a whole (Ogunyemi, 1985:69). That is the task of BTL as well, we argue.

We have established that womanism is a philosophy that presents womandom in a manner that celebrates black roots and the ideals of black life, with its aim being the dynamism of wholeness and self-healing (Ogunyemi, 1985). Womanists are committed to survival and wholeness of entire people (Walker, 1984). Womanist theology looks at the faith and spiritual dimensions of black women. To reiterate an earlier point, when we talk about womanism, we reflect on the combination of philosophy and faith examined.

If one of the cries of womanists is that BTL downplays their agency by defeating womanist aspirations of wholeness, pertinent questions that could be posed to womanists are as follows: to what extent do they, themselves bring this dynamism of wholeness and self-healing to all women? How have women dealt with class and

power among themselves? Can women be patriarchs? How is the agenda of the liberation of women ghettoized by women themselves? The conquering spirit and Cartesian ego in womanism and expression of culture we have explored in the previous chapter.

The point about womanists and culture is that they do not romanticise it. In an attempt to critique culture, the researcher employs Landman's (2000:177–178) observation of foremothers' (the *volksmoeders*) uncritical adherence to culture which has been inherited even by younger generations. The point for Landman is the silencing that comes with this. She posits that this uncritical adherence to culture silences them in the public domain and binds them to the private sphere. In this work, Landman further observes how the oppression of women by other women could be traced from a culture where women play a role as gatekeepers of cultural practices that are patriarchal. She exposes women's complicity in the venom of patriarchal violence. There are many examples of how culture has been demonised by Africans and black women themselves because of how they were taught to view their culture as barbaric, demonic, patriarchal and oppressive as perceived by the West (Kobo, 2016).

We have pointed to culture in black and African scholarship as of great importance. We argued that all cultures have patriarchal aspects, and African culture is no different, hence as womanists, we expose and debunk those while still embracing it as an integral aspect of our being as African black women. We also observed that there are external factors at play. The encounter of African culture with the West and its constructs, colonialism, imperialism, and religion that are racist and sexist have a bearing on how culture has been appropriated. This is the problem for black humanity. This is exactly the reason we bring this as part of the dialogue for BTL and womanists to redeem African culture and cleanse it of these pathologies. It is an attempt to curtail the practice of fleeing from our culture and kraals, where our life is enhanced.

6.6. Black humanity, patriarchal violence and BTL

As we continue to dialogue, we recap and reaffirm what we have discussed in previous chapters as fundamental issues in Black and womanist theologies. We do so to further demonstrate and expose what needs to be fixed for a meaningful dialogue that liberates fragmented black humanity.

The central thesis of the philosophy of BC is to liberate blacks from their willingness to participate in their own oppression by conscientizing them and calling them back to their personhood through the creation of their own value system, as opposed to the white value system they had inherited from a racist, capitalist, and sexist society (Vellem, 2007b). On the edifice of this philosophy, BTL was developed as a theology of liberation, "...in revolt against the spiritual enslavement of black people, and thus against the loss of their sense of human dignity and worth" (Moore, 1973: ix). Frances Beale's (1979) earlier observations on the system of capitalism with racism as the source of black people's underlying psychological problems and Williams' on the affinities of capitalism and patriarchy are helpful. Therefore, capitalism cannot be separated from sexism, patriarchy and racism. By creating spaces for the venom of patriarchy to flourish, capitalism and its constructs of racism, classism and arguably sexism promotes the reduction of the vitality of the community of African and black people (Bujo, 1998). Therefore, the problem is a fragmented black humanity that must be fixed.

In our critique of Biko's philosophy, we have pointed to the limitations of his androcentric use of language for the task of fixing black humanity. It is inadequate because it silences experiences and voices of black women and bodies. As womanists, we argue that we expect that from Western epistemologies and binary frameworks; they have never understood us as black women, and we further posit that we do not even want to be understood anymore. BC and BTL, however, are another matter; they need to know these issues so that they are fixed if we are to proceed with the dialogue. Thus, we have already argued, all the pathologies that are identified by

Biko have affected black women too. The issue for us is the liberation of black humanity and bodies as an agenda in the kraal.

What we have attempted to do so far is to briefly give an overview of the context of the broken Black community by adopting a 'hard-line pro-black position', arguably positing that black men are not black women's enemies. "Like black men, Black women also rely on Jesus to help them survive the forging of a new identity" (Hopkins & Thomas, 2010:21). We do not have to look at the liberation of black women outside the framework of BTL but surely, womanist theories alter BTL at metaphysical level. Ntintili (1996:13) argues that the premise for Black Theology is the concrete experiences of oppressed people. Black, poor people are arguably the starting point of BTL.

Womanism, on the other hand, concerns itself with people as a whole, female and male. What seems to be the point of difference, one could argue, is that BTL talks about liberation of black people. By people, we have already argued that they refer to men. Womanists, on the other hand, are more specific, they talk about 'entire people, male and female'. Womanists acknowledge the role of black men in fighting world power structures that subjugated black people. To reiterate my earlier point, 'Black men are not black women's enemies'. By taking this pro-black position, however, we do not romanticize the location of black men. Womanists' affirmation of black men does not dispel the level of injustice black women have suffered at the hands of their black men. We are aware! ... hence the privileging of black women's bodies and experiences! We are saying to BTL, they must take these bodies and experiences seriously.

Black men downplaying the agency of black women cannot be further emphasized as it has already been done throughout the thesis. However, maybe, just a brief recap: from its conception, BTL argued that race, class and gender are constructs (Ntintili, 1996:4). It has been argued that BTL, in its beginnings, was aware of the oppression of black and women and the need for their own liberation. The very first publication

(1973) edited by Basil Moore in 1973 defines Black Theology as a passionate call to action for freedom, for God, for wholeness, but then for man. It uses androcentric language to contradict what it promises. It has a passionate call for wholeness, yet sees that in a man, and that is problematic. What we see are flaws we identified at the level of its philosophy. We have demonstrated throughout this work how much we disagree with androcentric use of language and the problem it creates for our discourse. We do not excuse it at all, and BTL must take that into consideration. Even the work that talks about the double yoke of black women in South Africa and exposes patriarchal violence in various structures, including home situations, finds itself trapped in language that is truncating the struggle for liberation.

Indeed, in their critique, some Black women, like Jordaan (1987:44), are in order when they argue that any form of liberation which excludes others should be seriously challenged for misrepresenting the concept of liberation. No person can be free when part of that which gives you your humanity is in chains, she argues. What this implies is that in their endeavour to liberate Black humanity, by downplaying the interlocation of Black women BTL compromised the whole concept of liberation. Differently put by Mosala (1987), liberation became dangerously truncated. "What went wrong was BTL's failure to acknowledge, affirm and utilize the various gifts and talents of their fellow black sisters" (Hayes, 2010:23). Just as Christian theologians (mostly Western and mostly male) never took seriously the situation of oppressed people when formulating their ideas, so have African male intellectuals, including theologians, not given much attention to women in their various enterprises (1994:2).

Phiri's insights on the 1984 Black Theology Conference in Cape Town are helpful for us. In that conference, women's voices could not be ignored as they articulated their strife and oppression by their fellow black men, thus challenging them to prioritise liberation of women. She avers,

In general, women made it clear that black theology cannot be a liberation theology if it does not take the liberation of women seriously. The women emphasised the need

for black theology to create space for women to participate on an equal basis. They also argue that all meaningful liberation theologies in South Africa should be aiming for a non-racist and non-sexist South Africa (Phiri, 2004:17).

While the critique is against BTL, in Phiri's writings women's role in their own liberation is emphasised. They state what liberation means for them explicitly and expose the intersections of race and sexism that can no longer be ignored. The "struggle between struggles" (Mosala, 1987:39), i.e. the tendency to give attention to certain struggles while leaving others to suffer, is no longer helpful. BTL focused on liberating Black people from white domination, but in the process they were not conscious of themselves oppressing Black women. This is the cry of womanists and throughout the thesis we have demonstrated that the hierarchy of struggles within BTL can no longer be tolerated.

In a conversation and reflection on this thesis with Allan Boesak in Pretoria in November 2017, he indeed conceded "the hierarchy of struggles weakened the liberation, and had BTL included women from the start, things would have been different and certainly much better"⁵⁴. It is worth noting that Allan Boesak's upcoming book (2018) has taken this seriously. In one of the chapters, he employs Kirk-Duggan, a womanist, to critique the Exodus, the foundational paradigm of BTL, by posing the question of the role of women in Exodus. Hopkins concurs with Boesak; he posits, "Black women's equality would have strengthened black men and the entire movement. The suppression of black women meant the suppression of a vital resource that God had provided for an oppressed community in its stride toward freedom" (Hopkins, 1993:191). While black theologians are self-evaluating, it is also pertinent to pose the question on women and patriarchy and their role in safeguarding it. In the sections that follow, we begin to embark on the journey of the 'walking together' of BTL and womanist theology, black men and women walking together to build a new world! According to Beale (1979:375), any idea of a new world, even for women, is

⁵⁴ Since this conversation it is humbling to realise that Allan Boesak has submitted a manuscript for publication that critiques BTL at metaphysical level. This work problematises Exodus women which have for years been concealed or downplayed.

that which is non-capitalist. Moreover, this is the task of men, women and children working together towards attaining this goal.

6.7. Womanists and Black Theologies walking together

The insights from Davies and Graves' definition of womanism below set the scene and affirm the hard-line pro-black position taken in this thesis.

African feminism... recognizes a common struggle with African men for the removal of the yokes of foreign domination and European/American exploitation. It is not antagonistic to African men but challenges them to be aware of certain salient aspects of women's subjugation which differ from the generalized oppression of all African people... (it) recognizes that certain inequalities and limitations existed/exist in traditional societies and that colonialism reinforced them and introduced others (Davies & Graves, 1986:8).

This well-articulated definition of womanism captures what Gqola (1998) highlights as the challenge that womanism has encountered in South African academia. It is said to embrace, celebrate and condone black patriarchy by acknowledging black men's interlocation. In their defence, womanists assert that their position takes into consideration the positive representation of black people as a whole. Womanism acknowledges the interlocation of black men and the role they played in liberation of black humanity and transformation of colonized black people from "mere' national subjects to 'political subjects' (Koyana, 2001). Womanism thus incorporates the well-being of men who are also victims of the world power structure that subjugates black people as a whole.

Oduyoye stated long ago that the responsibility of healing our brokenness falls on men and women alike. She also highlighted the importance of the female perspective in an attempt to reclaim silenced voices that have not been given a chance to become integrated into the existing basis of our relationships *and dialogue* (1986:135).

Arguably, this does not disregard a black male perspective in any way. However, in our quest for liberation of black humanity, voices that have not been heard ought to be heard. In view of the thoughts above, it is my contention that there can never be liberation of black humanity if black men and women are not in dialogue. Womanists know this very well, and black theologians also acknowledge it. This section on the 'walking together' is premised by voices of proponents of the school, thereby acknowledging their failure to give sexism equal treatment as they have done with other constructs of race and class.

Mofokeng (1987:25) observes the contradictions of having women in the forefront of the struggle, yet BTL occluded their struggle. He affirms our thesis that suggests that while patriarchy is nuanced in the vision of BTL, it downplayed the interlocution of women. He avers, "Black theologians have to hang their heads in shame..." (:25). Mosala (1987:39) asserts that the success of any liberation struggle is measured by how it liberates women in that struggle. He points us to the urgency of an autonomous black feminist theology as a critique of BTL theology, but also as a call to BTL to prioritise black women's voices and struggle. He argues that this is beneficial for the school as a whole in the quest for liberation of black humanity. In addition, without that, liberation will be truncated. If one follows the progressions in the school, one discovers how black theologians have taken the struggle of black women as the problem of black humanity. To name a few, Maluleke and colleagues (1997, 2002, 2004) and Vellem (2007, 2014, and 2015) are among those who have pointed to the importance of the liberation of women.

