


AUTHOR:

Gerrie F. Snyman 
<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5145-2822>

AFFILIATION:

University of South Africa

CORRESPONDENCE TO:

gfsnyman@global.co.za

DATES:

Published: 27 August 2021

HOW TO CITE THIS ARTICLE:

Snyman, G.F., 2021. A hermeneutic of vulnerability: Difficult empathy in response to moral injury within whiteness. *KOERS — Bulletin for Christian Scholarship*, 86(1). Available at: <https://doi.org/10.19108/KOERS.86.1.2506>

COPYRIGHT:

© 2021. The Author(s).
Published under the Creative Commons Attribution License.

A hermeneutic of vulnerability: difficult empathy in response to moral injury within whiteness

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this essay is to expose reader vulnerability by unmasking what is hidden in the reading of a (biblical) text. The working hypothesis is as follows: The mythical norm of reading the biblical text masks the issue of race in biblical hermeneutics in assuming white innocence and hiding a moral injury caused by the imperial agenda of modernity. A hermeneutics of vulnerability is suggested in order to acknowledge the moral injury that the racial implications of the imperial agenda of modernity caused and is still causing. The moral injury is mitigated by a process of difficult or unsettling empathy engendered by a hermeneutic of vulnerability. The arguments are set up as follows: the first section endeavours to figure out what lies behind the projection or construction of white innocence associated with the mythical norm (given the preponderance of race in current discourse in South Africa and the USA). The second section deals with the way a hermeneutic of vulnerability can enable a reader to credibly respond from a position of whiteness to, for example, the pressures from the decolonial turn in the discourse on race, asking what it means to be vulnerable and how one accounts for vulnerability. The third section embroiders on the consequences of accepting and revealing vulnerability, namely to show empathy and more specifically an uneasy or difficult empathy in a racially tense society.

Keywords: vulnerability, decoloniality, racism, biblical hermeneutics, Reformed Churches of South Africa, unsettling empathy.

Opsomming

Die doel van hierdie opstel is om die weerloosheid van die leser bloot te lê deur dit wat verborge is in die lees van 'n (Bybelse) teks, te ontmasker. Die werksipotese is soos volg: Die mitiese norm van die lees van die Bybelse teks verbloem die kwessie van ras in die Bybelse hermeneutiek deur die aanname van wit onskuld en die verdoeseling van 'n etiese wond wat veroorsaak is deur die koloniale agenda van moderniteit. 'n Hermeneutiek van weerloosheid word voorgestel om dié morele wond raak te sien in terme van rassisme wat deur die koloniale agenda van moderniteit veroorsaak word en nog steeds veroorsaak. Die etiese letsel word egter versag deur 'n proses van moeilike of ontsetelende empatie wat deur 'n hermeneutiese kwesbaarheid veroorsaak word. Die argumente word soos volg opgestel: die eerste afdeling poog om uit te vind wat agter 'n konstruksie van witwees se onskuld lê ten opsigte van die mitiese norm van uitleg (gegewe die oorwig van ras in die huidige diskoers in Suid-Afrika en die USA). Die tweede afdeling handel oor die manier waarop 'n hermeneutiek van weerloosheid 'n leser in staat kan stel om geloofwaardig vanuit 'n posisie van witwees te reageer op, byvoorbeeld, die druk van die dekoloniale wending in die diskoers oor ras deur te vra wat dit beteken om kwesbaar te wees en hoe neem 'n mens met kwesbaarheid rekening hou. Die derde afdeling verduidelik wat die gevolge is wanneer weerloosheid aanvaar en erken word, naamlik om empatie en meer spesifiek 'n ongemaklike of moeilike empatie in rassiespanning te toon.

Kernbegrippe: weerloosheid, dekolonialiteit, rassisme, bybelse hermeneutiek, Gereformeerde Kerke van Suid-Afrika, ontsetelende empatie

1. Introduction

In his book *Neither Settler nor Native. The Making and Unmaking of Permanent Minorities*, Mahmood Mamdani (2020:195) states the following:

The response to political violence in South Africa [...] was not ethnic cleansing, as in North America and Europe. It was a reframing of political identity so that formerly opposed identities could live together in the new political community. This is the heart of decolonizing the political. The point is not to avenge the dead but to give the living a second chance.

Mamdani sees South Africans not as victims and perpetrators of apartheid and racism—colonialism—but as vulnerable survivors willing to reimagine the political. In fact, he attributes to the negotiations in the early nineties (Codesa I and II) the notion of the *frontier* of decolonization because these negotiations did not mimic the colonial logic of race but undermined it (Mamdani, 2020:31) by turning black and white into configurations of power. The move away from race-based identity politics enabled South Africa to incorporate a black majority and a white minority into a single governing structure (Mamdani, 2020:162). He regards the experience as a relative success in that South African society transformed from perpetrators and victims, bystanders and beneficiaries, to survivors.¹

How do I bring my survival status into play when I read the biblical text? Has anything changed in South Africa as it did in Europe since the Holocaust? In Europe no serious theology can be practiced without taking the Holocaust into account. Should the same be valid within South Africa with apartheid?

Following Mamdani's argument, 27 years ago the country moved away from what he calls (Mamdani, 2020:144) the Nurnberg logic: the separation of perpetrators and victims, the punishment of the former and the segregation of the latter so that perpetrators and victims could live separately without harming each other in continuous cycles of violence. Codesa I and II struck a balance between survivors and victims in a single political dispensation. The establishing of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) gave opportunity to pin blame and seek reparations. However, the TRC's Achilles heel was pinning the blame on individual perpetrators and individual victims, thus failing to deliver social justice.

With its focus on the individual it was impossible to hold specific constituencies to account for enabling apartheid and colonialism. It reduced political violence to criminal violence and the political constituency that benefitted from these systems got off scot-free (Mamdani, 2020:194). According to Mamdani, the TRC looked at apartheid violence as an excess and not as a norm, in the interest of white beneficiaries who felt exculpated by the TRC with no moral or political obligation towards social justice. Broader social justice was absent. It is in the sense of the reductive definition of political violence as criminal violence that I understand former President F.W. de Klerk's 2020 statement about the criminalization of apartheid. To him apartheid was political and not a crime towards humanity (De Klerk 2020a and 2020b). De Klerk argued the crime was the excesses associated with it.

The reaction to De Klerk could have been predicted: the lack of social justice pushed the rhetoric back to the harsh experiences of the victims and the innocence felt by perpetrators of racism—an innocence of not-knowing and not wanting to know (Wekker, 2016:17). De Klerk's statement does not properly acknowledge the harm and injury caused by apartheid. The victim side (blackness) tried to educate the perpetrator side, but it fell on the deaf ears of innocence. Then the pitch became harder and louder, turning into a politics of spectacle

1 Mamdani is not blind to the failures of the processes followed. Although race-based privilege is being dismantled, the same is not happening to ethnic-based privilege which he sees as being at the root of xenophobic violence (2020:32). The customary laws introduced during the colonial period as a product of the settlers remain in force.

at the opening of the South African parliament in February 2020. The discourse re-entered the cycle of conflict where each side tried to exert a one-upmanship, black victim versus white perpetrator.

