

Exegesis seeking appropriation; appropriation seeking exegesis: Re-reading 2 Samuel 13:1–22 in search of redemptive masculinities

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Exegesis in the traditional sense is concerned with generating as much (scientific) detail about a biblical text as possible. Whilst the two primary modes of biblical exegesis – socio-historical and literary-semiotic – do this differently, they share a common concern for the detail of the text as an ancient artefact. Critical distance is a key concept here, with the exegetes bracketing (for a moment) their own contexts and concerns. However, such bracketing is impossible to sustain, and so the exegetes' interests (shaped by their contexts and concerns) 'leak' into the act of exegesis. Most exegetes today recognise this leakage, and whilst some still view such leakage as contaminating the exegesis, others, including the tradition of African biblical scholarship, actively identify the contextual concerns they bring to the task of exegesis, both respecting the detail of the text and desiring to be accountable to their contexts in which the Bible is a significant text. This article explored some of the dimensions of forms of exegesis that actively seek appropriation, using 2 Samuel 13:1–22 as an example. In this case, the article analysed the contextual shift from a focus on women as the victims of sexual violence to an emerging emphasis on masculinities. Reading the same text from these different contextual concerns 'activates' particular details of the text, and so both draw on different elements of the text and thus guides the gaze of exegesis.

Introduction

African biblical hermeneutics is a reflective discipline, analysing what African biblical scholars do. Though often cast in a prescriptive mood, it is properly a descriptive project. Of course, identifying, describing and analysing what scholars are up to when they do their work can take on normative or even imperative force. Something similar seems to have happened with early attempts to describe the sacred texts that were being used by the early church or churches. By describing what was being used by Christian communities, what was being used began to take on a normative and even imperative 'canonical' stature (Dungan 2007). But my intention in describing the current state of African biblical hermeneutics is not to direct, but to describe. African biblical scholarship has a relatively recent self-conscious history (Ukpong 2000) and therefore definitely is a work in progress.

Until recently African biblical hermeneutics was characterised as a comparative, or bipolar, project (Anum 2000; Holter 2000). Analysis was done of both the biblical text and the African context, and the two sets of analyses were then 'compared', in a range of different ways (Ukpong 2000). What has become more evident on closer scrutiny (West 2009a), however, is that the comparison of text and context is a mediated process, involving a third pole, that of appropriation – hence the coining of the term 'tripolar' approach (Draper 1991). This description of African biblical hermeneutics is relatively new, and so various attempts are being made at analytical clarity (Draper 2002; West 2010a), to which this article contributes.

New forms of analysis often require a new vocabulary, and though this can sometimes be rather tiresome, new vocabulary can occasionally offer fresh ways of understanding. The postcolonial notions of hybridity and mimicry, for example, are useful new additions to our vocabulary (Bhabha 1994) and have offered fresh ways of understanding the transactions that take place in colonial encounters. In order to begin to talk about the mediating and appropriating movement or moment between text and context, I have used the term *ideo-theological orientation*.

I have derived the term from the late Justin Ukpong's acknowledgement that his own work (and this is common to most African biblical scholars) had a theological component. 'The goal of interpretation', declares Ukpong (2000):

is the actualization of the theological meaning of the text in today's context so as to forge integration between faith and life, and engender commitment to personal and societal transformation. (p. 24)

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I offered the term 'ideo-theological' for two reasons. Firstly, it is implicit in Ukpong's formulation, and explicit in Jonathan Draper's critical engagement with Cristina Grenholm's and Daniel Patte's work on a tri-polar model for interpretation (Draper 1991), that African biblical scholarship has a strong tradition of praxis, where real social action and reflection are conjoined in a cyclical process. Ideology in the socio-political sense has a place in African biblical interpretation. Secondly, I wanted to make the notion of 'ideology' prominent because as, again, Ukpong has said, for most African biblical scholarship, 'Africa is the subject of biblical interpretation' (Ukpong 2000:12, 24). As subject, African contexts shape not only *what* the biblical text is brought into dialogue with, but also *how* it is brought into dialogue. There is a context-derived ideological dimension to the third pole. As African interpreters we are shaped by the ideological orientations of our contexts. Therefore we might associate the 'ideological' especially with the 'contextual' pole. Similarly, we might associate the 'theological' especially with the 'textual/scriptural' pole. These 'primary' associations, however, should not exclude the impact of text on ideology formation and context on theological formation. The formulation 'ideo-theological' acknowledges both the contributions of African context and of biblical text to the forms of dialogue that take place between African contexts and biblical texts.