It is evident that BTL nuances patriarchy in its vision of liberation, but patriarchy is still the problem in the 21st century and by implication, black women's agency is still downplayed. By proposing an autonomous discourse within this framework, the school took a step forward on the journey of walking together with Womanists. Womanists, in turn, not only become critics of BTL and "their wake-up" call (Wright, 2010:258), but become partners walking on the same agenda (:259). Womanists are ready to walk with their men.

Mosala (1988:6-7) has long embarked on the walking together, and this must be acknowledged. His use of the Bible to affirm women is worth embracing. His interpretation of the text of Esther using the woman as an interlocutor helped unmask the struggle for liberation of women in South Africa. He uses the same Bible that we have demonstrated in previous chapters as being functional in the oppression of black humanity and women. This is important because of the centrality of the Bible and religious symbols in the lives of the oppressed black women. The researcher has demonstrated elsewhere how “Patriarchy and the oppression of women have been justified and perpetuated by a complex interplay of Christian teachings and practices fused with culture and the use of the Bible. Yet, for these women, church and the Bible continue to be central in their lives” (Kobo, 2018:1). Mosala has led us in the journey of the walking together, which shows and affirms his commitment to the walking together. His nuance of patriarchy paved the way to a possibility of a harmonious dialogue and collaboration between Womanist and Black Theologies in the 21st century.

6.7.1. Womanist Theology is Black Theology

As argued earlier by Mosala (1986:130-131), experience is a common feature between the following theologies; Black Theology of Liberation, Contextual Theology and Feminist Theology. BTL’s presupposition is the experience of Black people where the interlocutor is a non-person. For Womanists, the experience of black humanity is the starting point, and its interlocutor is a black oppressed woman who cannot be separated from black oppressed men. This method is a critique of the abstractionism of traditional theology, which concerns itself almost exclusively with metaphysical issues (Ntintili, 1996:13).

In their walking together, Maluleke and Nadar (2004:2–7) point to the scarcity of real engagements between black intellectuals as one of the impediments to the walking together of BTL and womanists. Another challenge is that the dialogue happens rather with their white colleagues but rarely with one another because of the imbalances in representation of black intellectuals in academia. There are at least a significant number of black men, but black women are scarce. They suggest that this shortage

works against the necessary dialogue between black women and men. They further observe the contestations, disagreements and differences often attached to experiences of pain, death and injustice between black women and men. They critique the limitations of black men speaking on behalf of black women as a call to speak with them. Employing Biko, they are poignantly reminding as well as calling us to liberate ourselves as black humanity. In this journey, therefore, Black men and women, Black and Womanist Theologies as protagonists of the Black community, therefore with one specific cultural heritage in mind, should engage in critical dialogue and collaboration for their liberation.

6.7.2. Walking together to the Promised Land

Walking together of Black men and women suggests that they have stopped looking for solutions to their problems elsewhere and have now realized that they have each other to lean on. This is not to suggest that their problems are over. However, their walking together in harmony is for the benefit and restoration of the black humanity. This point is articulated well by Flora Nwapa, the first African woman to publish a novel in English in Britain, who has been called the mother of African women's literature.

Ogunyemi summarises Nwapa as follows:

... Nwapa would readily acquiesce; men and women are "family members" whose resources must be pooled together for survival. However, such a compromise does not preclude an occasional confrontation between men and women. After all, family members are liable to fall out only to be reconciled. What counts is the nature of the palaver and the spirit of the ensuing palaver for reconciliation (1996:134).

So, in the spirit of ensuing palaver for reconciliation, Black and Womanist Theologians in walking together ponder on the following praxiological question:

How long will the dialogue and the discussion, the disagreement and the distrust go on between Black Theologians and Womanist Theologians? How long will there be a gap between the Academy and the pew when it comes to the issues addressed by Black Theology and Black Theologians and issues considered crucial by the average Black parishioner across the broad-based denominational spectrum, which makes up the Black church? (Wright, 2010:256)

They look together at the disconnect that exists between BTL, Womanist theology and the church. They look at the danger of being only confined to the walls of the academy and not liberating the poor it envisaged liberating (Bujo, 1992; Hayes, 2010). They ponder on the challenges that face them together, the “culture of amnesia, the crisis of leadership and the compromise of mission” (Carruthers, 2010:2), the question of the invisibility of black women in academia and absence of the womanist discourse in the church among other things.

These are crucial questions to ask in the 21st century, particularly when we look at the church’s silence on issues of injustice. Unless our theologies, liturgies and music contribute to breaking this cycle and liberate our people from the plight of the black community, we have betrayed the message of the Gospel, which is about setting people free and reconstructing the structures that perpetuate injustice in society. As praxiological theologies, the effectiveness of our theories will be tested by their ability to transform society and liberate black humanity. Together with our black men, we ask as Wilmore suggests:

How can it be that the burning issues of the 21st century – preventive war, terrorism, gay rights, human sexuality, family structures and values, the hip-hop culture, prison, construction and reform, abortion, stem-cell research, genocide and ethnic cleansing, Afrocentrism, and the explosion of African Christianity, globalism, HIV/AIDS and the desperate needs of the Two-Thirds World, *land reform*, *#FeesMustFall*, *fragmented black humanity*, *patriarchal violence* – are scarcely touched by our Sunday sermons, conference addresses, church governing bodies, or literature? (Wilmore, 2005:167-168) (Emphasis added).

Hopkins and Thomas' question for us is: "What has kept this enduring people in a corporate process is their walking together through good times and bad, relying on what W.E.B. Du Bois called their "dogged strength" to keep "from being torn asunder" (2010:1). Walking together for Hopkins and Thomas means that:

Walk Together, Children even with your differences of language, shades of colour, diverse genders and orientations, jobs, callings, vocations, unique gifts of the spirit, agreements and disagreements. It is a joyful and hopeful imperative to move forward together at this time and in this space. Walk now and not wait. Do it together and not alone. In addition, be as children on two accounts (2010:4)

By walking together, they advance beyond spiritual weariness towards clarifying their ultimate life and death visions for themselves and their children in our great meeting in the Promised Land (Hopkins & Thomas, 2010:6).

6.8. Conclusion

This Chapter is a dialogue from within the School, between BC and womanism, and BTL and womanist theology in a quest for the liberation of fragmented black humanity. We assert that this dialogue is not about an elitist paradigm of black theology or womanism. This journey is not possible without a holistic integration and a communal approach to constructing liberation knowledge and epistemology. If BTL is not aware of conquering tendencies internally while it alerts us to external conquests by vicious power of conquest and colonialization, it will never be helpful for liberation of personhood as a whole. Equally, if womanism does not deal with conquering spirits from within, the liberation of black humanity will be truncated. We are in dialogue because we are black and we are aware of what is at stake. In the kraal, we are face to face with one another's lived experience and therefore we are in solidarity. The kraal collapses the "I" and in becoming "we" critique of the West is no longer possible. Black women's bodies are epistemology to decentre the West because they unravel the whole existence and Eurocentric systems that put white men, women and black men

on top of these bodies for more than 500 years. We are bodies that can no longer be contained by Eurocentric frameworks. This bigger picture is clear in the kraal and hence we walk together with our men in the world that is life-killing for blacks to decentre the West.

CHAPTER 7

Decentring the West: The praxis of Womanism

7.1. Introduction

In the previous chapter, we identified the points of dialogue between BTL and womanism, namely, the rehabilitation of philosophical content of BTL, theology and its affinities to colonialism, and patriarchy and racism as fragmenting factors for black humanity. We also looked at black women's bodies as epistemological disturbance and posited that womanism cannot take its language from Western feminism. As womanists, we critiqued BTL and encouraged it to be attentive to systems of knowledge and its philosophy that must take patriarchal violence seriously. We did this because we know very well that as black women our knowledge, spirituality and life are in the kraal with our black men. The researcher (cf. Kobo, 2016) has argued that the kraal is a governing, ethical artefact for *amaXhosa* and many black Africans, a place where economics, politics, spirituality and faith of a black home reside (2016:4). To rehabilitate our liberation knowledge, we argue in this chapter that we must move away from the West. In this chapter, we go beyond critique to decentre the West from our epistemology, spirituality, bodies and life.

BC as a philosophy is helpful for example if it is interpreted as a philosophy that emphasises lived experiences of black people, for example, insights such as existentialism (Gordon, 1977) – *Existence in Black: An anthology of Black existential philosophy* or Steve Biko (1987) *I write what I like* – who does also say that BC is a way of life. In chapter 4 of Gordon's book, he focuses on the theme of "existential dynamics of theorising black invisibility". What is important for us in this thesis is that Gordon makes it clear that philosophy for a black person is not abstract but existential.

The necessary distinction that we make in the thesis between philosophy and theology should not, however, be understood as a distinction infused with Western categories of thinking. Rather, as Gordon argues, BC and existential philosophy is about presence of black bodies in the world. The body is knowledge from the perspective of one's Womanist Theology. The combination between BC as philosophy and BTL as a faith discourse is undoubtedly an existential discourse on black bodies and black life. "The rebellion of the kind that Biko exemplified is in itself a philosophy of transcendence, a going beyond what is and a becoming of what ought to be" (More, 2017:16).

However, this chapter is not written by a philosopher; it is written by a theologian who is also a philosopher of existentialism.⁵⁵ In decentring the West, womanism looks at how the West has destroyed the knowledge systems of black people. It is not worth repeating that because the entire thesis points to how missionary theologies muted African spiritual resources and denigrated everything African, including the kraal, as ungodly. The affinities of the missionary enterprise with colonialism and Western Christianity with slavery are too troublesome for us as blacks. How BTL itself has continued to critique Western theology does no longer bear any fruit, so we are moving beyond critique to decentring the West. This chapter asserts that there will be no external vision of liberation for black people such as the impositions of Eurocentric knowledge. A decentring of the androcentric, sexist conquering man within the internal discourses of BTL is as bad as the conquering West, if not worse. The assumption that a black woman who is liberated can sustain dialogue with the West in particular that has continued to dungeon black women's lives even in the 21st century is no longer helpful.

If we are walking with black men to decentre the West, we should first look at the West as the centre; second, decentring with BTL; third, black women's bodies as knowledge to decentre the West; fourth, the womanist memory of Elmina castle and finally, pseudo-spirituality. Before we venture on those aspects we have identified to validate

⁵⁵ Recently, as we celebrated the memory of James Cone, Prof Itumeleng Mosala made a point about anthropological blackness as different from existential blackness.

our argument on decentring the West, let us problematize the West as the centre to set the scene for our conversation.

7.2. The West as the Centre

Can the West still be the centre of our universe or the world? We are using the theme of decentring in the same way that Mignolo uses it in his reflection on the Sharjah Biennial 11 exhibition, as curated by Yuko Hasegawa, Chief Curator of the Museum of Contemporary Art in Tokyo, who posits that Sharjah “creates a dialogue that liberates them from Eurocentrism, globalism and other relevant -isms” (Mignolo, 2013:2). Mignolo’s observes that “Re: emerge, Towards a New Cultural Cartography” suggests a reassessment of “Westerncentrism of knowledge in modern times” (2013:2). His insights below inspire our discussion. He avers:

Today, one feels that, with the collapse (financial, political and ethical) of the European Union and the critical moments currently taking place in the U.S. both domestically and internationally, we are living a change of epoch, not an epoch of change. Things are shifting: centres are moveable; sensibilities are shifting the illusion of the end of history after 500 years of localized western history, consolidation and domination is ending. Older – much older – histories of civilisations are re-emerging. Globalism (the neoliberal vision of homogenizing the planet) is spinning out of control and every western universal is under siege (Mignolo, 2013:2).