The incident at the opening of Parliament 2020 illuminated that South African social life and discourse are still ravaged by racial issues and illustrated what Gloria Wekker terms “white innocence,” (Wekker, 2016) cultivated by privilege and entitlement that are deeply disavowed. Wekker (2016:16) relates innocence to the Christian religion’s Jesus as “an iconic innocent man” who is emulated by many faithful believers. Innocence is associated with being a child protected from the evil outside, and with “believing like a child” (Faber van der Meulen, 1996). It also carries feminine connotations as being more affectionate and relational and not strong and aggressive. It is an innocence regarding the anger and violence that accompanied the imperialist agenda of modernity, an innocence that constructed an entire epistemology of not understanding the racialisation that took place during the past 500 years (Wekker, 2016:17). In the end, such innocence feeds a nostalgia that masks the involvement of whiteness’s domination, and invokes an innocence which presents people as mere bystanders (Wekker, 2016:109).

One would have assumed that 25 years after the demise of apartheid, former Pres. de Klerk would have formulated his views on apartheid more responsibly, and even pointed the discourse in a new direction which could be utilized fruitfully in our combat against racism. He and I belong to the same faith community, the *Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika*, but I have a similar experience with him as with my fellow members of faith: a particular self-presentation in which the colonial mind of whiteness and Christian imperialism still play a role (Wekker, 2016:21; Snyman, 2011). It is as if we continue to ignore the experience of the black Other of apartheid.

I am willing to honour former Pres. De Klerk for his work to dismantle apartheid in the nineties, and perhaps acknowledge that social justice was not in his purview at the time—he had other things to worry about.² But lack of social justice implies that our epistemologies—the ways we think about life, the world and each other—have not been challenged sufficiently. If it has been, I doubt De Klerk would have made such a statement. By now it should be clear how our political ideologies, power relationships, culture, and geopolitical location played and still perform a role in our task of understanding biblical texts. Whilst the world around us (whiteness specifically) has changed dramatically in terms of political and economic power, changes on other levels are resisted in order to sustain what we always perceived as “normal.” Change would render us vulnerable, and vulnerability usually implies harm and injury. We would rather keep ourselves invulnerable. In order to change, we need to become vulnerable, but vulnerability does not have to be viewed as negative (cf. Gilson, 2016). I rather opt for positive vulnerability which assists people to open up to change, and call it a *hermeneutic of vulnerability*. A hermeneutic of vulnerability aims to achieve something similar to what was achieved after WWII with regard to the practice of theology: a theology after the Holocaust. In other words, in South Africa theology becomes impossible if there is no account for the effect apartheid and colonialism had on people.

I define a hermeneutic of vulnerability as a critical study of the biblical text in terms of a two-fold vulnerability: a vulnerability of the text towards the reader’s reception, as well as a vulnerability of the reader towards the demands of the text. Firstly, the reader needs to serve justice to the text in its context by exploring the possible different meanings attributed to the text in the past and present. Secondly, the reader needs to be explicit about his or her own geopolitical context so as to lay bare the reader’s own power relationships and the role the text would play in his or her context. The critical study of the text thus reveals a two-fold vulnerability: firstly, that of the text and its past usage (use and abuse), and that of the reader with regard to his or her position towards the possibility of change of the status

2 For a more critical view of De Klerk’s statement, see Snyman (2020).

quo. The first part of the hermeneutics can be compared to Schüssler-Fiorenza's (1988:14-15) notion of historical accountability with an added emphasis on the text's utilization in the past (the theological tradition); and secondly, a revealing of the reader's epistemic vulnerability which implies his or her methodology, context, ideology, and many more. It is not only a responsibility but also a response-ability (Snyman, 1997a).

In this essay, the kind of reader I will explore, is one who is currently arraigned in the dock by various opposing ideologies: decoloniality, black consciousness, black theology, various brands of feminism, critical race theory, constructivism, queer theology, etc. These are ideologies that do not fit the mould of what Cheryl Anderson (2009:31-44, followed by Snyman, 2011) calls the mythic norm of reading the biblical text: *a heterosexual, masculine, white, wealthy, middle-class, Christian, patriarchal reader*. In terms of intersectionality I cannot successfully dissociate myself from this norm. This mythical norm is problematic because each label it assigns excludes an Other in a binary way. The Others are always present, but not always acknowledged, laid bare, revealed or critically accounted for. By placing the vulnerability of the text as well as that of the reader in the foreground, that which is masked in the reading process can be put on the table for scrutiny.

This essay wants to expose the reader's vulnerability in unmasking what is hidden when one enquires about whiteness. The working hypothesis is the following:

The mythical norm of reading the biblical text masks the issue of race in biblical hermeneutics in assuming white innocence and hiding a moral injury caused by the imperial agenda of modernity. A hermeneutics of vulnerability is suggested in order to acknowledge the moral injury and the racial implications that the imperial agenda of modernity caused and is still causing. The moral injury is mitigated by a process of difficult empathy engendered by a hermeneutic of vulnerability.

The first section endeavours to figure out what lies behind the projection or construction of white innocence associated with the mythical norm (given the preponderance of race in current discourse in South Africa and the USA). The second section deals with the way a hermeneutic of vulnerability can enable a reader from a position of whiteness, to credibly respond to the pressures of the decolonial turn: what does it mean to be vulnerable, and how does one account for vulnerability? The third section expands on the consequences of accepting and revealing vulnerability, which is to show an uneasy or difficult empathy in a racially tense society.

2. The construction of innocence or a hidden moral injury?

2.1 Destroying innocence

After more than 25 years since the demise of apartheid, the argument is not whether the political system was a crime against humanity, but rather concerns the harm and injury done to the victims of apartheid—officially, publicly and personally. Such acknowledgement gives people back their agency. Former Pres. de Klerk's public memory froze whiteness and blackness into their previous hostile relations. How does one thaw memory, in other words, how does one shake people out of their illusion of innocence?

Björn Krondorfer (2020:326), a science of religion scholar working with the progeny of Nazi Germans and Jewish victims as well as Palestinians and Jews in Israel, refers to the two-hundred-year present rule. This concept incorporates the birthdays of those who touched a person and the birthdays this person will touch in his or her life. In other words, to take De Klerk as an example, his two-hundred-year present incorporates his great grandparents, grandparents and parents and his own children and grandchildren, or even great grandchildren. The touch of his parents and (great) grandparents is burdened with memories of the South African War/Anglo-Boer War as well as apartheid. These memories

mark us with injury, shame, and guilt. In our touching and marking of future generations, would our touch and mark impair them with a troubled history and future, repeating the cycle?

Here perpetrator memory with a concomitant vulnerability enters the scene. In his statement, De Klerk called up the memory of apartheid, but did not acknowledge the wrongdoing of apartheid: he offered self-exculpation in suggesting that it was not a crime against humanity, and he failed to recognize the trauma it caused and the harm it inflicted. The statement thus lacked empathy and subsequently the black audience also lacked empathy towards him. He leaves the impression of invulnerability, the opposite of what is needed. The statement fails to risk a vulnerability in the presence of the traumatized injured black Other, and to create an unsettling empathy that would have helped to open the apartheid perpetrators to the past in order to enable new future relations (cf. Krondorfer, 2020:93).