Connecting text and context

The importance of the third pole is that it connects the two poles of text and context. Because these two poles have been apparent to the scholarly gaze for longer than the third pole, they have received more careful critical attention. The critical techniques and discourses that have been forged over centuries to interrogate the various dimensions of 'text' are often referred to as 'exegesis'. And although 'exegesis' has had a quite narrow connotation in the earlier parts of the last century, being restricted to historical-critical analysis, the term has expanded its embrace, even if reluctantly, to the literary, semiotic and sociological detail of 'text', roughly in that historical order (Lategan 1984).

Within African biblical scholarship, as in other 'contextual' forms of biblical interpretation, the other pole, that of 'context', has also developed a critical discourse, though not a discourse specific to biblical studies. With respect to 'context', African biblical scholarship has drawn on the social sciences to analyse, critically, African contexts. Whilst we have not always been as meticulous and rigorous in our use of social scientific forms of analysis with respect to context as we have with the textual forms of analysis, we aspire to a careful and critical analysis of context, moving beyond the anecdotal.

Here, then, is the 'science' of our work as African biblical scholars.¹ And whilst we too have followed other scholarly

1.I invoke the term 'science' here for two reasons. Firstly, an earlier form of this article was presented as a paper at the second Joint Conference of Southern African Academic Societies in Pietermaritzburg from 18–22 June 2012, which had the theme 'Knowing, believing, living in Africa: Perspectives from religion, theology and science'. Secondly, I offer this article to honour the work of my colleague Jurie le Roux, who regularly re-calls us to the scientific rigour of our discipline.

discourses in downplaying claims to neutrality and objectivity, we still want to insist that our work with 'text' and 'context' is critical, using an array of structured and systematic 'scientific' questions.

However, precisely because we have insisted on the 'scientific' quality of our work, we have been reluctant to acknowledge how we connect 'text' and 'context'. A hallmark of most African biblical scholarship is that we do connect 'text' and 'context', as I have indicated. This has long been acknowledged. But we are still developing a vocabulary for 'how' this takes place. Throwing the term 'hermeneutics' at the two poles of 'text' and 'context' is not sufficient. Precision about what it is we are doing when we connect 'text' and 'context' is required, and the tripolar model is offering us further theoretical incentive to do so.

African biblical scholarship has become more astute about its 'hermeneutics', delving into the 'hermeneutic' discourses of other disciplines, so that names familiar to these other discourses, such as Hans Georg-Gadamer and Paul Ricoeur, to mention two of the most prominent, are fairly common to biblical studies hermeneutics, and have been for quite some time (Thiselton 1980).

African biblical studies have also begun to be more precise about the most common ideo-theological frameworks within which biblical hermeneutics operate. These include, in roughly this historical order, inculturation ideo-theological hermeneutics, liberation ideo-theological hermeneutics, feminist or womanist or African women's ideo-theological hermeneutics, and post-colonial ideo-theological hermeneutics (West 2010a).² Slowly we are offering our distinctive contributions to these hermeneutic frameworks.

The exegesis or appropriation nexus

The focus of this article is on the relationship between exegesis and appropriation. So in a sense I am negotiating here the relationship between 'science' and 'ideo-theology'. In so doing I journey with a colleague who has emphasised the former, and in whose honour I offer this article. Jurie le Roux has been at the forefront of reminding his fellow African interpreters that our work must not neglect the 'substantial contribution' of the 'critical scholarship of the past two centuries' (Le Roux 2008:307–308). Though his own work has emphasised the historical detail, he is affirming of the synchronic dimensions of text as well (Le Roux 2009). 'Detailed exegesis' is what is important, requiring 'an investigation of the smallest detail in the text' (Le Roux 2009:4, 5).