In this quotation, Mignolo exposes the instabilities in the West, which impact on its self-claimed role of being the centre of the universe. He points to the shifts and the moving of centres and dispelling of illusions that dominated the universe, that the world could only be seen through the eyes of the West. He asserts that the universalizing tendencies and the whole domination of the West is crumbling, and points to a re-emergence of old histories of civilizations. While he acknowledges its role in civilization, he posits that it has reached its limitations. It indeed can no longer assist us as posited by Vellem (2017).

Mignolo argues that the problem of the West is its inability to accept that there exist other localities that are non-West, and to universalize Western localities then erases other localities. Now people have become aware and are realizing that it is not necessary to start from the West. This is what we are arguing in this chapter. For him, this points to a “radical shift in the geopolitics of knowing, sensing and believing” (:8). Living a change of epoch suggests a departure from the critique of Eurocentrism and a western-centrism of knowledge as a focus in order to build something different, a radical decentring (2013:5).

In our attempt at being imaginative, we developed this rendition of our view of the West as the centre:

West as the Centre of knowledge

West as the Centre of life

West as the Centre of faith

West as the Centre of defining who the human is

West as the Centre of defining who the woman is.

The West has always been at the centre, and the essence of womanism is decentring the West. For as long as womanism is interpreted through the lenses of the West, it will not be a true interpretation in terms of knowledge, spirituality and lived bodies.

Eurocentric modernity has dominated humanity and the world for 500 years (Dussel, 1995; Alcoff & Mendieta, 2000; Mendieta, 2003), leading to the rest of Europe placing itself as the centre of the world system with a capitalist economy (Mendieta, 2003). Philosophy, ethics, religion, culture, and the humanities have all been understood through Eurocentric lenses. Grosfoguel (2013), Maldonado-Torres (2014) and Mignolo (2013) are among those scholars who, in conversation with Enrique Dussel, have exposed the myth of the universalism of knowledge and life centred on the West. Cormie Lee (2018) also debunks the myth of universalism by arguing that “all

knowledge is contextual” (2018:51) and further exposes the notions of coloniality of power, epistemic violence, cultural genocide, amongst other things, as closely linked to Eurocentric modernity.

Enrique Dussel is one of the scholars that has critiqued modernity and postmodernity of the West (1988, 1995, 2009). As indicated in the introductory chapter of this thesis, Dussel’s understanding of philosophy as dialogue is important for us. As a critique of the West and its claim for universality, he argues, “This universality claim falls of its own weight when philosophers of other philosophical and cultural traditions become conscious of their own philosophical history and its grounded implications” (2009:510). What Dussel says about philosophy is applicable to all spheres of life and disciplines (cf Grosfoguel, 2013). For us, it means that when we become conscious of who we are in the circle and kraal, where we articulate our blackness as the starting point of seeing the world, the universality claim falls off and the center shifts. We will return to this point later.

Grosfoguel’s (2013) article titled “The Structure of Knowledge in Westernized Universities: Epistemic Racism/Sexism and the Four Genocides/Epistemicides of the Long 16th Century” is helpful for us in locating the West in the centre. This work also employs Enrique Dussel’s critique of Cartesian Philosophy and its Godlikeness, founded on the questions of “I think, therefore I am”, followed by “I conquer, therefore I am.” He is also influenced by the conquest of Americas in the 16th century. He, however, adds other dimensions to the conquest by also bringing in the enslavement of Africans among other things. His focus is different though from that of Dussel, who pays attention to genocides associated with the conquest. He focuses on epistemicide, the extermination of knowledge and ways of knowing as foundations of Westernized Universities, which he associates with the emergence of colonial/modern structures of knowledge. The following questions frame Grosfoguel’s thought and work:

How is it possible that the canon of thought in all the disciplines of the Social sciences and Humanities in the *Westernized* University (Grosfoguel, 2012) is based on the

knowledge produced by a few men from five countries in Western Europe (Italy, France, England, Germany and the USA)? How is it possible that men from these five countries achieved such an epistemic privilege to the point that their knowledge today is considered superior over the knowledge of the rest of the world? How did they come to monopolize the authority of knowledge in the world? Why is it that what we know today as social, historical, philosophical, or Critical Theory is based on the socio-historical experience and worldviews of men from these five countries? (2013:74).

Grosfoguel demonstrates how the world's knowledge system centers on the West. He traces this at a philosophical level. Cartesian philosophy informs the Western forms of knowledge, the binaries and the separation of the mind and body. He exposes the 'I', which has become definitive as equivalent to a "God-Eye" view, the 'I' that produces, creates, discovers and conquers. Vellem critiques this philosophy and exposes its implications for black humanity in the following manner:

The 'I' of the Cartesian ego is not capable to comprehend the plight of a black person who cannot be the 'I'. The epistemological roots of the Cartesian ego are asleep to black pain. The lethargic sleep to the pain and violence meted out against black people in addition to the inability of the white people to fulfil the good of their own values are among the things that shocked Tiyo Soga when his small bag was stolen in Edinburgh. Western thinking related especially to the Cartesian ego undeniably places the rationality of Western theology that has espoused this canon as a faith challenge, a matter of the spirit lock stock and barrel (Vellem, 2017:6).

Vellem pursues Grosfoguel's thesis on the implications of Western knowledge systems to non-Westerners. Indeed, if the 'I' cannot comprehend those that cannot be the 'I', like the black humanity, the question for the researcher is: why must we continue to critique the West?

In his analysis of the emergence of modern/colonial structures of knowledge, Grosfoguel observes that the knowledge of a few white men from five countries in

Western Europe and the USA became the center. He critiques the fact that the provincial social and historical experiences and worldviews of these men became the universal sources in the conceptualization of theory and how their time and space dimensions were projected and imposed on the whole world despite the differences in time and space. The imposition of the western forms of being, knowledge and so forth, have already been critiqued in the fourth chapter of this thesis. The lesson for us here is the tensions between the Western and African worldviews and systems that led to genocides, epistemicide and spiritualicide which structure the theme of decentring.

Whenever the West has imposed something on Africans, the African worldview and value systems debunk it. For instance, in the previous chapters, we have observed that Africans debunk Western binaries and Scottish forms of liturgy. We also look at how Africans debunk time. For instance, in the West, time is linear and modern, associated with the rhetoric of progress, the movement from one point to the other. Africa falls within a circular framework, a circle; things in Africa intersect. Africans are communal and comprehensive. There seems to be no justification for further critique. Africans must decentre the West!

Grosfoguel further argues that the Social Sciences and the Humanities in the Westernized universities are founded on the social theories based on the social experiences of these men. He points to the implications of universalizing what is provincial and the effect it has on everyone else's experience and epistemology and how they are subverted and excluded from the canon, e.g. non-Western, Global South and women's experiences and epistemologies. If women's epistemologies are in the worst position and inferior as he suggests, that means black women's epistemologies and experiences are not even on the radar of the canon, as we have demonstrated how the category of women in the West only referred to white women.

He posits that Westernized universities are founded on racist and sexist social theories. Another implication is the replacement of God as foundation of knowledge. In other words, these few white men have so much power and influence that they can

be equated to God; in fact, they have arguably usurped the position that belongs to God. Their epistemic privilege emulates Godlike qualities that they possess, he argues. Whenever a certain group acquired privilege, the implications are that some will assume the status of being inferior, as evident in distinction between Global North and Global South.

Grosfoguel's argument locates our thesis on the exclusion of black African women's bodies and epistemologies as part of the Long 16th Century. Indeed, even the so-called discovery of the New World cannot be discussed without listing the 'dungeoning' of black women's bodies at the center. The transatlantic slave trade itself cannot be excused as the symbol of the 'dungeoning' of black bodies in the dungeons of the Elmina Castle and pseudo-religiosity. The Long 16th Century represents the enslavement of the knowledge, bodies and spiritual heritage of black humanity and women.

Nelson Maldonado-Torres discusses another dimension of the centrality of the West, locating it in the Long 16th Century. He critiques how the content of concepts of religion in the sixteenth century expanded to include race as construed by West, a definition and understanding grounded on modernity that became universal (2014a:637). He posits: "What we have come to call religion and what we call race have played a central role in the way peoples and societies have been depicted, conceived, approached, and organized in the West for the last several centuries. Few other ideas have had equal weights" (2014b:691).

Like knowledge, the meaning of religion in the West is what determined what religion should mean in the entire world. Maldonado-Torres observes close affinities between 'discoveries', colonization and what we understand today as religion, race and imperial power (2014a & 2014b). In his critique of western modernity, he argues that it was primarily spread throughout the world through colonialism, which is closely linked with the Age of Discovery (2014b:695). Alluding to Sylvia Winter, he looks at Columbus' voyage, aptly defined by "Discovery, evangelization, and colonization" (:696). Simply

put, in the quest to evangelize, wealth was discovered, and mechanisms had to be devised to acquire the wealth. Hence, people were colonized and enslaved. This paved the way for global colonization, which is a combination of discovery and how the West began to think about race (:697). Maldonado-Torres avers,

... the universal application of something called religion and the formulation of radical exceptions to it in reference to New World peoples and slaves brought from Africa opened up a universe of signification that culminated in the naturalization of inferiority, the belief in ontological gaps between different groups of human beings, and the production of what Fanon referred to as a Manichean divide that rendered colonizers as good and colonized as essentially evil. That is to say, modernity generated a Manichean divide out of the religious/non-religious and the soul/non-soul binaries. This modern predicament cannot be understood without addressing the ways in which religion and race have combined to generate ideas about self and others in modernity (2014b:703).

This quotation exposes the intersections that underlie the understanding of religion through the eyes of Western modernity, the discovery of the New World and wealth that led to colonialism and the enslavement of the African people. The application and extension of the Western binaries such as religious/non-religious and souls/non-souls extended to differentiate the indigenous people in the Americas and black Africans in later encounters.

If these indigenous people were lacking subjectivity, without religion, and seen as potential servants, the encounter of the West with black Africans was more severe. There we distinguish between how the West perceived indigenous people and how it perceived black Africans. Indigenous people were considered beings that could be indoctrinated and inculcated in the dogmas of the church; with African slaves there was no such consideration. They were rather condemned and associated with Ham, the cursed son of Noah, and seen as those that must be wiped off the face of the earth (2014a:655). They were also conceived in the modern/colonial world as subjects

without subjectivity, but one which was also fundamentally violent, and they “became perhaps the most evident mark of condemnation in modernity” (2014a: 657).

Alluding to Hannaford (1996:112), Maldonado-Torres traces the beginning of racist logic in the West to the use of metaphors of reason and unreason, to have religion and to have none (:641). He further states,

To refer to the indigenous as subjects without religion removes them from the category of the human. Religion is universal among humans, but the alleged lack of it among natives is not initially taken to indicate the falseness of this statement, but rather the opposite: that there exist subjects in the world who are not fully human (2014a:641).

Africans were not only regarded as a people without religion and souls, as rightly put by Maldonado-Torres, who observes the links between the notion of people without religion with people who lacked soul (2014b:699). They were not human. He thus observes what it meant to refer to the indigenous peoples as subjects that did not have religion, as follows:

Since the recognition of religiosity was a principal feature in the recognition of peoples as people, the declaration that natives did not have religion opened up the path for the expropriation of the natives' lands, denied them subjectivity, and declared them servile subjects (2014a:640).