The two-hundred-year present destroys the myth of innocence and brings the trauma of apartheid—in terms of endured wounding and culpable wrongdoing—centre stage. Trauma is destructive and, if not addressed, spans generations, as has been the case with the Anglo-Boer War (cf. J.J. Snyman, 1999) and its relation to the policies of apartheid introduced from 1948-1994. It did not only affect blackness, but it disrupted whiteness to the extent that it caused Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) because of the moral injury induced by the theological justification of apartheid. With the fall of apartheid there was no intervention and thus no post-ventative therapy or counselling to enable whiteness to mourn its loss of power appropriately and become successfully integrated into a new political dispensation.

It would be an understatement to suggest that apartheid would not have survived as long as it did had it not been for theologians, dominees (pastors), and politicians affecting the fears, anxiety, and uneasiness of the white colonizing minority. They legitimized a policy that saw the uprooting and dehumanization of black people in the country. They created an ethical paralysis in a biblical hermeneutic that failed to attribute responsibility as well as response-ability (cf. Boone, 1990:109) to the interpreter. The result was a theological discourse of which no one is the master, yet everyone is urged to obey the rules of the discourse, doing and saying what God proclaims in his Word. In contrast to this ethical paralysis, I want to formulate an ethics of interpretation that would counter our moral injury that such an adverse hermeneutic caused, namely a hermeneutic of vulnerability that may lead through difficult empathy to a process of change. It is a hermeneutic of responsibility and response-ability.

2.2 Ethical paralysis as moral injury

It will be delusional to deny the existence of racial tension in South Africa and in other parts of the Western world. It persists in the form of racial suspicion, threat, and conflict (Durrheim, Mtose & Brown, 2011:1). During the first decade of the 21st century, Durrheim, Mtose and Brown (2011:158) observed, it was not unusual during the summer holidays to see racial clustering or persistent patterns of racial segregation on beaches attended by all race groups. They saw such practices “connected to the past because they occur in spaces that were produced in the past and bring people together that were separated in the past” as “a recursive self-producing process whereby racial orders are reproduced and maintained” (Durrheim, Mtose & Brown, 2011:161). It is a continuous performativity through which racial bodies are stylized and contoured when racialized bodies perform repeated sets of racialized acts. The segregation between white and black beachgoers alludes to the racial privilege and victimization of the past and continue to structure practices and racial subjects in racial conflict with one another (Durrheim, Brown & Mtose, 2011:164). Melissa Steyn (2012:8) states it succinctly:

Yet the system of racial apartheid could not have been functional or sustained for over four decades without the active and the passive cooperation of the white population—using separate entrances, enjoying whites only transport, beaches,

restaurants and cinemas, paying subminimum wages to black employees employed only for menial labour, educating only white children in the schools their children also attended, enjoying the security of curfews, serving in the army [sic] and, of course, participating in discourses that justified the status quo.

The question I am confronted with, is why people still separate themselves from the black Other 25 years after the demise of apartheid. Is it shame, because whiteness's sense of goodness has become affected, resulting in a feeling of an inability to function properly in society, or as Wiinika-Lydon (2018:365) suggests, a sense of "vulnerability concerning moral selfhood"? The notion of *moral injury* may be helpful here.³

The term "moral injury" is borrowed from the psychological field of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and pertains to veterans returning from the Vietnam War dealing with long lasting outcomes of the stressful situations experienced during that war. PTSD was very visibly encoded in their bodies as trust in others that has been destroyed. These veterans turned to substance abuse, domestic and even criminal violence (Shay, 2014:184), often ending their lives with suicide. Their plight has remained largely unacknowledged because society thought their good character as soldiers could not be destroyed.

Jonathan Shay (2014:183) defines moral injury as:

- A betrayal of what's right
- By someone who holds legitimate authority (e.g. a military leader)
- In a high stakes situation.⁴

Shay argues that there is ample evidence to suggest that good character changes in devastating psychological circumstances. Moral injury leads to bodily afflictions. He says (2014:185):

From my observation, where leadership malpractice inflicts moral injury, the body codes it as physical attack, mobilizes for danger and counterattack, and lastingly imprints the physiology every bit as much as if it had been a physical attack.

Devastating psychological circumstances affect the entire human being: the body, the mind (high stakes situation such as love for the combat partner), the social system (someone who holds high authority), as well as the culture (betrayal of what is right) (Shay, 2012:59). In a military culture it becomes "dirty hands": doing wrong in order to produce an important gain (cf. Wiinika-Lydon, 2018:357). But dirty hands play out differently for the one in power and the subordinate (Wiinika-Lydon, 2018:362). Someone in a leadership position would act with knowledge about the moral dimension of the choice to be made, whereas the subordinate, in trusting the leadership, would become morally injured, usually after the fact. When that happens, the sense of goodness becomes affected.

The fact that the ruling National Party of 1948-1994 needed a theological justification of apartheid, implies that their racist policies in its essence lacked the necessary moral foundation. The current South African Constitution with its chapter on human rights is indicative of the problem of racism—more specifically apartheid—and any discrimination or exclusion of the Other based on race, religion, gender or sexual orientation. What is less known is a law or a rule formulated in Portugal or Spain in the 15th century with the expansion of the sea routes to India via the southern tip of Africa and the Americas. Sousa

3 See Snyman (2020) for the use of the notion of moral injury in coming to terms with perpetrating characters in the biblical text.

4 For a discussion on various definitions of moral injury, see Hodgson and Carey (2017:1215-1216).

de Santos (2007:53) refers in this regard to the “abyssal lines of amity” drawn up in a treaty between Spain and Portugal where the Tropic of Cancer and the prime meridian passes through the Canary Islands. At the intersection of these lines the laws of Europe ended and the lawlessness of the “New World” started.

In other words, in the territory that would form the colonized areas since the 16th century (such as Southern Africa), the non-ethics of war would apply: genocide, slavery, abuse, exploitation and control (cf. Maldonado-Torres, 2007:247). Extraordinary acts of war became normalized in the colonial world. Racism was just part of the coloniality of being with the black body the recipient of excessive violence and the white body as the *ego conquistador* (cf. Snyman, 2014:1048). Whiteness was humanity with rational thinking above the line in the zone of being and blackness was not human enough and without rational thinking below the line and relegated to the zone of non-being (cf. Mignolo, 2011:167).

To illustrate closer at home, colonial rule did not mean that European laws would of necessity function in the colonies. When Jan van Riebeeck settled in the Cape, he asked permission twice to round up the Khoi, put them in chains, and force them into labour (Mellet, 2020:116). The *Vereenigd Oost-Indiesche Compagnie* (VOC) refused, but Van Riebeeck’s actions, nonetheless, ended up doing that when he built a wooden fence with towers and wild almond hedges from Salt River to Kirstenbosch. It is interpreted as such by Mellet (2020:117):⁵

This boundary created by Van Riebeeck was both a defensive structure and a message to the indigenes that this was no longer their land. It was a clear act of land and resource seizure, and an act of expulsion of indigenous peoples. This act and Van Riebeeck’s ideas however, set the paradigm of European-indigene relations that has remained to this day. Forced removals and the ‘redoubt’ concept essentially translated into group areas and reservations, and lasted well after Van Riebeeck, right up to the imposition of the Group Areas Act under apartheid in 1950.