But, like the bulk of African biblical scholars, Le Roux refuses to terminate the interpretive process with exegesis. The detail is important precisely because it is this detail that offers the potential for African appropriation. Critical *historical* scholarship, which is Le Roux's focus, offers this potential in

2.These are simply the most common forms of our ideo-theological appropriation, not an exhaustive listing. For other, emerging forms of appropriation see Punt (2011).

two related ways. Firstly, it offers 'information on how the Old Testament was appropriated in different contexts and how it addressed social issues' (Le Roux 2009:2), and in so doing, secondly, enables a responsible appropriation as we locate ourselves and our 're-telling' and 're-living' of Israel's story within the long conversation of Israel's 'constant process of interpretation and re-interpretation, appropriation and actualisation' (Le Roux 2009:6). 'Thus', argues Le Roux, 'the actualisation of the Old Testament for the present day depends on the exegete's competence to immerse him-/herself in the text and relive Israel's past' (Le Roux 2009).

Le Roux is profoundly aware that entering into this hermeneutical process cannot be done 'in a detached and formal way, merely describing objectively what was going on in the Hebrew text or what happened in the history of Israel' (Le Roux 2009:7). What I have called ideo-theological appropriation is part of the hermeneutical process, though Le Roux does not use such terms. In his words, 'the exegete's life context determines the exegesis of a text. The exegete's own life context (or *praxis*) influences the exegetical process right from the beginning. Right from the onset the 'exegete "sees" things in the text and this is determined by his/her own life context' (Le Roux 2009:2). So, in sum, Le Roux (2008) argues that:

... we in Africa must not shun from the scholarly challenges and results of the Old Testament science of the past two centuries. We must rather appropriate them because there-in lies great possibilities for understanding the text and our context. (p. 311)

In the remainder of this article I explore a recent example of exegesis seeking appropriation and appropriation seeking exegesis. I begin with the 'science' of exegesis of a particular text, recognising from the outset that I am using a rather constrained notion of 'exegesis'. Some would contest that there is even a separate moment of 'exegesis', insisting that all 'exegesis' is already appropriation (Tracy 1987:11–27). However, I allow myself to be constrained by the traditional denotations of 'exegesis' because I want to affirm the importance of the detail of the text, along with Le Roux, in all the many dimensions of textual detail.³

In 1984 Phyllis Trible published a landmark book entitled *Texts of terror: Literary-feminist readings of biblical narratives* (Trible 1984). All three poles of the interpretive process are present in her work, but the bulk of the work is focussed on literary exegesis. Indeed, a careful reading of the book today demonstrates that Trible's treatment of 'context' and 'ideo-theological appropriation' is rather modest. The power of the book lies in its exegesis.

As one of the pioneers of literary exegesis, at a time when conjoining these two terms would have been considered odd, Trible is attentive to her exegetical craft or science.

3. My emphasis will be on literary or synchronic exegesis, but my arguments hold for socio-historical exegesis as well (West 2011). Indeed, my identification of this text as a literary unit, having an earlier 'independent' existence outside of the so-called Succession Narrative, is based on historical-critical criteria.

I remember well reading this book, together with a group of postgraduate students from different parts of the world, under the tutelage of David Clines at the University of Sheffield in 1985 or 1986. And whilst most of us were in the class because of our contextual commitments, we were spellbound by Trible's close and careful exegesis.