The researcher's upcoming work⁵⁶ postulates that in order to secure the dreams and aspirations of the West, black African people had to be landless, kraal-less, culture-less, tradition-less and religion-less. Had they been recognised as human and people with religion, there would be no justification for the expropriation of their land, denial

⁵⁶ Kobo, F.A. (2018). Hope in a Pseudo-spirituality of Democracy in South Africa: Religion and Human Security in Troubling Contexts. Manuscript submitted for publication.

of subjectivity, and the denigration of their culture among other things. Therefore, there are close affinities between being affirmed as human and economics in the West. These insights by Mamdani's summary of the institutional aspect of the colonial legacy, as echoed by General Jan Smuts, inspire this discussion too. He argues,

The political system of the natives was ruthlessly destroyed in order to incorporate them as equals into the white system. The African was good as a potential European; his social and political culture was bad, barbarous, and only deserving to be stamped out root and branch. In some of the British possessions in Africa the native just emerged from barbarism was accepted as an equal citizen with full political rights along with the whites. However, his native institutions were ruthlessly proscribed and destroyed. The principle of equal rights was applied in its crudest form, and while it gave the native a semblance of equality with whites, which was little good to him, it destroyed the basis of his African system, which was his highest good. These are the two extreme native policies which have prevailed in the past, and the second has been only less harmful than the first (Mamdani, 1996:5).

What Mamdani exposes are the fundamental and governing principles of Western modernity in its encounter with Africans, non-persons, who belong to the zone of non-being. He affirms a point made earlier on how the colonisers destroyed the past and controlled the present to destroy the basis of African system. His use of androcentric language, however, is not excusable. The same pathologies that were experienced by a native who is a he were experienced by a black native woman, even though her being was not recognised by the West.

The point for us here is to demonstrate the dominance of the West in public life. They are at the centre of everything, and the whole world is subject to how they view, interpret and understand it. As demonstrated by Grosfoguel, Maldonado-Torres and affirmed by Mamdani, their experiences, forms of knowledge, religion, ontology and race, among other things were privileged and became universal. Their quests and aspirations, as they became Godlike, as defined by Grosfoguel, gave them power to decide who is human and who is not, who has a soul and who does not. Following this

thesis, Vellem's insights are helpful. He asserts, "Western civilisation is no longer helpful to make any meaningful contribution to black life, especially when one interrogates growing fascism in the West, ostensibly in defence of the supremacy and superiority of one race against all others in the world" (2017:3).

Vellem observes that we are in an era that could be defined as that of growing fascism of the West to defend their privilege to remain at the centre, to continue to define knowledge for us and to exclude our experiences, if one looks at the implications of the West occupying the centre for black humanity. They can never make a meaningful contribution to our lives, and critique is no longer useful. Critique might suggest that we are part of the system; we can no longer critique the West but debunk it. We critique BTL because we are black; beyond critiquing it, what else can we be but Black? However, if we are critiquing black, why would we critique Eurocentric systems of knowledge? We are debunking them in order for womanism to decentre the West. As womanists, we posit that bodies of black women that do not exist in the Western worldview and epistemology are foundations of knowledge to decentre the West. Vellem writes,

A theology that harnesses its resources outside the Western *polis* by refusing to accord Western canons of thought any finality un-thinks the West. To un-think the West is a complete decentring of Western canons and a focus on making BTL's strong thought feasible. The disentanglement of BTL from the parasitic, life-killing antics of the West in the light of neo-fascism is urgent (2017:3).

As womanists, we affirm the disentanglement suggested by Vellem and proceed with BTL to decentre the West to make BTL and womanism's strong thought feasible.

7.3. Decentring the West with BTL

Vellem's phenomenal work on decentring the West sets the scene for us in this section. He avers at length:

It is indisputable that Black Theology of Liberation (BTL) intentionally un-thinks the West. BTL has its own independent conceptual and theoretical foundations and can hold without the West if it rejects the architecture of Western knowledge as a final norm for life. This, however, is a spiritual matter that the article argues. The historical arrest of the progression of liberative logic and its promises might be self-inflicted by rearticulating and reinterpreting liberation strong thought. At a time when neofascism, which is virtually an open display of psychological and ideological confusion, racism, classism, sensibilities of integralism and gender violence, having become rife, liberal democracy is arguably in crisis today. BTL has to move beyond rethinking and repeating its tried and tested ways of response to black pain caused by racism and colonialism. Un-thinking the West is not only cognitive but also spiritual (Vellem, 2017:1).

Vellem's insights are helpful for womanism and black humanity. They locate the liberation of black humanity outside the framework of the West. We have discussed throughout the thesis that the experiences of black humanity, the fragments, pain and struggle will not be liberated by outsiders. The West are the outsiders, we submit. If BTL intentionally un-thinks the West, the essence of womanism to decentre the West is validated. After all, BTL is Womanist Theology.

The rupture of broken women's bodies that started in Elmina continued in Marikana, Soweto, Stoffel Park and Tembisa. The growing intolerance by black people in townships today, whose struggle is to breathe and be alive, is indeed a spiritual matter, as referred to by Vellem. "Material want is bad enough, but coupled with spiritual poverty it kills," said Biko (2012:30). This makes the agenda to decentre an urgent one if we are to restore life in our people as Vellem suggests. He seems to argue that any

attempt to critique the West implies that there is hope that someday, the West will affirm the humanity of Blacks. It implies that there is hope that someday, we will sit around the circle with the West and define anew humanity, knowledge, life, faith, and who and what a woman is. It is to hope that the West will move from the centre.

Nevertheless, the growing fascism in the West tells us otherwise. New forms of killing of black humanity, with the poor getting poorer in democratic South Africa, tells us otherwise. The incidences of Gender-Based Violence point to an intensifying patriarchal violence. Vellem talks about the dooming (spraying congregants with an insecticide called Doom) of our people by pastors, the feeding of grass and drinking of petrol point to pseudo-spirituality and an open display of psychological and ideological confusion. If BTL and Womanists ever needed signs of the times to make a brave move, these are the signs. The fragmenting of black humanity post-1994 is a sign that wakes us up from utopia. Indeed, to say that we are rearticulating, appropriating and rethinking responses to racist and sexist ideologies, epistemologies, philosophies, theologies and spiritualities that are life-killing to our people is a misnomer. We are decentring so as to allow our ideologies, epistemologies, philosophies, theologies and spiritualities to be the centre. We can only succeed if we seriously consider ourselves un-West as Vellem's allusion to other Black Theologians suggests below:

Boesak's (2009) views on the Black Church, even Tshaka's (2014), Mofokeng's major work on Christology (1983) and many others if not the school as a whole indicate that the conceptual independence of BTL is attained only when it seriously considers itself as un-West (2017:6).

Boesak's upcoming book that critiques BTL's foundational paradigm also suggests that one cannot critique BTL at a metaphysical level and remain in the West. Vellem observes that decentring is possible if we believe that we are un-West and affirm ourselves as unapologetically Black and African. We affirm ourselves as such and draw from our own resources. What he says below is helpful:

Comprehensively speaking, BTL is both epistemologically and hermeneutically un-West. It is anti-white, meaning, against whiteness, superiority and inferiority. It points beyond – not in dualistic terms – the promises of white theology. The spiritual foundation of blackness is outside the lethargic sleep by the West at the violence and destruction of the black (Vellem, 2017:6).

We affirm as womanists and ‘second’ the proposal to un-think the West as a decentring mechanism and resource. Mignolo further affirms us when he states, “I am arguing here that both ‘liberation’ and ‘decolonization’ points toward conceptual (and therefore epistemic) projects of de-linking from the colonial matrix of power” (2007:455). He gives us the grammar of delinking and decolonizing as helpful resources to decentre. He argues, “A delinking that leads to de-colonial epistemic shift and brings to the foreground other epistemologies, other principles of knowledge and understanding and, consequently, other economy, other politics, other ethics is now urgent” (Mignolo, 2007:453).

Furthermore, de-linking presupposes to move toward a geo- and body politics of knowledge that on the one hand denounces the pretended universality of a particular ethnicity (body politics), located in a specific part of the planet (geo-politics), that is, Europe where capitalism accumulated as a consequence of colonialism. De-linking then shall be understood as a de-colonial epistemic shift leading to other-universality, that is, to pluri-versality as a universal project (Mignolo, 2007:453).

Mignolo debunks the myth of universalism pointed out by Grosfoguel and as argued throughout the thesis. Universality conceals the superiority of certain epistemologies, spiritualities and bodies and relegates others to the inferiority domain. He suggests that de-linking is a de-colonial epistemic shift that takes into consideration that there exists another universality, which he refers to as pluri-versality. His helpful grammar enhances the ability of our thesis to move beyond the West. It provides for us resources that are useful. However, it is still unable to take us further. While we agree

with Grosfoguel, Maldonado-Torres and Mignolo, among others, in the Coloniality School, we posit that they are outside the kraal. To be outside the kraal is elucidated by Biko in the following manner:

The liberal must understand that the days of the Noble Savage are gone: that the blacks do not need a go-between in this struggle for their own emancipation. No true liberal should feel any resentment at the growth of black consciousness. Rather, all true liberals should realise that the place for their fight for justice is within their white society (2012:27).

As foreigners of the kraal, therefore, they arguably cannot really be the definite solution for black humanity. We maintain that as black women, our knowledge, spirituality and life is in the kraal with our black men. No outsider must decide our destiny. We are decentring with our men and state that black African women's bodies are epistemologies to decentre the West.

7.4. Body of a black woman is knowledge to decentre the West

In the previous chapters, we have argued that black women's bodies are epistemological disturbances to hegemonic Eurocentric frameworks. We reflect briefly on what has already been stated to demonstrate the decentring nature of womanism. Spivak (1988) has critiqued western theoretical frameworks for their inability to represent subjects that fall outside their scope. She points out that this worsens when it comes to women in the Third World, which we refer to as the Global South in this thesis. She demonstrates how the lives of these women are unknown to these frameworks and how they cannot even be nuanced by their grammar. They are "so complex and unsystematic that they cannot be known or represented in any straightforward way by vocabularies of western critical theory" (Morton, 2003:7). They disturb the framework. For the West, it is better to silence these voices and occlude these experiences in the body of knowledge.

Butler (1999) has also critiqued the essence of Western frameworks to subvert and illegitimize epistemologies that fall outside their own. While she does so through the lens of gender, her principles are helpful for us. She looks into the Western binaries that locate gender between two domains, namely, male and female, woman and man, and posits that they must be disturbed and questioned, especially when people's lives are at stake. She also questions the operative power and norms that safeguard these binaries and exposes them. She pushes the binaries to try and find the alternatives. The pushing of the binaries is for the researcher decentring. Butler illustrates how binaries are deeper expressions of total colonial systems of knowledge, as we have already demonstrated what colonialism does. If they are a demonstration of destruction of black life, the only logical solution is to decentre.

We are decentring from the West that defined the category of women as white women only and a framework that only looks at the experiences of white, elite women who had an active role in the oppression and subjugation of black humanity. They are beneficiaries of the system that does not only silence black bodies but breaks them. How then do we entrust the liberation of these bodies on the hands that have chained them? Black humanity lost their sanity in this framework. As demonstrated in the previous chapters, racist and patriarchal systems eat into their psyche. It presents the psychological effect linked with a debilitating sense of inferiority of the entire race of black humanity at the hand of racial oppression (Ntintili, 1996:9).

How could we then trust the very structures to restore the sanity of black humanity? How can we trust them to "liberate blacks from their self-incurred mental and psychological bondage" (Velle, 2007b:47)? How do we trust them to pump life back into these bodies as per the task of Black Consciousness, when life itself is defined only through their eyes? What about anger, as observed by Biko? Can a person who has angered another be capable of calming that person down without touching the very thing that angered them in the first place? The answer is simple, we cannot trust them. The answer lies outside the white power structure.