In Mellet’s terms, moral injury became epistemologically inscribed into white being, a kind of “original sin” if you wish. Shay (2014:186) argues that the effect of moral injury on a person is the deterioration of character. It impairs and destroys trust and puts in its place a negative view of vulnerability, the expectancy of harm, injury, and humiliation. The theological justification of apartheid did not initiate a collapse of the moral architecture of the faithful within these faith denominations, in this case the four Afrikaans churches (*Apostoliese Geloofsending, Nederduitsch Hervormde Kerk van Afrika, Nederduits-Gereformeerde Kerk* and *Gereformeerde Kerke in Suid-Afrika*). It simply affirmed what was epistemologically already embedded in colonial thinking and resulted in a huge cognitive dissonance within the being of whiteness, white innocence, and ignorance.

2.3 The impact of moral injury on society

Can one recover from moral injury when it involves a betrayal of what is right and when that sense influences your sense of justice in society? Jacques Pauw (2014) once asked: “How was it possible for the ravenous tick of apartheid to feast on the blood of the Calvinist God-fearing state-obeying believer between 1940 and 1994?” One possible answer is a “contract of ignorance” or an “epistemology of ignorance” (Steyn, 2012) that caused a moral injury, blinding people to acts of transgression of moral beliefs and systems.

J. Harold Ellens (2007a:xiii) skilfully juxtaposes what religion can do to men and women: it can stir men and women to heights of spiritual illumination and ecstasy, as well as degrade them to inhumane atrocities. Religion has the capacity to encourage human beings to reach

5 Dan Sleight (2020) rejects Mellet’s view of the hedge and argues that it was simply erected to keep out other animals and theft of stock. Mellet’s book tries to break through the shield of white innocence historians have erected around the early history of the Cape.

phenomenal heights as well as the most bottomless pits of evil. Religion seems to have an infinite capacity “to generate new means, methods, modes, and manners of terrorizing humanity” (Ellens 2007b:3, 4). It is rather tragic to acknowledge the capacity of religion for violence, abuse, and exploitation (Ellens 2007b:3, 4).

Whiteness did not see the injustice of separate entrances, train wagons, schools, and universities. To follow up on Mellet’s argument (2020:117), it cost a series of 19 wars over a period of 227 years (well into the 19th century) against indigenous inhabitants, culminating in the South African War/Anglo-Boer War at the turn of the 19th century, deepening the moral scars left by colonialism. Moral injury concerns society and the impact on other communities within that society in terms of moral consequences (Wiinika-Lydon, 2017:225).

If this moral structure is shattered, societal relations turn poisonous (cf. Das, 2007). Such poisonous knowledge occurs when those whom one takes for granted—family, friends, partners, members of faith—may fail one in the end. It poisons one’s worldview and results into despair and loneliness (Wiinika-Lydon, 2017:225). In other words, a person ends up with a moral, bodily and epistemic dissonance. Dissonance was largely visible during apartheid, but from a position of whiteness the effects of apartheid were ignored. To repeat Melissa Steyn (see above), we never recognized the separate entrances to the post office or the liquor shop, the separate bridges over the train lines, the separate buses and the black queues for the latter, the separate schools and universities, the separation in medical care, the separation in neighbourhoods for what it was. We may have comprehended the daily separation, but we failed to connect the separation to the experience of the black other. In our cognizance we remained separate, which constituted a wilful cognitive dissonance: “[T]hose who are unaware know enough to know that they prefer not to know any more” (Geras, 1998:35 as quoted in Steyn, 2012:12).

Ignorance is not a failure of knowledge, but a social accomplishment (Steyn, 2012:10). In this sense, ignorance is literally put into practice through acts of communication and disseminated through social networks. As a technique of control, ignorance was systematically cultivated. Ultimately, ignorance encourages protection of whiteness and the oppressive systems that benefit it by discouraging interrogation and nurturing moral certainty (Steyn, 2012:12). And now, in the aftermath of apartheid, it seems ignorance continues to give rise to moral injury in rendering corrective knowledge sterile and, in turn, reinforcing ignorance and amnesia. Perpetrators do not willingly remember the wrongdoings of the past.

3. A Hermeneutic of vulnerability

Durrheim, Mtose and Brown (2011:204) argue that

[t]he starting point for a programme of social change is an analysis of race trouble, that is, our participation in forms of life that recite racist discourses and routines in ways that arouse a conflict of perspectives and create situations that are individually and collectively troubling.

Since 1994 ordinary citizens have faced race trouble as they go about with their lives, not knowing how to differently articulate the embodied racial practices we have been accustomed to. We do not know how to create different stereotypes of the Other. The decolonial turn does not make it any easier, as it confronts head-on white- and blackness in what is called coloniality as a matrix of power that remains in effect even after the demise of colonialism, dividing people into colonizers and the colonized (Maldonado-Torres, 2016:10). Decoloniality as a counterfoil to coloniality has escaped us. The decolonial turn urges us to rehumanize the world and to break down hierarchies of difference that dehumanize people. It tries to open up the world for other forms of being in the world (Maldonado-Torres, 2016:10).

Decoloniality mirrors for us the moral and epistemic dissonance and urges us to re-evaluate our cultural, political, and epistemological assumptions. It disrupts our way of being, of what we once held true and what we experienced. As Wiinika-Lydon states (2017:229), it turns our privileged status in the world inside out and makes one doubt oneself and “much of what one once thought of as dear, secure, and noble.” Decoloniality, in effect, affirms race trouble, and it requires from whiteness a critical engagement in the form of an epistemological reconfiguration and an inhabitation of the dissonant knowledge that will affect lives (cf. Wiinika-Lydon, 2017:230).

The process empowers the transformation of poisonous knowledge. It is the means with which this critical insight into white self-regard as a moral burden is achieved and the white self is liberated. This process is called a hermeneutic of vulnerability.

3.1 *Homo vulnerabilis vulnerator*

Homo vulnerabilis reflects a commonality within the human condition: the human being is vulnerable. *Homo vulnerabilis vulnerator* simply means that everything a human being touches, becomes vulnerable. It means the entire planet carries the mark of the presence of human beings (Weyns, 2018:3).

It is important to note the difference between showing vulnerability and being vulnerable. Showing vulnerability has a dark side to it and becomes problematic. Showing vulnerability is as if one would say the following: “Look, I am bleeding, I am crying, I am suffering. Look at my trauma. This misery and pain represent me!” (cf. Weyns, 2018:7). In this case, identity and self-worth are founded upon vulnerability and the outcry above may seem to make one invincible, but, ultimately, vulnerability is turned into victimhood. As victim, one always wins. The problem is that in this instance vulnerability is coquetted, making it infallible and immune to criticism (Weyns, 2018:8). Then it becomes fragility (cf. DiAngelo, 2012:54, 126).

Being vulnerable is different. Vulnerability as part of the human condition, is a shared quality with all Others. It is crucial for a shared interdependence and living together, especially those with whom one has to work and live and with whom one has no choice in sharing relationality (Hoppe, 2019:5). Everyone dares say “I am vulnerable, therefore I exist.” (Hoppe, 2019:5). It indicates a specific dependence on another, be that other a set of institutions, a particular environment, an individual or a group of people, to be protected, to be in good health, and to be accepted or acknowledged (cf. Butler, 2011:200). Vulnerability means to be open to another and not to be self-enclosed (cf. McGlothlin, 2016). To be open to other means to put yourself at risk (Butler, 2011: 201). You can either hide or reveal it.