I offer one example here, the story of Tamar (2 Samuel 13:1–22). Trible identifies the literary unit as combining 'chiasmus and alternation' (Trible 1984:61, note 50), framed within a ring composition (*ibid*:37, 49):

- A Introduction: Characters and circumstances, 13:1–3
- B Jonadab and Amnon, 13:4–5
- C David and his children, 13:6–9c
- D The crime: Amnon and Tamar, 13:9d–18
- B' Tamar and Absalom, 13:19–20
- C' David and his children, 13:21
- A' Conclusion: Characters and circumstances, 13:22

Given Trible's ideo-theological commitments, which she is overt about, she attends in particular to the female figure of Tamar within this literary composition. In a footnote she makes an astute comment with regard to the relationship between exegesis and appropriation, noting that by employing 'a feminist perspective' her 'hermeneutical emphases' are different from those of other scholars, 'even when literary observations concur' (Trible 1984:57, note 2). In what follows I will examine how 'hermeneutical emphases' (or ideo-theological orientations) and 'literary observation' (or textual detail) mutually engage each other.

Trible's attention to the literary detail of this text dwelt with me for many years before some of this detail was activated by a contextual call for appropriation. It was in 1996 that colleagues and I from the Ujamaa Centre, an interface between socially engaged biblical scholarship and local communities of Bible 'readers' (West 2009b:37–40), were invited by a group of women to facilitate a workshop on the theme of 'Women and violence' (West & Zondi-Mabizela 2004). Tamar's story, opened up to me by Trible's careful exegetical work, seemed an appropriate biblical text to interpret together in this specific context, offering as it did considerable detail that might be appropriated. And so I began to construct a Contextual Bible Study using this text. Following what was then an emerging shape of what has come to be called 'Contextual Bible Study', in which the Bible study begins and ends with the knowledge of the participants but includes the resources of biblical scholarship in-between, we began to develop a Bible study on 1 Samuel 13:1–22 that has come to have the following shape:

2 Samuel 13:1–22 is read aloud, preferably dramatically. After the text has been read a series of questions follows.

1. Read 2 Samuel 13:1–22 together again in small groups. Share with each other what you think the text is about.

Each small group is then asked to report back to the larger group. Each and every response to Question 1 is summarised on newsprint. After the report-back, the participants return to their small groups to discuss the following questions.

2. Who are the main characters in this story and what do we know about them?

3. What is the role of each of the male characters in the rape of Tamar?

4. What does Tamar say and what does Tamar do? Focus carefully on each element of what Tamar says and does.

When the small groups have finished their discussion, each group is invited to present a summary of their discussion. After this report-back the smaller groups reconvene and discuss the following questions.

5. Are there women like Tamar in your church and/or community? Tell their story.

6. What resources are there in your area for survivors of rape?

Once again, the small groups present their report-back to the plenary group. Creativity is particularly vital here, as often women find it difficult or are unable to articulate their responses. A drama or a drawing may be the only way in which some groups can report.

Finally, each small group comes together to formulate an action plan.

7. What will you now do in response to this Bible study?

The action plan is either reported to the plenary or presented on newsprint for other participants to study after the Bible study.

(West & Zondi-Mabizela 2004)

The Contextual Bible Study is framed by 'community knowledge' questions (Question 1, Question 5, Question 6, Question 7), with 'critical biblical studies knowledge' questions in-between (Question 2, Question 3, Question 4) (West 2010b). This format of 'The Tamar Campaign' Bible study has taken years to evolve as we have worked with it in the action-reflection cycle of our praxis. We worked through a range of critical questions before we found the question that would focus the participants on the extensive literary detail of Tamar's story. Whilst the overall shape of the Bible study draws on the exegetical detail of Tribble's work, focussing as she does on character, it is her careful work on the 'central unit' of this text that has given this Bible study its impact in communities across the world.