We have observed in the first chapter how dangerous it is to assimilate people into unchanged and oppressive structures. We spoke about the assimilation of black people into an unchanged white world (Lamola, 1989) and the assimilation of women into an unchanged male-dominated world. We posit that the assimilation of black women in a structure that is foundationally racist and exclusive would be catastrophic. Their liberation calls for a framework that privileges them, one that is structurally designed to enhance their many contributions in epistemology, among other things. We have demonstrated how women bring their all in theology, and the manner in which they redeem African culture as a greatest resource for their own liberation and that of black humanity as a whole. That can only happen further away from the West, only in the kraal with our black men, we contend. This work posits, therefore, that a womanist framework is in order as it is an epistemological agency of black women that is comprehensive. Hooks' (1989) earlier point is in order when she suggests that the complexity of these women's lives call for:

... feminist scholarship which addresses a wide variety of issues in Black life (mothering, Black masculinity, the relationship between gender and homicide, poverty, the crisis of Black womanhood, connections between health and our conceptions of the body, sexuality, media, etc.) – work that could have transformative impact on our future (1989:56).

Womanists take into consideration a wide variety of issues that constitute the agency of the black woman and her black brother. They recognise that their loss of womanhood as observed in the second chapter cannot be treated apart from that of black men who have lost their manhood in a capitalist, racist society. They are aware of differences that they have with BTL and have looked at them in the kraal in the sixth chapter. Walking with BTL, their concern now is the fragmented black humanity post-1994 in South Africa. That is what makes womanism comprehensive and, as argued, adequate to represent black African women and their unique contribution. In their journey with their black men, they debunk Western binaries, disturb and decentre them. No Western framework can do that and staying under the shadow and dominance of the West does not make sense. The circle and the bringing together of

things does not make sense in the West. The very attempt to do that is a decentring and the essence of womanism. So we must decentre.

Unlike Butler (2001), who disturbs the binaries and looks for alternatives from within, as argued in the fourth chapter, Young (2005) goes out of the binaries to Toril Moi's existential phenomenology. She observes intersectionality between lived bodies and their historical, social, racial, gender and sexual forms of being. While womanism affirms Butler's principles and Young's decentring, their contribution is curtailed by their absence in the kraal. They can only contribute so much as the interlocutors of the black kraal decide on the liberation and destiny of black humanity. Womanists also take into consideration that their black African lived bodies differ from any other body, including white women's lived bodies. So even Young's helpful proposition of lived bodies has limitations. Indeed, as an epistemological agency that is comprehensive, which enhances African culture and many other life concerns for African women, womanism posits that no Western framework can represent this unique contribution by black African women.

Lugones (2008) has seen this, hence her critique of colonial/modern gender system as venomous for black humanity. By rejecting it and proposing one that focuses on communal relations for black humanity, she is decentring. She is decentring from venomous binaries that disturb the epistemological agency for black women and humanity. Butler, Spivak and Young help us to disrupt Western knowledge systems. However, as demonstrated earlier, Butler remains within the binary framework while Young goes beyond the binaries. They offer resources that intensify the agenda of decentring but even the finality of those resources lies in the kraal.

Womanism debunks the binaries and move to a circle. In a circle, things are interconnected, intersect and are relational. This has been debated by BTL for decades. Anyone who understands the meaning of a circle in African systems of knowledge will never challenge any womanist theology about intersectionality. It is something that black African women have known, they live in it, their houses are round,

and they have rondavels. They think in circular terms. That has also been said for decades by the School as a whole. Therefore, we engage those elements that come from Butler, Young and so forth about the importance of intersectionality as validations. They simply say what has been said. However, as womanists, we are saying the body of a black woman is knowledge to decentre the West.

We posit that their lived experiences are knowledge for black humanity. As black humanity, we cannot know if we do not know the body of a woman because we must first exist before we know. If women are such broken, degraded bodies, do we know who we are? If knowledge is not affirming life, it cannot be knowledge. We exist as black women, as these bodies, so we are epistemology and that is the meaning of decentring feminist and Eurocentric categories.

Indeed, the whole colonial, Eurocentric structure, is enunciated in Elmina castle. That whole system of knowledge is not knowledge because it does not know the body of a woman. Eurocentric knowledge categories, as encapsulated by Elmina castle, cannot be knowledge unless the dungeons are brought on top of the colonial matrix of power and knowledge systems. To continue to engage womanism with feminist ideas from the West is enough and good, but that is not what we are discussing here — we are decentring the West. Butler and Young need to understand that there is a certain limitation to how far we can use them. The moment we go to the dungeons of Elmina castle, we cannot see how they can be helpful.

7.4.1. A womanist memory of Elmina⁵⁷

The visit to the Elmina castle⁵⁸ for the first time in November 2015 and for the second time in January 2018 marks a transition in the researcher's theologising and reflection

⁵⁷ This section is an edited version of the section taken from the researcher's article entitled "Black women's bodies as Reformers from the Dungeons: Reformation and Womanism" (Kobo, 2018b).

⁵⁸ The castle was initially designed for the gold and ivory trade but under the Dutch, the slave trade was added. <http://www.everycastle.com/Elmina-Castle.html> 4 April 2018. See Appendices

on life as a black African woman. The contradictions brought by Elmina have had reverberations throughout the researcher's own journey. Elmina represents the structural oppression and commodification of black humanity as slaves. Its structure and the location of enslaved black African women is what one struggles to comprehend or even forgive. Upstairs, there were the governor and the merchants' quarters, barracks for soldiers and pastors, and the Dutch Reformed Chapel was located on the same floor. One floor below were dungeons – male and female dungeons. The female dungeons were located below the Dutch Reformed Church. When psalms were sung upstairs, the women in the dungeons could clearly hear them. When women were raped and violated, their cries could clearly be heard by those in the chapel.

The tour guide told us that women were often brought to the courtyard, and the governor would choose who he found appealing for sexual exploitation and rape by the slave traders. In some instances, the guards raped some of the women. It was also narrated that some women resisted being raped, and the consequences of their actions was punishment by being put in chains and not given food. It is hard to overlook this resistance by enslaved women who would have known very well what the consequences would be. This spirit of resistance demonstrated by these women in such degrading conditions and the unwillingness of women to bow down to the perverse sexual desires of an enslaver is commendable.

Elmina is the epitome of broken black African women's bodies! What one experiences when touching the cracked walls brings the feeling of their scars, visible and invisible. One smells their odour in those dungeons that were never cleaned during their stay. The smell of urine, faeces and menstrual blood is still there because these women were expected to relieve themselves in the dungeons. They were not granted access to toilets or even menstrual cloths when they were on their periods. They were not even allowed to bath, except when one of them was chosen on a particular day to satisfy the enslaver's sexual fantasies. Even then, they were bathed in public in the courtyard while everyone else was watching.

The picture that forms in one's mind is that of seeing, feeling and smelling women who, on a daily basis, lived in fear in those dungeons, fear which according to Biko was an important determinant in politics (1977:272). They were asking themselves when their turn would come for their bodies and minds to be violated and their souls crushed before they would be sailed across the Atlantic through the 'Gate of No Return', never to return to their motherland. The transatlantic system of slavery is a summary of the dungeoning of epistemologies, bodies and lives of black African women, which is still happening in many ways even today.

Having been at Elmina as a womanist, can the West know me? If one stands in the dungeons of Elmina, the pits out of which a black body was taken to be raped by a white merchant slave master, will a Western framework of knowledge know me? If my body remains in the dungeons, in the caves of the dungeons with bar rods that can crack the skull of a woman by merely hitting it by mistake, thick iron bars and chains, can this body be explained by Eurocentric systems of knowledge? Elmina makes clear the agenda of decentring from the West. In order for us to proceed, we must turn upside down the Elmina Complex of the colonial wound, put the dungeons on top and all the merchants, galleries, governors' quarters and Dutch Reformed chapel below.

By putting the dungeons on top, we posit that black African women's bodies are epistemology. They are the centre that is often concealed by patriarchal structures and institutions, including those that are faith-based. Experiences of women in the dungeons must be our starting point in our quest for liberation of black humanity. For a Black African woman, Western Christianity and its affinities are toxic to her consciousness and spirituality. Black bodies in dungeons must come out to decentre the West.

7.4.2. Pervasive dungeons for South African black women post-1994

We have demonstrated and reflected on the lived experiences and broken bodies of black African women post-1994 throughout this thesis. The fifth chapter, which dwells on the conference on 'Broken bodies, patriarchy and African women', captures this well. In looking at black women's bodies, we have already established that they are bodies that are sites of struggle, contested spaces, surveilled sites and texts. They are bodies that are marked and rejected by Western frameworks, including the white feminism which claims to represent all women. Their epistemology and spirituality are subverted along with their bodies. We have, in the sixth chapter, spoken about the importance of these bodies with our black men. In our moving together to decentre, we bring these bodies out of the many dungeons, as observed in many stories that have been told, including those that are untold. We bring them out because they matter, they speak and are the epistemology that we need as black humanity to know ourselves. Our liberation as black humanity depends on them being taken out of the dungeons to stand together with their men and decide their destiny.

We bring out the bodies of Marikana women who are mourning the death of their sons, husbands, brothers and children who were brutally killed by the police on 16 August 2012 at Lonmin Mine, Marikana. Marikana is important for us because it is the epitome of modern democracy, a Western framework that has failed to liberate black humanity. The researcher's (Kobo, 2018c) upcoming book looks at democracy as producing a pseudo-spirituality which emanates from its false hope and promises to liberate black humanity. The researcher contends that failures of democracy are evident in its inability to liberate the people it promised to liberate, when we see the poor getting poorer while escalated poverty point to a pseudo-spirituality of democracy.

Chomsky employs Walter Lippmann, a major theorist of liberal democracy's 'revolution in the art of democracy', to expose the meaning of democracy as that of domination, where a certain group of privileged people think, plan and take decisions as custodians of the common interests of the public (Chomsky, 2011:23). Maldonado-Torres (2014a)

defines Western democracy as a product of modernity. Maldonado-Torres (2014a), Ramose (1999) and Vellem (2015b) are among scholars that argue that democracy cannot be separated from modernity itself, which is racist, sexist and elitist as experienced by black African men and women in the Global South. "Western-style democracy is neither emancipative nor is it an authentic expression of contemporary African political culture" (Ramose, 1992:63). It is for Vellem "... a tool of the elitist, too detached from the aspirations of the poor masses" (2015b:6). Vellem traces this ideology from the translation of the French Revolution and the history of the discovery of a New World from the West to Africa, an encounter that led to genocide, epistemicide, and colonisation of the African people. Mamdani (1996:4) critiques the principles of the French Revolution, which he argues emancipated Europe but did the opposite when translated to Africa (Vellem, 2015b:11).

He posits:

The black African experience, up to this day, continues to be a festering wound inflicted by those who benefited from the virtues of the liberal discourse upon arriving on the continent in our land South Africa. It is difficult to place the liberation vision on the traditions and values that were enjoyed by those who used them as bitterest sources of oppression and subordination in the non-Western worlds (Vellem, 2015b:11).

The point made here by Chomsky, Maldonado-Torres, Ramose and Vellem is that the West cannot remain in the centre of the liberation of black humanity. The shooting of the miners in Lonmin Mine, Marikana, is certainly a reflection of this. These men were protesting for a wage increase to support their families and to better their own lives. We submit that Western frameworks will never hear the cries of black humanity. The women that we are bringing out of the Marikana dungeons will certainly not be helped by this democracy. In the apartheid system, these women were separated from their sons, husbands, brothers and fathers who had to go and work in the mines. In the democratic dispensation, these women are separated from them through death and killing. BTL and womanists have to realize that they are indeed walking in a world that is life-killing and have to decentre their people from this.