How does one open up without falling in the trap of white victimhood? Vulnerability implies to stand up again after a fall, to begin anew, to adapt or adjust to new circumstances (cf. Weyns, 2018:9). To enable such a renewal, one needs to understand that vulnerability entails an openness to social norms and modes of power. The body is from its inception open to the modes in which one becomes gendered, medicalized, and legalized (Butler, 2011:203). If one is open to social and political modes of power from the start, one is also open to harm and injury in this sense, i.e. abuse and exploitation from systemic orders of institutions such as religion. A person’s dependence on the outside world for food, care, and shelter—the very material condition of life and persistence according to Butler (2011:204)—makes one vulnerable from birth (2011:204).

The reality is that lives are not treated equally. The mythic norm suggested earlier in the essay and which excludes certain categories of people manifests to an uneven sharing of vulnerability. Racism, homophobia, xenophobia, sexism, ethnocentrism, etc. causes lives to be unequally exposed to harm, to injury, to exploitation. Some groups are safeguarded against it, but it is at the cost of other groups from whom injurability and destructibility are extracted. If lives are unequally exposed to vulnerability, argues Butler (2011:205), “we must struggle for new forms of economic, social, and political life that institutionalize the principle of equality of the value of life and overcome its unequal distribution.”

3.2 Accounting for vulnerability

The vulnerability that is implied is not an easy one, but one in which the responsibility for various exclusionary measures is taken up as the *white, heterosexual, patriarchal, wealthy, middle class, masculine Christian perpetrating agent* in the presence of those who bore the brunt of these exclusionary policies of the past. It means to put yourself in the place of the victim, but not to play victim. It is a decentring of the disposition of the mythic norm behind the one who reads the Bible (cf. Snyman 2015a, 2015b, 2017). The process renders one vulnerable, but it opens up the opportunity for change for bible readers who find themselves at the wrong side of history, and equip them with a framework with which to work through their complicity with the racism embedded in apartheid and coloniality. In this way one can indeed think theologically “after apartheid” and generate a theology that bears the effects of apartheid in mind.

My intended audience is very much part of coloniality—those of us who by birth, culture, association or whatever means of connotation, might have or have had links with apartheid and colonialism. In short, the audience is those of us who are associated with *whiteness*, not necessarily by the lack of melanin in our skin composition, but more due to the power that that specific lack imposed on us and which we have to wear, whether we want to or not. Some of us have become part of the metropolitan colonial centre that still aims to extract labour from the bodies of the colonized and dehumanized subjects, and some of us remained in the zone of non-being, below the line of the colonized.

This hermeneutical context targets certain men and women in terms of masculinity (defined as male power over women). Colonized women are particularly vulnerable in this instance, as violence towards their bodies affirms masculinity without any real consequences (Maldonado-Torres, 2016:17). Mellet (2020:118) is of the opinion that the vulnerability of enslaved women is the dark side of coloniality. Their abuse and subsequent impregnation by white masters is not a topic that is easily broached. The VOC did not encourage such carnal relations for the first decades after 1652, but Van Riebeeck did, because any child from an enslaved woman became a slave of the VOC in the Cape. As a result, whiteness has a large ancestral relation with these slave women as their ancestral mothers.

Masculinity as male power over the female has received final theological approval in my audience’s denomination when a special National General Synod of the GKSA in 2016 rejected petitions in favour of women in the ministry. It was a synod that was deliberately male structured, and congregated with a historically white majority. As far as I could ascertain, no woman could officially make a presentation.

Following news reports, the synod also did not tolerate questions about its racial composition. A reference to the racial composition of the audience and the power that is drawn from that composition was not understood or well received. Subsequently, those who made the comments,⁶ had to withdraw it (cf. Noeth, 2016). The force to withdraw is exemplary of decoloniality, as Maldonado-Torres (2016:17, my emphasis—GFS) reminds us “colonized males are in many contexts particularly susceptible to being conceived as *enemy combatants* who are a threat to the lives and power of white males and to the ‘honour’ of white women.” According to Noeth (2016; bear in mind he is also a white member of the GKSA, a former minister and currently the executive director of the labour union Solidarity’s Helping Hand) the issue at the synod was solved “amicably” and in “brotherly love,” although it remains an emotional topic of identity. With the racial issue of power that

6 According to *Beeld* (Steyn, 2016), Derek Mashau (a black professor at the University of South Africa and a member of the GKSA, a former professor in Missiology at the Theological Seminary of the GKSA in Potchefstroom) made a comment on white power and Afrikaans as language of discussion, highlighting the exclusion of delegates who had to listen to the translation all the time, hampering their participation in the debate. The late Rev. Kiepie Jafta (equally not a member of the white fraternity but a minister within the GKSA) bemoaned the fact of lack of transformation in the various commissions.

reared its head as well as a decision that excluded women from the ministry, it is clear to me that there is a direct link between the composition of the synod and the decisions taken. The composition of the synod in terms of power relationships was that of *heteronormative, masculine, patriarchal*, (mainly) *Afrikaans, financially relatively secured, white (there were a few black churches represented, but they were by far a minority), middle class, Christian readers* of the biblical text with two aspects challenged but reaffirmed: masculinity and white Afrikaans identity.

The epithet attached here to the synod is not intended to shame, but to confront a racial and gender reality and a subsequent vulnerability. Cheryl Anderson (2009:32) refers to the mythical norm of biblical interpretation that becomes synonymous with faith and orthodox church practices: heterosexual masculine white wealthy Christian patriarchal readers. Subsequently, adherents to the mythical norm arrogate to themselves those privileges and benefits Israelite men possessed in the biblical narrative (Anderson, 2009:32). In the biblical narrative, according to Anderson (2009:32), the Israelite heterosexual male head of the household had the most privileges, whilst the poor female non-Israelite women had the least. Most readers in my audience would adhere to and identify with the former associatively and admiringly.

Those who could not adhere to this privileged position within the tradition of faith became the Other: Africans, women, homosexuals, the poor, non-Christians, non-whites. These people are outside the mythical norm and their readings are not recognized because readers within the mythical norm cannot recognize the disadvantage of not being within the mythical norm.

My immediate audience, which subscribes to this mythical norm, venerates the biblical text—a reverence shaped by articles 3-7 of the *Confessio Belgica* (or as we say in Afrikaans, *Die Nederlandse Geloofsbelijdenis*). In fact, any summons referring to the mythical norm must reckon with an accusation of rejecting these five articles of faith. The *Confessio Belgica* came into being simultaneously with the invention of the printing of books. The subsequent textualization linked the text to truth in such a way that truth became synonymous with what has been written (also called a correspondence theory of truth). This kind of relationship found its climax in Mendelsohn's second symphony which was composed for the 1840 celebrations of the printing press in which the composer uses portions of the biblical text to celebrate the printed Gutenberg Bible (see Snyman, 1997a:482). From the Hymn of Praise it becomes clear that God blessed those who invented and possessed the art of printing in contrast to those without it. The latter would remain in the dark. In addition, because the Bible is deemed written words directly from God, it became scripture, or rather with a capital "S": Scripture, the sacred writings of Christianity (cf. Kaiser, 1983: 87-88).