The rape, or 'the crime', is identified by Tribble as the 'central unit' (D). Here, she says, 'form and content yield a flawed chiasmus that embodies irreparable damage for the characters' (Tribble 1984:43). 'The rape itself', she goes on to argue, 'constitutes the center of the chiasmus. This design verifies the message of the preceding circular patterns: Tamar is entrapped for rape' (*ibid*:44). So within the central unit (1 Sam 13:9d–18), Tribble identifies the following 'flawed' chiasmus, which she then goes on to analyse in detail (*ibid*:44):

- a Amnon's command to the servants and their response (13:9de)
- b Amnon's command to Tamar and her response (13:10–11a)
- c Conversation between Amnon and Tamar (13:11b–14a)
- d Rape (13:14b–15b)
- c'–b' Conversation between Amnon and Tamar:
Amnon's command to Tamar and her response (13:15c–16)
- a' Amnon's command to a servant and his response (13:17–18)

This exegetical analysis became crucial to our work, and is offered to the participants in the form of Question 4. Question 4 compels the participants to return to re-read the text yet again, this time focussing carefully on this central unit. Our Question 4, however, expands Tribble's central unit, extending it to include Tamar's actions (1 Sam 13:8–19), for in our analysis Tamar is an agent before and after she is a victim. The chiasmus we worked with begins and ends with Tamar, not Amnon:

- a Tamar 'went' (and other actions) ... (13:8–9)
- b Amnon's command to the servants and their response (13:9de)
- c Amnon's command to Tamar and her response (13:10–11a)
- d Conversation between Amnon and Tamar (13:11b–14a)
- e Rape (13:14b–15b)
- d'–c' Conversation between Amnon and Tamar:
Amnon's command to Tamar and her response (13:15c–16)
- b' Amnon's command to a servant and his response (13:17–18)
- a' Tamar 'put' (and other actions) ... (13:19)

Why did we expand the chiasmus? What made us re-examine Tribble's literary analysis? Surely a chiasmus is an 'objective' structure? My tone here is ironic, for all exegetes know that our science remains open to contestation and even 'falsification' (Feyerabend 1978), that most noble of scientific virtues! The honest answer is that our African feminist ideo-theological appropriation, shaped by the women's struggle in our South African context, wanted to emphasise the agency of women. And as we brought this contextual concern to the text, via the mediating conversation of our African feminist ideo-theological framework, we noticed a detail that Tribble had 'missed'. Our chiasmus is in the text. We are not importing it into the text; we are not doing eisegesis. Our ideo-theological orientation has opened up detail of the text not previously picked up by Tribble's analysis. Our appropriation has led to exegesis.

So Question 4, to some extent, takes us beyond Tribble's emphasis, for just as our extended chiasmus emphasises the agency of Tamar, so too does the focus of this question. In her analysis of what is the third element of her construction of the chiasmus (c), Tribble does give careful attention to the detail of Tamar's 'deliberations' (Tribble 1984:45), but her emphasis is on how the narrative design 'verifies the message of the preceding circular patterns. Tamar is entrapped for rape' (*ibid*:44). This is a persuasive reading of the detail, particularly when we remember that Tribble's approach in this book is to offer 'a third approach' to feminist hermeneutics. The first and most familiar approach 'documents the case against women', showing 'the inferiority, subordination, and abuse of the female in ancient Israel and the early church'. The second approach 'discerns within the Bible critiques of patriarchy', upholding 'forgotten texts' and reinterpreting 'familiar ones' in order to 'shape a remnant theology that challenges sexism of scripture'. The third approach, says Tribble, 'incorporates the other two', recounting 'tales of terror *in memoriam* to offer sympathetic readings of abused women' (*ibid*:3). Whilst Tribble seems in her exegesis of 2 Samuel 13:1–22 to lean more towards the first approach (as part of her third approach), we have tended to lean in the direction of the second approach, emphasising the resisting detail of the text.

Tribble notes that Amnon's imperatives in elements (a) and (b) her version of the chiasmus are met with 'objection' from Tamar. In the presence of the rapist, Tamar does not panic. 'In fact', argues Tribble, 'she claims her voice' (Tribble 1984:45). But whilst Tribble gives careful attention to each of the components of Tamar's direct speech, noting how the deliberations of Tamar 'slow the movement of the plot', Tribble's emphasis is on how 'they are unable to divert it' (*ibid*:45). The plot, together with the narrator (who

does not use Tamar's name in introducing her speeches), argues Tribble, portrays 'her powerlessness' (*ibid*:46). Our emphasis, as I have said, is on Tamar's speech as resistance. By extending the chiasmus as we have done to include the actions of Tamar in verses 8–9b and 19, we are able also to emphasise the agency of Tamar in her conversations or contestations with Amnon (d, and d'–c'). Question 4 has the potential to open up these dimensions of the detail of the text.