We bring out of the dungeon bodies of the likes of Winnie Madikizela Mandela who recently passed on, whose life is a reflection of the brutality of the encounter of the West with Africans, especially black women. In the fifth chapter, we have demonstrated the attempt to erase from history one who fought for this country's liberation; one who fought apartheid when most men, including Nelson Mandela, were either jailed or exiled; one who walked the streets with the people shouting *Amandla ngawethu*, power belongs to the people; one who kept the fire burning and the spirit of resilience alive in the masses; and one who risked her life and that of her children as she exposed them to her numerous arrests and banishments. "The Apartheid state developed a sophisticated and brutal infrastructure for our oppression. It was intolerant of any talk of democracy, especially from a woman activist" (Dlamini, Mail & Guardian: 14 April 2018). In his speech at her funeral, the president of the Republic, Mr Cyril Ramaphosa, acceded that Winnie never sold out. He stated, "As men ran away, she was there" (14 April 2018).

As the country transitioned from this evil system to yet another evil system of democracy, this Western system showed its darkest and most evil side by employing one of its strategies to conquer, which is that of divide and rule, and succeeded in turning her fellow brothers against her. She was too powerful for the African National Congress (ANC) to contain; they had to push her back. Her fellow black men! She was the voice of the downtrodden that she encountered in the streets. As it were, there was no space to listen to cries in democracy, as evident even in the so-called ANC that refuses to listen up to this day. Western frameworks will never hear the cries of black humanity.

Winnie was dungeoned by white supremacists, white patriarchs and black patriarchs. White men, white women, black men and to some extent black women trampled on Winnie's body. All forces collided against a powerful woman in an attempt to silence her and to push her back to her place as a woman! Winnie was an affront to racism and sexism, both white and black patriarchy, and she had to be silenced! Yates (1998), in her critique of the injustice levelled against Winnie, suggests that in a patriarchal society, power is a men's domain and Winnie Mandela was aspiring to what belonged

to men and society would not allow it. We are bringing Winnie out of the dungeons to decentre the West. As South Africans, we cannot know ourselves without knowing Winnie's body. She must come out of the dungeons for our own liberation to be comprehensive.

In bringing these women out, it is unavoidable in our reflection to note close affinities between spirituality and commodification of life [the location of a Dutch Reformed chapel above the female dungeon at Elmina Castle where human beings were commodified, and denied food when they resisted inhuman actions — where black African women were raped and humiliated, a clear demonstration of how the church can allow itself to become the cultural and religious guardian of the symbols of domination and subjugation]. This leads us to ask what spirituality is, therefore, for black women and humanity.

7.5. Pseudo-spirituality of an oppressed black woman

The West does not hear the cries of black African women, as demonstrated above. If we look at the location of the female dungeons at Elmina below the Dutch Reformed Church, when psalms were sung upstairs, the women in the dungeons could clearly hear them. When women were raped and violated, their cries could clearly be heard by those in the chapel. However, the cries of these women in the dungeons were not heard. The researcher's (Kobo, 2018a) recently published article problematizes the cries of black African women as cries for life. This work poses the following questions that inspire our discussion:

What does prayer mean to a Marikana widow and, by implication who listens to the prayers and cries of black African women in their struggles for life? Whom are they directing their cries to? Furthermore, what role does Christianity play in their pain and cries? Does this faith contribute to the misdirection of their cries and pain? (Kobo, 2018a:2).

From the section above, it is evident that the West does not listen to these cries. If we think about Vellem's (2015b) earlier point on placing the liberation vision on the traditions and values that were used to oppress and subordinate black humanity; to expect them to hear these cries then is delusional. This raises pertinent questions for the researcher. What is spirituality for a black woman? Is it Jesus who is white with blue eyes? Is it heaven that is still coming?

Oduyoye (1989) argued a long time ago that the Christian religion instilled in Africans hope in the world to come and faith that is otherworldly. In an attempt to dissuade them from resisting their subservient role, this religion taught our people that it is acceptable to suffer now and have no land, that there is a promise of a paradise to come, where none shall lack anything and everything will be made right in Christ (:37). If we follow from this thesis by Oduyoye, heaven is where black humanity and women aspire to go. They do not aspire to be land owners or live better lives. This resonates with Torres' earlier point on religion interpreted through the eyes of the West and its implications for the rest of the world, especially its encounter with Africa. He exposes the affinities in declaring black Africans as people without religion and their loss of land and enslavement. It is, therefore, not by mistake or out of ignorance that black Africans aspire to go to heaven more than returning to their land and kraals. The kraals were denigrated so that they never find who they are. Hence, a womanist dialogue with BTL is a journey back to the kraal because it is where the resources to liberate them have always been.

Can this Christianity, therefore, listen to the cries of Marikana women? Can the religion that eludes the meaning of the dungeons for black humanity liberate them? Can churches that hide the dungeons and sit on top of black women liberate them? The researcher's (2018a) article demonstrates the disjuncture between material and the spirit. It exposes the pseudo-spirituality produced by the encounter of the West with Africa. It exposes the implication of the translation of their binaries in the life of an African. It looks at how black African women's cries for material goods are evaded by a promise of heaven. It observes how their prayers are escape routes to that heaven without any attempt to address their material needs.

It problematizes how for these women, church and the Bible continue to be central in their lives yet they continue to interiorise forms of theology and thus spirituality that does not take into account their lived experiences and ultimately their struggle for liberation (Kobo, 2018a:2).

In its current forms, these theologies, spiritualities and churches will not liberate black women and humanity. The incarnation of spirituality, theology and church means nothing without black bodies in dungeons. Black women's spirituality must come out of the dungeons to decentre the West. We bring out women from the dungeons of churches and spirituality and theology to liberate black humanity as a whole. Spirituality is defined by Kalilombe (1994) as attitudes, beliefs and practices that animate people's lives and further helps them to reach out toward spiritual realities; it can only be realised through the spirituality of black women in dungeons (:115). They must come out of the dungeons to restore harmony in the kraal.

By bringing the dungeons to the top, we are bringing out the bodies, epistemologies, and spiritualities as resources to enhance the life of black humanity. We are taking the West to the dungeons because its frameworks are no longer useful for us. "Blacks are out to completely transform the system and to make of it what they wish" (Biko, 1987:50). We must move away from the knowledge systems and spiritualities that were enunciated and intimated through the commodification of life. The cultural dispensation of black people, land of the black person — all those things are one's spiritual resources. If Jesus does not include my spiritual resources, then pseudo-spirituality is in order.

7.6. Conclusion

The argument in this chapter is that black men and women have dialogued in the previous chapter. They have critiqued and spoken about things that need to be

addressed for their own liberation. They did this because they are black and are equally troubled by the persisting fragments in their humanity. They have established that in order for black humanity to fully know itself, black women's bodies must come out of the dungeons and be the centre of knowledge. In this chapter, we argued that moving away from any critique of the West is a possible solution, as the West has not helped a black woman and man. BTL and womanists have moved away from knowledge systems, spiritualities and bodies as enunciated and intimated through the commodification of life. By bringing dungeons on top, black men and women are bringing out the bodies, epistemologies and spiritualities as resources to enhance the life of black humanity. They are taking the West to the dungeons because its frameworks are no longer useful if they cannot see where these frames of knowledge come from.

CHAPTER 8

Conclusion

8.1. Introduction

This chapter concludes the thesis by recapitulating its major discussions. Starting by restating the hypothesis, it takes us through the chapters briefly as a way of re-articulating the problem to which this work attempts to respond. It highlights key issues raised in the thesis and states its contribution to the School of BTL. It poses questions of the 21st century that remain to be further researched.

8.2. Recapitulating the Major Discussions of the Thesis

The main hypothesis in this thesis is that BTL, within its first phases of development, recognised the importance of patriarchy as a vital construct to engage, but shifted this problem to the back burner. This was done with the understanding that the liberation of black people as a whole should be given priority by focusing on constructs such as racism and class; thus the School (BTL) left a gap in the comprehensive understanding of liberation. BTL apparently overlooked the androcentric categories in its philosophical orientation, namely, BC philosophy, in addition to the pervasive contradictions of black faith that exhibits traits of patriarchal violence even today.

Chapter 1 introduced the core of this thesis, namely, this pervasive challenge of patriarchy to BTL and a hierarchy of struggles among black people. First, the thesis asked to what extent Black Theology of Liberation has responded to the constructs of race and class without identifying patriarchy as an equal challenge to black people themselves. Second, does the liberation of women require a distinct set of theories in addition to the propositions of the liberation paradigm within the framework of Black Theology of Liberation? Third, what are the possibilities for Womanism and Black Theology collaborating as strong forces for the liberation of Black humanity? These

questions and the objectives set for the thesis were examined within a methodology that is Black and womanist, the motif of dialogue playing a central role.

Chapter 2 reviewed the gains of BTL in its response to the challenge of patriarchy through the lens of various strands of BTL and their respective notions of liberation. The argument was that there are different notions of liberation and even different types of black theology which account for some truncated views with regard to constructs of oppression. Intended as a self-critical presentation of the harmony that must exist between faith and reason, and the promise of BC as a philosophy of liberation, this chapter engaged Steve Biko's BC philosophy and the presentation of black personhood through androcentric language, "Black man." BTL is faith and BC is reason. The chapter argued that there must be harmony between faith and reason because any disharmony is dangerous. Perhaps the most critical point in this chapter is the finding that BTL has to be altered at the metaphysical level by dealing with its androcentric philosophical content.

Chapter 3 sought to propose a compatible dialogue partner, a black woman in dialogue with a black man in pursuit of liberated black personhood devoid of Eurocentric categories of knowledge. The chapter also examined the question of culture as a unique contribution necessary for the affirmation of comprehensive liberation without nonetheless romanticising culture. Womanism is a comprehensive epistemological agency for black personhood, the chapter argued, following on the insight that BC cannot be helpful if it is not challenged to deal with androcentric elements. Womanists as compatible dialogue partners, not less than men or subject to waiting for other struggles. For this reason, other constructs of oppression in addition to patriarchy are equally important, such as the current debates on the question of LGBTIQ+, if a comprehensive vision of black liberation is to be attained.

Chapter 4 tackled gender theory and relied on Judith Butler, as the title of the chapter indicates, Gayatri Spivak and others. This chapter looked at how binaries are foreclosed and arguably exclusionary in gender debates, especially Eurocentric ways

of knowing. Gender, the chapter argued, is better understood as epistemological disturbance. More importantly, the chapter argued, gender must be critiqued by being alert to the rupture between power and life if power is at the centre of gender constructs, a matter that poses ethical risks and has implications for being human. From a black African perspective, the discourse around gender is better understood as part of a comprehensive and interconnected view of life, life being a criterion above constructs, as the chapter demonstrates that there is a relationship between gender, power, and life.

Chapter 5 focused on the challenge of dialogue between womanism and the grassroots. The major question here was how do we engage with the lived experiences of black women? The chapter argued that any conquering systems of knowledge and spirits, whether internally or externally, are not acceptable, especially the conclusion that BTL has somehow created a hierarchy of struggles among black people. Following the philosophy of dialogue by Dussel, Oduyoye and the Coloniality School, the transformation of “I” into “we”, an eradication of the Cartesian “I” that conquers and the animation of lived experiences to a womanist suggest unlearning and learning face to face with these experiences. All elements of exclusion and a mindset of conquering and colonising internally, externally and within the discourses of womanism were critiqued as unacceptable in the process of connecting to the grassroots.

Chapter 6 explored possibilities of Womanist and Black Theologies collaborating as strong forces for liberation of Black humanity. The Chapter argued that dialogue in the 21st century should be inspired by, among others, the rehabilitation of philosophical content of BTL, and black women’s bodies as epistemological disturbance. We are in dialogue because we are black and we are aware of what is at stake. Using the kraal as a symbol of dialogue, the chapter argued that in the kraal we are face to face with one another’s lived experience and are therefore in solidarity. The kraal methodologically collapses the “I”, a critique of Western intrusions in the collaboration both a black woman and a man should espouse for the journey of black liberation. Black women’s bodies are for this reason, the chapter argued, epistemology to

decentre the West because they unravel the whole existence and Eurocentric systems that put white men, women and black men on top of these bodies for more than 500 years.