Any argument, such as a contextualization of the reader in terms of socio-historical or political location is interpreted as an assault on the *Confessio Belgica* whereas, in reality, it is rather an effort to tone down the trend towards bibliolatry (the idolatrous worshipping or deification of a book). It is to the credit of liberation theology that a third dimension to the constitution of the meaning of the text has been added: the context of the reader, and especially in the latter instance, the context of those who suffered under colonialism in the sense of loss of land, personhood, economy, knowledge, etc. Reading the text became a reading with the people in their context, a reading from below over-against a reading from above and for people, as is still the case in most traditionally Reformed circles within the group that defined themselves in terms of a white power configuration.

What does one do when someone brings up the issue of the mythical norm? The immediate response may be defensiveness as the mythical norm indicates lack of awareness or recognition of the context of the reader—a kind of privileged aloofness (Schüssler-Fiorenza, 1988:12). The mythical norm enquires into the interests served by a particular reading and the kind of values propagated by that norm. Vulnerability is closely linked to a double

ethics of interpretation by: (a) questioning what kinds of reading will do justice to the text in its different historical contexts, even when it irritates our own experiences and interests, or relativizes our views, authority, and values; and (b) investigating the reader's choice of interpretative model and the consequences of the resulting interpretation (cf. Schüssler-Fiorenza, 1988:14, 15).

This double ethics of reading concerns a responsibility towards the otherness of the text as well as a response-ability towards the "other" in the text and audience. In 1997 I summarized the play on responsibility and response-ability as follows (Snyman, 1997b:97):

Firstly, one should ask, what will enable them [the readers] to respond to the text as the author envisaged? Secondly, what will disable them so that they might follow the persuasive intent of the text? The answer to the first question will depend on the readers' ability [response-ability] to successfully read the text in its pastness. The answer to the second question will depend on the way the readers are able to take into account [responsibility] and to accept the responsibility of their theoretical interpretative model.

In his book, *White Theology. Outing Supremacy in Modernity*, James Perkinson refers to the divide between black and white that he wants to overcome. However, for some reason any racial encounter constitutes what he calls "the most difficult site of racial confrontation for white people both externally and internally," (2004:3) i.e. race trouble. His remark addresses the problem within South Africa head on. For me, in coming to consciousness of myself as white, I have to look into black eyes and not deny the reflection. I need to hear black critique and be embarrassed of having been caught out by my most frightening other, to use the words of Perkinson (2004:3-4).

What I am confronted with, is the mythical norm Cheryl Anderson alluded to: a white, (Afrikaans), heterosexual, masculine, patriarchal, financially secure, middle class Christian reader. It is not scandalous to be labelled with such a norm. Most of these categories are part of my identity and anyone would be able to interchange these categories with their own depictions. There is nothing to this specific categorization that I could deny except perhaps the one on sexual orientation and patriarchy.

The point is that a description of the norm for bible reading is also a marker of power. For every identity marker there is a powerless Other, which needs to be taken into consideration: from a position of whiteness, blackness is questioning the racist environment in which I grew up that left residues in my thinking and practices, in my epistemology and philosophy; my Afrikaans identity juxtaposes me with the English of the Anglo-Boer War as well as my Afrikaans compatriots whose complexion is darker than mine, but with whom I share a slave origin; in my masculinity I am confronted with texts that have been used to justify my superiority towards the feminine; and with the intersection of race and ethnicity I have been made complicit in the subjugation of black women. Patriarchy has turned my homosexual orientation into a divine abomination whilst my financially secure middle class position highlights the privileges I have acquired to walk effortlessly through life's obstacles of higher learning and social status. With my Christianity, I was able to justify every other position I could attain and not be left in the gutter of poverty or being denied a place of worship or a job because of adhering to a particular religion.

4. Vulnerability and empathy

The question pertaining to the ethics of interpretation is whether someone is rendered vulnerable, especially when the biblical text is used as a matrix of power to order society, as was the case with the biblical justification of apartheid and is still the case in the exclusion of women from the ministry within the RCSA. Within a paradigm of subordination, to use

Perkinson's metaphor, at least one pair of eyes negates the other, exploiting the latter's vulnerability, creating harm, injury or a wrong (cf. Snyman, 2017:190). Without empathy, the exploitation of the vulnerability of the Other is turned into a moral injury to the self (Shay, 2014:183), and a manipulative tool to harm or shame the other.

I identify empathy as "the imaginative ability to understand the experience of someone other than myself by entering into a relational process that is both affective and cognitive" (Krondorfer, 2020:142). In general, empathy is a "first-person imaginative projection, at once emotional and cognitive, of oneself into the perspective or situation of another" (Bubant & Willerslev, 2015:5). Although rooted, activated, and located in the self, empathy is less about the self and more about the state of the other (cf. Krondorfer, 2020:138).

Empathy can be easy, or it can be difficult even to the point of becoming unsettling. It is easier to show empathy for those whom we think deserve our empathy, such as victims of abuse, people with serious illnesses or people being harmed by systemic violence over which they have no power. It is more difficult to show empathy for those who have perpetrated horrible deeds. Leake (2014:175) calls the general definition of empathy an unthreatening form of empathy—easy empathy because no one is challenged. Easy empathy furnishes one with a life-affirming look in the mirror or provides one with a generous self-understanding (Leake, 2014:177).

A *sine qua non* for empathy is mutual understanding, altruism, consolation, intersubjective compassion, care, or social cohesion, but Bubant and Willerslev (2015:6) add a darker picture to empathy, be it easy empathy or difficult empathy. They argue that empathy may be deceptive and used for violent purposes (like torture). Empathy in this sense is part of the torturer's skill set, turning into a tactical empathy, a social maintenance of dignity by pretence (Bubant & Willerslev, 2015:9). It is virtuous under particular circumstances, but brutally violent in others. Tactical empathy is used by (Bubant & Willerslev, 2015:8):

[p]oker players, police profilers, military strategists, con artists, internet scammers, method actors, and everyday romantic Casanovas [who] engage in similar forms of tactical empathy when they attempt to assume the perspective and affective stance of an avowed opponent, victim, portrayed figure, or desired subject, and base their future actions on some form of mimicry that allows them to win the game, gain a strategic advantage, capture, fool, portray, or seduce someone else.

A more complex form of empathy is "difficult empathy" that is unsettling and mirrors our own vulnerabilities in others as well as our own capacity to be a victimizer. Difficult empathy "pushes the limits of our understanding in reaching out to those with whom we might not otherwise wish contact or association" (Leake, 2014:176). Difficult expressions of empathy challenge us in pushing our identification with or recognition of disturbing qualities we might share with others—qualities that is common in humanity but definitely not representing our best. It helps us to see ourselves differently through problematic others and their social conditions (Leake, 2014:184). Whereas easy empathy allows us to remake the other into our own image and erases critical differences, difficult empathy highlights those critical differences, which prohibits us to remake ourselves in the image of the disgusting other (cf. Leake, 2014:178).