This process of exegesis offering us a form of appropriation in the Tamar Contextual Bible Study, and of the Tamar Contextual Bible Study returning us to the text 'to see' new ('objective') detail in the text, has continued. The decades in which the Tamar Contextual Bible Study has been done around the world have produced a common refrain from the many women with whom we have worked. The focus on Tamar, a young woman who is sexually abused, is important, but what about a focus on men? The Ujamaa Centre has endeavoured to heed this call, and has produced a range of Contextual Bible Studies exploring a range of aspects of masculinity.⁴ The reason we did not use the Tamar Contextual Bible Study in our emerging work on masculinity was that the text portrays each of the male characters as implicated in the rape of Tamar. We were in search of 'redemptive masculinities' and so had to look elsewhere in the Bible for resources.

But because we continued to do the Tamar Contextual Bible Study we continued to be confronted with the text. Whilst working with the Tamar Contextual Bible Study, as part of the 4th Pan African Conference of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians in Yaoundé, Cameroun, in 2007, I re-read (again) 2 Samuel 13:2, seeing it in a new way. Tribble (1984) had translated this verse as follows:

So tormented was Amnon that he made himself ill
on account of Tamar his sister,
for a virgin was she,
and it was impossible in the eyes of Amnon
to do to her anything. (p. 39)

Here is a powerful portrayal of character, full of detail. Tribble's analysis picks up on Amnon's 'desire, lust-sickness and violent yearning' as she carefully probes the narrator's emphasis on familial ties (Tribble 1984:38–39). In terms of plot, 1 Samuel 13:2 is, for Tribble, the start of the complication. Though she does not use this form of plot analysis, her analysis indicates that 1 Samuel 13:2 is part of the plot's 'complication'. There are, of course, many ways to approach plot. But a common way of analysing how plots 'move', since Aristotle (1967:30), has been to see plot as having three fundamental movements: exposition, complication and resolution (Clines 1998:5). 'Plots move', argues Jerome Walsh, 'like an arc from a situation of (relative) stability, through a process of tension or destabilization, to a new situation of (relative) stability' (Walsh 2009:14). For Tribble, verse 1 is the exposition (a situation of relative stability), and verse 2 is the beginning of the narrative tension. But what if 13:2 is 'in fact'

4. See the series on 'Redemptive masculinity' (<http://ujamaa.ukzn.ac.za/Practical.aspx>)

part of the 'exposition'? What if the 'complication' or tension only begins in 1 Samuel 13:3?

Our problem, as I have said, with using this text in our work with men was that it portrayed men as perpetrators, with each of the male characters playing some role in the rape of Tamar. Indeed, Question 3 of the Bible study invites such an analysis. But if verse 2 can be considered an aspect of the narrative's exposition, then it portrays an Amnon who is full of desire, but who does not act, precisely because, as Tribble notes, 'as a virgin, Tamar is protected property, inaccessible to males, including her brother' (Tribble 1984:38). Amnon's state of heightened desire could be considered as a state of relative stability! Verses 1–2 form the exposition, introducing the family (1 Samuel 13:1), and introducing the initial 'stable' state of the relationship between Amnon and Tamar. On this exegesis of the text, Amnon is a normal male! Like most males he experiences sexual desire, but he does not (initially) act on this desire, because of a whole range of socio-cultural constraints. It is Jonadab who ushers in the complication (1 Samuel 13:3).