Chapter 7 then asserts that no man can be the centre of any notion of liberation among black people, much as there will be no external vision of liberation for black people such as the impositions of Eurocentric knowledge. A decentring of the androcentric, sexist conquering man within the internal discourses of BTL, deemed to be as bad as the conquering West, should constitute our praxis as womanists and thus enable us to move beyond critique and question the possibility of any dialogue with the Eurocentric West that has continued to 'dungeon' black women's lives even in the 21st century.

Black men and women have dialogued, they have critiqued and spoken about things that need to be addressed for their own liberation. They did this because they are black and are equally troubled by the persisting fragments in their humanity. They have established that in order for black humanity to fully know itself, black women's bodies must come out of the dungeons and be the centre of knowledge. Moving away from any critique of the West is a possible solution, as the West has largely not helped any black woman and man – black humanity in a nutshell.

This thesis therefore, we humbly submit, attempted to meet its objectives. It has shown that BTL is paralysed by responding to other constructs of oppression without identifying patriarchy as an equal challenge to black people themselves. This challenge has been diagnosed and established as a problem at metaphysical level, therefore the philosophical aspects of BTL as a school. If this trend continues, BTL itself might simply be a conquering discourse that keeps black women in dungeons even today. Furthermore, in addition to the propositions of the liberation paradigm, within the framework of BTL, Eurocentric models of feminism were shown to be problematic. The liberation of women requires a distinct set of theories such as a theory of liberation that is far from being androcentric, faith that is alert to ideology and

more importantly, theories of dialogues that cannot be seen to perpetuate conquering or conquest of women's bodies, internally and externally.

The thesis thus presented a proposition: BTL and womanism collaborating as strong forces, strong because there is a synergy and convergence at the level of lived experiences of black people, women in particular, without creating a hierarchy of struggles. If indeed women are interlocutors of BTL, what then is the justification of the school continuing to critique the West rather than decentre the West from its systems of knowledge? Decentring the West, the thesis presented its proposition, is the praxis of womanism for dialogues with any discourse, including the West, that does not hold the centre against the comprehensive liberation of black personhood.

8.3. Contribution to Black Theology of Liberation

The thesis first makes a contribution to BTL by examining conversations that have already created new discursive possibilities. Often, especially in South Africa post-1994, a deeper evaluation of the gains of BTL is not done, including in writings by black theologians. This has created a problem in one way or another for the richness of the paradigm and school in the debates that are taking place in the democratic South Africa and the overall challenges to theology. In a humble way this thesis attempted to dig deep into the gains of BTL and developed possibilities for new appropriations of BTL in the current challenges of the 21st century.

It is important to note that without understanding the various notions of liberation, and points about different black theologies that were made some time ago, the comprehensive view of liberation from a black perspective has not found expression in South Africa after the end of apartheid. There is still more that BTL can contribute but this could be done with a deep engagement with the School. So, our second point here is that in its own way, this thesis has attempted to clarify that within womanism are womanisms too. In this sense, the thesis attempts to contribute to methodological issues that are at stake in connecting theology to the grassroots.

Third, the subject of spirituality as a product of ideology (reason) and faith (theology) already made by others still needs further work. Political liberation in South Africa has created a problem for matters of spirituality and much of our stories are told through political icons and our country, South Africa, now has to grapple with many issues, corruption being the most threatening. This means that challenging philosophy of liberation has not been emphasized enough and thus the danger of deficient philosophies made to relate to faith threatening our spirituality today.

Needless to say, any writings that are produced today cannot do justice if they continue to underestimate patriarchal violence. As a theological question, the contribution of this thesis, our third point, is that issues of sin, the study of ecclesiology and Christology to mention but a few should be evaluated based on where they put women if they do not synchronize their analysis with the plight of women.

Lastly, in our own modest way, this is a social theological work. It is about theology and ethics in our society, schools, economics and other spheres. The thesis makes a modest contribution by arguing that Eurocentric systems of knowledge in ethics can no longer assume centre stage and must be animated by lived experiences of the black woman, and the original sin of the commodification of black lives, black ethics cannot be pursued as business as usual anymore, in churches, universities and all spaces of life in SA.

8.4. Tentative Future Research Questions for the School

A few broad themes we suggest could be further explored. First, a continuous check on the elusive character of patriarchal violence is a task BTL and womanism cannot underestimate in future studies, possibly in other fields too, for the development of new anthropologies of life in the 21st century. By debunking the androcentric presentation of a black man in the philosophy of BC and by critiquing BTL for being constantly eluded by the violence of patriarchy, the philosophies must not be left unattended by a womanist and in other fields too this approach might be further used.

The thesis integrated a black man and woman in that way to suggest a holistic view of humanity.

Second, the development of epistemologies that are not tied to Eurocentric forms of knowledge is the direction that must be taken in the 21st century, a decolonial discourse. This thesis is an epistemology of new epistemologies of life-affirming faith in the context of coloniality in the 21st century. More importantly, research that looks at the West as a whole rather than one that focuses on politics, or economics or theology, as the Coloniality school suggests, is important.

For us as blacks, our third point is that gender should be a construct that disturbs our culture and norms for life to be affirmed much as this stance must be taken against other cultures as well. This thesis suggests that gender is epistemological disturbance against life-killing norms of masculinities, whether Eurocentric impositions or black African knowledge systems.

Lastly, philosophy and theology for a womanist might need to be continuously rehabilitated and this could be a future approach to sustaining liberation for blacks, humanity and creation. A continuous rehabilitation of philosophy and faith from androcentric categories and patriarchal violence is a quest for comprehensive vision of liberation for Black and Womanist Theologies.

Pedagogy of social theological ethics that excludes patriarchal violence in favour other constructs of oppression and notions of liberation requires attention in the 21st century.

BTL in the 21st century must examine its contradictions at the level of its fundamental principles that shape its notions of liberation.

8.5. Conclusion

It is undeniable that democracy in South Africa brought about a number of qualitative changes to South Africa. Something, nonetheless, seems to keep most black people, especially women, in the same trenches of destitution, undermining the qualitative benefits ascribed to the dawn of democracy. In a democratic country, the problem of patriarchy, which has ruptured society, communities, homes and institutions where it manifested, hid and revised itself, is staring us in our faces. Clearly, something is wrong! Patriarchy is a reality that needs to be debunked, and a womanist dialogue with Black Theology of Liberation in the 21st century attempts to respond to that call by offering a critical examination of faith and reason. We posit that womanism and BTL can only dialogue on philosophical content of faith that is devoid of patriarchal violence and fragmentation.

The ultimate goal of the thesis is to “knit the world’s black family together to achieve black, not just female transcendence” (Ogunyemi, 1985:69). This is a task black men and women do together without the intrusion of the West.

EPILOGUE

One of the lessons of the school of BTL as posited by Vellem is to “disclose your location and assumptions upfront’, in order to contribute with humility and responsibility” (Vellem, 2017:1). In this section we problematize the researcher’s location in analysing the plight of the Black community, as a conversant, a black woman, an ordained pastor and lecturer in this dialogue. While this dialogue is an intellectual conversation between BTL and Womanist theology, it is also a personal dialogue for the researcher. My own experiences therefore cannot be separated from this work. This epilogue thus reflects on how this journey of immersing has humbled and shaped me.

Origins of my womanist voice

It is important that I begin by locating myself and declare my interest in this complex subject of the liberation of black African women and humanity. I locate my womanist’s voice in my childhood, having been brought up in a single-parented home by two powerful women, my grandmother who was widowed when I was two years old and my mother who never married. My parents separated when my mom was carrying me in her womb, and when I was born, my father refused to admit paternity, only to accept it 32 years later. This silenced me for most years of my life, and it is something I never spoke about nor wrote about until this thesis. This thesis forces me to look back! Growing up as a misfit was, however, not unusual in a Black community that comprised many single-parented and child-headed households. Family structure, i.e. single-parented, child-headed, is a socio-economic and thus a class matter. In the case of single-parented homes, one person shoulders the responsibility of raising and nurturing children, schooling, shelter, clothes, food and other basic needs. Some never really succeed in carrying such huge responsibilities, leading to cases of suicide and children who run away from home to look for better opportunities and end up on the streets. In the streets, some end up consuming drugs, and to feed the craving, they

commit crime by robbing people, businesses and homes and end up in jail. In other households, grandparents are left with many children to take care of and the only income is the social grant provided by the state. In some cases, their children flee to the cities to look for opportunities; with little education, some end up being employed as domestic workers earning close to nothing and as a result, fail to send money home. Some children end up on the streets as sex workers and in some instances, they die of HIV/AIDS, leaving behind HIV positive children. Therefore, what this suggests is that most black children are born into a vicious cycle of poverty.

Being Black and poor is a vicious cycle that never breaks! It never breaks when poor parents have to sacrifice everything to educate their children, including indebting themselves. When they complete their tertiary education, they struggle to get employment, and when they finally do, they have a responsibility to repay the debt that accumulated. We are looking at about 10 to 15 years where you have to support your parents and siblings, build them a home, buy them clothes and food, and ensure that their lives have improved. By the time you dream of focusing on yourself, you have missed out on a lot. I write as person who was born and nurtured in the Black community.

I was raised by my Christian maternal grandparents; my grandfather passed away when I was two, and I stayed with my grandmother until I turned six, and my mother at that time was a school teacher in another location. My grandparents instilled in my siblings (I have three brothers and cousins) and me strong Christian values and we went to church every Sunday. My grandmother would wake us up every day at 4 a.m. to pray for her family and other people in distress. My grandparents were at the forefront of starting a school and church in that little village. Church and school were the pillars in our home.

When I went to live with my mother and to start school, I was very reserved as a child; even as I grew up to tertiary level, I never said much. I compensated by reading a lot and getting good grades. But I was a black girl child and raised in the Black community,

where it was normal for fathers to deny their children's paternity, a community that taught me not to say much, not to raise my voice, even though at home women said a lot, because mine was a matriarchal home and my mother was very loud. My struggle to reconcile these made me more reserved as I was growing up.

When I was growing up, I was very active in the church that was paradoxically led by black men, yet almost 80% of the congregants were women. I only recall two women who were ordained throughout my childhood in the Reformed Presbyterian Church in South Africa (RPCSA). I had always admired them from a distance. In 2018 in the Uniting Presbyterian Church in Southern Africa, the number has increased; however, very few even today find doors to leadership, whether lay or ordained, fully open to them. What is even worse, it is not only black men who struggle to overcome their biases against women ministers, elders, deacons, and so forth, but black women too! I was nurtured by the black church that silenced black women's voices. This and many other issues make me suspicious of the institution of the church and its mission.

The most recent incident that raised my suspicions occurred in a church where my mother worships as an active member of the UPWF, a women's manyano of the UPCSA. She was elected to lead this association based on her commitment and dedication. She was discouraged by remarks that she cannot lead because she has never married. This was said by her fellow women, and she was really hurt by it. The position of these women in her women's manyano adds another dimension to patriarchal violence, and it exposes the role of women in reinforcing the sin of this violence. Luckily, the minister addressed the matter and it was resolved. Today she holds that position with pride, as a leader, a teacher and Black woman. For a very long time, I could never reconcile Christianity, church, Jesus and the many evils that I witnessed as a black person and a black woman. I am still struggling with that up to this day.

In my childhood and as I grew up to understand issues, heterosexuality was the order of the day. I recall a few rumours about certain people who were said to be gay and how harshly such rumours would be squashed. The church never spoke about sexuality and other issues that were considered controversial. I recall how HIV/AIDS

led to some people being ostracized by the church. There was hardly any space for dialogue and hence the silence. Sexuality is still a sensitive matter in most black churches even today. Where they have chosen to talk about it, they have condemned any framework outside the heterosexual one.