Krondorfer (2020:145) adds to the general definition of empathy the following two aspects: a willingness to be challenged and the ability to embrace such a challenge. These two aspects make empathy unsettling, which Krondorfer (2020:145) describes as "a relational commitment to caring responsiveness in the face of past injustices and power asymmetries." In practice it means a willingness to be unsettled by the presence of the Other regarding our worldviews, attitudes, deeply held beliefs, and values. It is a question of looking into Black eyes with those eyes looking back and responding. It is a posture that would shake the white and male worldview and need a cognitive openness to such an experience. Thus, unsettling

empathy also entails the ability to endure the process by accepting that its outcome would be beneficial, so that the two pairs of eyes can productively engage one another without anyone having to give up who they are (Krondorfer, 2020:145).

To Krondorfer (2020:156), unsettling empathy is a critical practice within intimate public, yet safe spaces that demand reciprocal mutual engagement. He (2020:156) summarizes unsettling empathy as follows:

Unsettling empathy costs something, whereas compassion can too easily be mistaken as the kind of civil discourse that uses polite forms of rhetoric to mask underlying tensions.

Unsettling empathy requires the risk of vulnerability, of courage, and of being shaken to one's foundations and assumptions about the world and the other.

Unsettling empathy calls us into the presence of objective differences without negating the vitality of human interaction, whereas compassion may tempt us to erase some of the objective differences in the name of a common humanity.

Unsettling empathy allows for the inclusion of both a critical perspective on power asymmetries as well as the empathetic stance towards the other despite unresolved historical injustices.

Unsettling empathy describes a posture that blends the critical/political with the affective/interpersonal.

Krondorfer's unsettling empathy—as a willingness to be challenged and the ability to embrace change—links up with Erinn Gilson's (2016:97) view of epistemic vulnerability and its use of openness and affectivity (cf. Snyman, 2017:192). Epistemic vulnerability is to her an openness to not knowing or to be wrong, an attitude which does not refrain from interaction in which one's ideas, beliefs, and feelings are put to the test. Epistemic vulnerability enables one to learn in a context where one is unknowing and foreign, that is, a context in which one is not in power. But to be open to new ideas means one needs to lay down wilful ignorance and embrace the alteration of unconscious beliefs and habits that are ingrained into our bodies. Epistemic vulnerability demands an openness to the ambivalence of our bodily and emotional responses, an openness to alter the concept one has of the self. In other words, similar to Krondorfer (2020:148), the change that takes place affects what one does, how one thinks about, and how one defines oneself: "it requires the willingness to question assumptions about ourselves and presuppositions about the other." Importantly, in both instances the self does not become the other. The self does not take the victim's place but recognizes the otherness of the other. In fact, epistemic vulnerability is based on "the condition of one's knowledge since it is only by being affected by others that one knows and is" (Gilson, 2016:97). Unsettling empathy is based on separateness and not identification, because it is rather disruptive. Hence Gilson also argues that vulnerability resists closure, because closure implies invulnerability. Invulnerability lacks openness and a willingness to change.

5. Conclusion

A hermeneutic of vulnerability is about giving the survivor of apartheid a second chance to reimagine the reading of the biblical text. It relates to the reimagination of the political in the light of the decolonial turn which occurred in 1994 in South Africa. Since vulnerability is part of the human condition, vulnerability is shared by black and white, perpetrators and victims, and bystanders. Vulnerability indicates a specific dependence on the other—an openness in which one puts oneself at risk for the other.

To be more specific, a hermeneutic of vulnerability is about the perpetrator of apartheid grasping the effect of the biblical justification of the racist logic of apartheid, struggling with his or her own unresolved emotions and fractured relations towards an integration of human agony in the presence of the Other. It is perhaps time to acknowledge that moral injury has already been embedded in our epistemology and that this embeddedness results in whiteness's cognitive dissonance and feelings of ignorance and innocence. The function of a hermeneutic of vulnerability may be to render corrective knowledge fertile and cultivate a memory that honours those who suffered under a racist/sexist/homophobic system.

A hermeneutic of vulnerability activates the reader's ability to become responsible for his or her own reading of the biblical text in accepting responsibility for the outcome of that reading process. It prevents the reader from hiding behind a mythic or hidden norm that controls the outcome of the reading and urges the reader to put all the cards on the table as far as possible, that is, reveal as much as possible presuppositions, prejudices, belief systems, political ideologies, and epistemologies that would induce certain interpretations. Without revealing the nature of norms that govern the reading of the biblical text, one is left with a discourse of which no one is the master, of which no one takes responsibility, yet everyone is made responsible to obey the rules of the discourse, doing and saying what God proclaims in his Word. Our human condition of vulnerability then remains hidden.

The revelation of the mythic norms behind our current reading practices is not to disavow them, but to be honest about what influences the outcome of a particular reading. A different reading would require the weighing of what causes the difference in such interpretation. It should never be the one with power who proclaims a specific interpretation of the text. That power will always be questioned. Vulnerability provides one with a framework with which to question that kind of power and complicity. In other words, the power of the minister on the pulpit is relativized and his message from the Word of God is weighed with the way the ordinary member in the pew understands the text in his or her context. A hermeneutic of vulnerability render the reading from above **into** a reading from below. The homework of the minister on the pulpit as exegete is to render himself (or herself) responsible to the text by not denying his/her own ability to be responsive to the audience's needs.

If a male heteronormative synod of the RCSA makes decisions on women in the ministry or on homosexuality, their own masculinity and heterosexuality will be questioned in their interpretation. Would it be naïve to expect from a hermeneutical enterprise to rehumanize the world in breaking down hierarchies of power and difference in order to open up the world for other forms of being? The vulnerability expected here is rather difficult. It challenges us to recognize disturbing qualities we might share with others—qualities we have in common with humanity, but may not represent our ideal self.

What is the challenge of a hermeneutic of vulnerability? It requires risk, and does not come cheap. It requires a willingness to be shaken to your foundation. It does not negate differences, and engender a critical perspective on power relationships. Finally, it is a condition of the mind.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- ANDERSON, C., 2009. Ancient laws and contemporary controversies: The need for inclusive biblical interpretation. Oxford: Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780195305500.003.0001>.
- BOONE, K., 1990. *The Bible Tells Them so. The Discourse of Protestant Fundamentalism*. London: SCM Press.
- BUBANT, N., WILLERSLEV, R., 2015. The Dark Side of Empathy: Mimesis, Deception, and the Magic of Alterity. *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 57, 5–34. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0010417514000589>.