This insight, this recognition of the detail of the text, offered us a way of working with this text with men. So we have returned to this text and have begun to evolve a Redemptive Masculinity Contextual Bible Study using this text. At the moment its form is somewhat flexible, but a common version of it is as follows:

2 Samuel 13:1–22 is read aloud, preferably dramatically. After the text has been read a series of questions follow.

1. Have you heard this text (2 Samuel 13:1–22) read publically ... on a Sunday? Share with each other if and when and where you have heard this text read.
2. Who are the main characters in this story and what do we know about them?
3. What is the role of each of the male characters in the rape of Tamar?
4. How would you characterise Amnon's masculinity in this text? Consider:
What prevents Amnon initially from acting on his love/lust for Tamar (v2)?
What is it then that enables him to act on his love/desire/lust (v4–6)?
How does he react to Tamar's arguments (v14)?
How does he behave after he has raped Tamar (v15–17)?
5. What does Tamar's response to Amnon's assault tell us about her understanding of masculinity? Consider:
What does she say (v12–13,16) and what do each of the things she says tell us about her understanding of what it means to be 'a man'?
What does she do (v19) and what do each of things she does tell us about her understanding of what it means to be 'a man'?
6. What are the dominant forms of masculinity in our contexts (in various age groups), and what alternative forms of masculinity can we draw on from our cultural and religious traditions?
7. How can we raise the issue of masculinity in our various gender and age-groups?
The action plan is either reported to the plenary or presented on newsprint for other participants to study after the Bible study. (Redemptive masculinity n.d.)

Question 1 performs a similar function to that of the first question in the Tamar Contextual Bible Study, but draws

attention to the absence of the text in the male-dominated world of religious life, whether Jewish, Christian or Muslim (and this Bible study has been done by participants from each of these faith traditions, in each case at their own initiative). Question 2 and Question 3, as in the Tamar study, draw attention to the details of characterisation in the text and provide an overall orientation to the story. Question 4 and Question 5 slow the 'reading' process down considerably (Riches 2010:41), posing two related and quite difficult questions. In working with this Redemptive Masculinities Contextual Bible Study we have wrestled with these two questions, often reformulating them, in order to devise a form of question which combines a careful reading of the text with the participants' own understandings of notions of 'masculinity'. So far we have settled on a general question and then some prompting sub-questions which focus the participants on particular details of the text, such as the characterisation of Amnon in verse 2. By introducing these prompting sub-questions in Question 4 we direct the re-reading process to particular textual detail and so offer participants some of the fruits of the critical literary analysis of biblical scholarship, including the kind of detail Tribble identifies in her exegesis of the central chiasmus.

By introducing the prompting sub-questions in Question 5 (of the Redemptive Masculinities Contextual Bible Study) we again offer participants the opportunity to engage with the kind of literary detail discussed in terms of the Tamar Contextual Bible Study (above). But in addition, we also offer participants the opportunity to re-tell and re-live Tamar's story by imagining with her what kind of masculinities she and we yearn for. Question 5 enables participants both to focus 'on the smallest detail in the text, by a close reading of each word' and to 're-enact' part of Israel's past (Le Roux 2009:5, 6).

Once again, appropriation has opened up details of the text not emphasised by Tribble. Appropriation has led to exegesis, for it is clear that the detail is 'in the text'. And whilst this detail is literary rather than historical detail, the argument Le Roux (2009) puts forward holds:

Historical [and literary] investigation illuminates the many facets of our shared humanity; it is a way of relating to life and its challenges, a way of discovering life's meaning by understanding the lives of others, a way of understanding humanity's hopes and fears, and a means of providing some direction and orientation in this life. (p. 6)

Conclusion

The science of exegesis will remain a resource beyond the confines of the academic community as long as the Bible is a significant text for faith communities, for exegesis offers important detail to ordinary readers of the Bible that they do not usually have access to. Often, the very detail denied them by the church is vital detail in their daily struggles to live full, abundant lives. As any lectionary will demonstrate, 2 Samuel 13:1–22 is not normally read in church on a Sunday (or other sabbath days). Yet here is a text with important detail for women and men in the context of gender violence.

But as I have also shown, bringing our contexts to bear on the Bible, acknowledging the ideo-theological orientations that enable this encounter, provides the impetus to exegetical innovation, enabling the scholar to 'see' detail of the text that has gone unnoticed.

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