Reclaiming my voice

I started finding my voice, however, when I was at the University of Fort Hare enrolled for a Bachelor of Theology, and we were only two women in our class; for some, our presence was disturbing because they were brought up by societies that taught them God only calls men and that even the Bible says so. I learnt to defend myself. At this university, our faculty staff was mainly white and male, Drs J Bohnen, R Oosthuizen, Prof DT Williams and a few blacks, Prof SP Abrahams, Revs A Manxaile, B Gama, and there was only one woman, Rev G Kapuma, who taught us Feminist Theology until her contract expired and she had to leave.

After obtaining my degree, I relocated to Pretoria and enrolled for my postgraduate studies at the University of Pretoria, where I worked with a white male professor, Prof de Villiers, for my Honours and Master's. Before I went to serve in the congregation, I worked at the University of South Africa as research assistant to a white male professor, Prof J Dreyer and an Indian female professor, Prof M Naidoo. It was during that period that I claimed my voice, when a white male, Rev Dr E Germiquet, who was Secretary of the ministry committee in our church forced me to go a congregation which had glaring challenges. When I tried to reason with him, he could not listen to a black woman, and as a result, I was suspended and removed from the list of people eligible to go to congregations for attachment. Below is an extract of the correspondence of the decision taken about me.

The Ministry Committee wishes you to know that your refusal to accept to appointment makes it appear that you are dictating your own terms to the Ministry Committee. This the Committee will not tolerate. The Committee also wishes to remind you that at the second Selection Conference you attended, you were closely questioned about your

willingness to submit to the decisions of the Ministry Committee. You responded that you were totally committed and ready to serve in accordance with the directives of the Ministry Committee. It appears that you have now changed your mind. The Ministry Committee has therefore decided to withdraw your status of Probationer and no further attempt to place you will be made. Furthermore, you are no longer required to attend the PAT Conference in March and your name has been removed from the list of participants. ... Whether this is the end of the road with respect to your sense of call to the ministry in the UPCSA or a stage of growth will be clarified at a later date (26 February 2010).

The first observation one makes is that the person whose future is decided upon was not asked to present her case in front of this committee. This decision was taken based on a telephonic conversation, which was followed by a white man representing the student in the manner that he did, which led to the decision that was taken. The reasons that led the student to refuse to go the place chosen for her are not stated and are only known through the lens of the white man in power who decided to be her spokesperson. Following this arguable misrepresentation, the student was sent to discuss the matter with the psychologist, who is a white woman. This is not unusual if we bring the stories of Nontetha and other black women who resisted colonial forces of power cited earlier. Nontetha was declared mentally unfit, in the same way one observes how a student who refuses placement in a problematic congregation was made to see a psychologist because she is black and a woman. Indeed, my future was clarified later after I met with the psychologist. I was restored six months later, and then went to serve in congregations in the Western Cape.

I started in *Gugulethu* township and a year later moved to Delft. Both these areas can be described as a combination of vibrant life, poverty, disease and violence. The situation of black people in these communities challenged my theology; I felt that I had not studied enough because my theology was not responding to their plight. Nyambura Njoroje's story relates to mine as narrated by Musimbi Kanyoro. She posits that as an ordained woman brought up in a Presbyterian home and church, she bemoans her training as a pastor, which never equipped her to deal with social or gender issues. On the contrary, she asserts, Njoroje was trained to see people as souls without

bodies, an aspect that limited her ministry (Kanyoro, 2001:38). We trace this from the missionary enterprise as critiqued by Mercy Oduyoye in earlier chapters. I discovered that, in order to serve them effectively, I had to learn from them. I had to immerse myself in their lives and communities. Their cries and brokenness, as most of them were single parents, employed as domestic workers, earning close to nothing, prompted me to continuously ask, in doing theology, what are the implications of this for women? What does it mean for me as a Black African woman and my sisters who have been silenced over the years by systems that put them at the bottom of the ladder, women who have suffered the triple oppression of race, class and gender — a vicious cycle that never breaks? While some blacks have succeeded in breaking it, some had to sell their souls to the devil to break it, and the point is, the majority of black people are still poor in 2018. Mine is a womanist voice shaped by those dungeons!

A few years down the line, I had the opportunity to serve on the theology desk of the World Communion of Reformed Churches in Hannover in Germany for one year. Once again, I was supervised by a white male, Dr Douwe Visser, and all my colleagues were white except one who was Cuban. I was exposed to a global ecumenical community, and had the opportunity to tell our story and listen to others; my womanist voice was thus strengthened by these encounters. Further exposure to the Global Institutes in Indonesia, Costa Rica and Busan has enriched as well as expanded my scope of doing theology.

As I write, I am very much aware of the biases that come with these locations. I have been formed by white and black males and a few white women, the fact is, they rule the world! But mine is a womanist voice. Katie Cannon's insights inspire me and this thesis. She writes:

The origins of my womanist voice are from reflections on my life as a black woman, a daughter, a sister and a spiritual sojourner. The origins seem to arise from the flowing waters of the "life river" within me. When I retreat with myself, I find myself sitting at the banks of my life river, listening to the constant, continuous, flow of river water, calling me to flow with it, to stir it up, or simply lie in it. The voices of women, black

women, that I have known and have read about, call to me from the river (Cannon, 1993a:193).

I am currently a PhD candidate inspired by a theological vision that dreams of comprehensive liberation for women and men, the African church and the world through the gospel of Jesus Christ. I am supervised by a black male Professor, Vuyani Vellem, a scholar of Black Theology of Liberation. I believe ours has been a dialogic journey. My reading and writing of BTL in conversation with Womanist theology was enhanced by his humility and the space that he gave me to struggle with the concepts and to find my womanist voice. Wright's insights describe better our dialogic journey: "Rapprochement has already taken place or we are on the verge of meeting of the minds that will be made manifest by men and women scholars moving together theologically with a common agenda that is determined to set all God's people free" (Wright, 2010:2).

Finally, I am also a lecturer in the Department of Church History, Christian Spirituality and Missiology at the University of South Africa. My colleagues are mostly men, white and black men; there are two white women who are Professors, and I am the only black academic, others are research assistants and administrators. It is important for me to mention this because it speaks to the invisibility of Black women in academia that has always been raised by Grant (1979). While attempts are being made to redress this, gaps still very much exist. The questions raised by my childhood and upbringing, my theological training and vocation as an ordained minister in the Western Cape became part of my life as spiritual and theological questions that I bring into everyday dialogue in this position.

As a requirement of this position to belong to academic societies, I am a member of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians (The Circle), which I have reflected on earlier. "Our story is one of letting it be known that African women are awake" (Oduyoye, 2001b:99). We are a mixed group of white and black academics, and one of the struggles of the Circle and womanism is to occupy space in church and to overcome class differences between women in these locations.

Drawing from the researcher's living experience, this section exposes the nexus of race, class and gender that formed the researcher, and a cardinal point in the Black community. Taking its cue from the framework of BTL, which concerns itself with black people, my position as the researcher begins there but focuses on black women's experiences as a people whose stories have not been told, whose success has not been celebrated, whose bodies have disturbed epistemologies. The body of a black woman is epistemology!

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APPENDICES

Elmina Castle, Ghana



A Portuguese Chapel

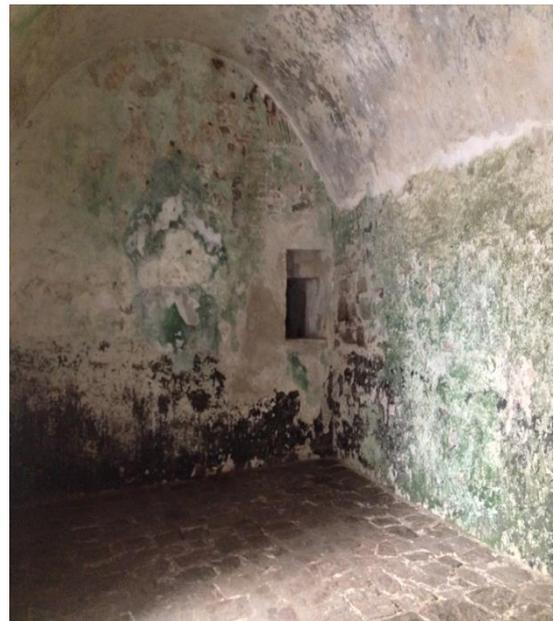
A Dutch Reformed Chapel



Two Chapels: Located at the center of the commodification and fragmentation of black humanity

Black African Women's Dungeons

Location of Black African woman



Methodology of Womanism

Ikhaya (home) – holistic integrated cosmos



Tshwane Circle Chapter

Dr Helen Labeodan
General Coordinator
Circle of Concerned
African Women
Theologians



Department of Religious
Studies
University of Ibadan
Ibadan
Nigeria

Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians

14 July 2017

Dear Pastor and Church Council

INVITATION TO A SEMINAR: TSHWANE CIRCLE CHAPTER OF THE CIRCLE OF AFRICAN WOMEN THEOLOGIANS

I trust that this email finds you well.

The Tshwane Circle Chapter (TCC) is one of the numerous Chapters of an organization called, "The Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians" (hereinafter referred to as Circle). Established in 1989, the Circle has as one of its main objectives, the nurturing and mentoring of emerging African women theologians and biblical scholars in research and to help them in the practice of theology informed specifically by the daily experiences of African women.

In its commitment to ploughing back into the local communities, the TCC has decided to conduct a seminar in one of the local townships here in Pretoria during the month of August. The main aim of the Seminar is to allow academic women to dialogue with fellow church women especially those who take keen interest in God-talk (theology) and Bible interpretation on one of the burning issues of our time, that is, gender-based violence. The Seminar seeks to address the following questions among others: How may church women respond to of Gender-Based Violence in our day? How may we read the Bible informed by the challenges faced by women and children in present day South Africa? Which role may women believers in our churches play in addressing this particular challenge?

I am writing this letter on behalf of the TCC to invite members of your church's women's league to the Seminar whose details appear here below:

Venue: Maranatha Reformed Church of Christ in Saulsville

Date: 26 August 2017

Time: 10H00-13H00

Theme: The role of the church in gender based violence

RSVP by 11 August 2017 to the following persons depending on your denomination:

Rev M. Morape (mogajanemm@gmail.com/ 0838827288)

: Prof D. Farisani (farisd@unisa.ac.za/ 0760745894)

Open Rubric



**Circle of Concerned
African Women
Theologians**

PROGRAMME

TSHWANE CIRCLE CHAPTER SEMINAR

Venue: Maranatha Reformed Church of Christ (MRCC): Saulsville
Date: 26 August 2017
Time: 10H00-13H00

Presiding: Prof. Madipoane Masenya(Ngwan'a Mphahlele)

1. Opening Prayer: Mrs M Mabena
2. Words of Welcome: Ms Julia Dube
3. Why are we here? Prof. Madipoane Masenya(Ngwan'a Mphahlele)

4. Introduction of Panellists: Prof. Analet Van Schalkwyk

5. Dialogue Partners: (1 Hour)
 - Prof. Jennifer Slater
 - Dr. Johanna Erzberger
 - Dr. Dorothy Farisani
 - Dr. Mable Maimela (Respondent)
6. Questions and Comments (15 minutes)
7. Breakaway Groups(30 minutes)
8. Feedback from Groups (30 minutes)
9. Final Wrap (15 minutes)

10. Vote of Thanks :
 - 10.1 TCC: Rev. Leomile Mangoedi
 - 10.2 Women's Church: Ms. Mathonsi
11. Announcements
12. Closing Prayer

REFRESHMENTS..... REFRESHMENTS..... REFRESHMENTS..... REFRESHMENTS.....
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