- DAS, V., 2007. *Life and Words: Violence and the Descent into the Ordinary*. Berkeley:University of California Press.
- DE KLERK F.W., 2020b. Statement. 17 February 2020. F.W. de Klerk Foundation. <https://www.fwdeklerk.org/index.php/en/document-library/statements>.
- DE KLERK, F. W., 2020a. Former President FW de Klerk on unbanning of political parties and Mandela's release. SABC News, Youtube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VBE844vDkx4>.
- DIANGELO, R., 2012. What does it mean to be White? Developing White Racial Literacy. *Counterpoints. Studies in Postmodern Theory of Education*. New York: Peter Lang.
- DURRHEIM, K; MTOSE, X and BROWN, L. 2011. *Race Trouble. Race, Identity and Inequality in Post-apartheid South Africa*. Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press.
- ELLENS, H.J., 2007a. Introduction, in: *The Destructive Power of Religion: Violence in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*. Praeger Publishers, Westport, Connecticut, pp. xxi-xxiv.
- ELLENS, H.J., 2007b. The destructive power of religion, in: *The Destructive Power of Religion: Violence in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*. Praeger Publishers, Westport, Connecticut, pp. 1-7.
- FABER VAN DER MEULEN, H., 1996. 'Worden als een kind'. Als welk kind? *HTS Theological Studies* 52(2&3): 351-375. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v52i2/3.1514>.
- GERAS, N., 1998. *The contract of mutual indifference. Political philosophy after the Holocaust*. New York: Verso.
- GILSON, E. 2016. *The ethics of vulnerability. A feminist analysis of social life and practice*. Routledge studies in ethics and moral theory 26. London: Routledge.
- HARK, S.; VILLA, P-I., 2011. 'Confessing a Passionate State ...'. Judith Butler Im Interview. *Feministischen Studien*, 29, (2): 196-205. <https://doi.org/10.1515/fs-2011-0204>.
- HODGSON, T.J., CAREY, L.B., 2017. Moral Injury and Definitional Clarity: Betrayal, Spirituality and the role of Chaplains. *J Relig Health*, 56, 1212-1228. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10943-017-0407-z>
- HOPPE, K., 2019. Responding as composing: towards a post-anthropocentric, feminist ethics for the Anthropocene. *Distinktion: Journal of Social Theory*, 1-18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1600910X.2019.1618360>
- KAISER, W.C., 1983. *Toward an exegetical theology. Biblical exegesis for preaching and teaching*. Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI.
- KRONDORFER, B., 2020. *Unsettling empathy. Working with groups in conflict*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- LEAKE, E., 2014. Humanizing the Inhumane: The Value of Difficult Empathy, in: Hammond, M.M., Kim, S.J. (Eds.), *Rethinking Empathy through Literature, Routledge Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Literature*. London: Routledge, pp. 175-185.
- MALDONADO-TORRES, N., 2007. On the Coloniality of being: Contributions to the development of the concept. *Cultural Studies*, 21 (2-3): 240-270. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09502380601162548>.
- MALDONADO-TORRES, N., 2016. *Outline of ten theses on coloniality and decoloniality*. Paris: Frantz Fanon Foundation.
- MAMDANI, M. 2020. *Neither Settler nor Native. The Making and Unmaking of Permanent Minorities*. Cambridge: Bellknap Press.
- MCGLOTHLIN, E., 2016. Empathetic Identification and the Mind of the Holocaust Perpetrator in fiction: a Proposed Taxonomy of Response. *Narrative*, 24, 251-276. <https://doi.org/10.1353/nar.2016.0016>.
- MELLET, P. T., 2020. *The Lie of 1652. A Decolonised History of the Land*. Cape Town: Tafelberg.
- MIGNOLO, W., 2011. I am where I think. Remapping the order of knowing, in *The Creolization of Theory* (ed. F. Lionnet and S. Shih), Duke University Press: Durham, pp. 159-192.
- NOETH, H., 2016. "GKSA-Sinode: 'n Terugblik." *Maroela Media* 1. Online: <https://maroelamedia.co.za/debat/meningsvormers/gksa-sinode-n-terugblik/>.
- PAUW, J., 2014. "Inside TB Joshua's broken temple." *News24*. Online: <https://www.news24.com/News24/Inside-TB-Joshuas-broken-temple-20140921>.
- PERKINSON, J.W., 2004. *White Theology. Outing Supremacy in Modernity. Black Religion/Womanist Thought/Social Justice*. New York: Palgrave.

- SCHÜSSLER FIORENZA, E., 1988. The ethics of biblical interpretation: decentering biblical scholarship. *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 107, 3–17. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3267820>.
- SHAY, J., 1995. *Achilles in Vietnam. Combat Trauma and the Undoing of Character*. New York: Touchstone (Simon & Schuster).
- SHAY, J., 2012. Moral Injury. *Intertexts*, 16, 57–66.
- SHAY, J., 2014. "Moral Injury." *Psychoanalytic Psychology*, 31, 182–191. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0036090>
- SNYMAN, G.F., 1997a. On opening windows and doors of Old Testament studies in South Africa. *Old Testament Essays*, 10, 474–493.
- SNYMAN, G.F., 1997b. 'Tis a vice to know him'. Readers' response ability and responsibility in 2 Chronicles 14 16. in: Nolan Fewell, D., Phillips, G.A. (Eds.), *Bible and Ethics of Reading, Semeia 77.*, Atlanta, USA: Society of Biblical Literature, pp. 91–114.
- SNYMAN, G.F., 2011. Empire and a Hermeneutics of vulnerability. *Studia Historiae Ecclesasticae*, XXXVII – Supplement, December 2011: 1–20.
- SNYMAN, G.F., 2014. Esther and African Biblical Hermeneutics: A Decolonial Inquiry. *Old Testament Essays*, 27(3): 1035–1061.
- SNYMAN, G.F., 2015a. Responding to the decolonial turn: epistemic vulnerability. *Missionalia: Southern African Journal of Mission Studies* 43, 266–291. <https://doi.org/10.7832/43-3-77>.
- SNYMAN, G.F., 2015b. Totius: die ironie van vergewe en vergeet. *LitNet Akademies (Godsdienswetenskap)*, 12 (2): 211–235.
- SNYMAN, G.F., 2017. Read as/with the Perpetrator: Manasseh's vulnerability in 2 Kings 21:1–18 and 2 Chronicles 33:1–20. *Scriptura* 116, 188–207. <https://doi.org/10.7833/116-2-1318>.
- SNYMAN, G.F., 2020. Reader's Disgust in the Case of Rebekah, Jacob, Isaac, and Esau: Perverters of Justice? *Old Testament Essays*, 33(3): 445–472. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.17159/2312-3621/2020/v33n3a6>.
- SNYMAN, J.J., 1999. Die Politiek van Herinnering: Spore van Trauma. *Literator*, 20, 9–33. <https://doi.org/10.4102/lit.v20i3.487>.
- SOUSA DE SANTOS, B., 2007. Beyond Abyssal Thinking: From Global lines to Ecologies of Knowledge. *Cultural Studies*, 21 (2–3): 45–89.
- STEYN, M., 2012. The ignorance contract: recollections of apartheid childhoods and the construction of epistemologies of ignorance. *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power*, 19, 8–25. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1070289x.2012.672840>.
- STEYN, P., 2016. "Wit heerskappy" is probleem, hoor GKSA se sinode." *Beeld*. Online: <https://www.netwerk24.com/Nuus/Algemeen/wit-heerskappy-is-probleem-hoor-gksa-se-sinode-20160112>.
- WEKKER, G., 2016. *White Innocence. Paradoxes of Colonialism and Race*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- WEYNS, W., 2018. "Homo Vulnerabilis." *Recto Verso*, 81, 1–9.
- WIINIKKA-LYDON, J., 2017. Moral injury as inherent political critique: The Prophetic possibilities of a new term. *Political Theology*, 18, 219–232. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1462317X.2015.1104205>.
- WIINIKKA-LYDON, J., 2018. Dirty Hands and Moral Injury. The Royal Institute of *Philosophy*, 93, 355–374. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0031819118000050>.