


# The reception of the alternative voice by Afrikaans readers (1994–2002)

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On 27 December 1994, woman theologian Christina Landman published her first contribution to the religious column *Godsdiens Aktueel* [Religion in Action] in the Afrikaans daily newspaper *Beeld*. The reaction of the Afrikaans readers of *Beeld* to what has been regarded by readers as 'an alternative voice' will be presented in this article. Although Landman is still writing for this column and has published 222 articles until 15 March 2023, in this article only the first 57 articles will be considered, published over 8 years between 1994 and 2002. The content and reference of the articles and the reaction of the readers to that have changed with the developments that occurred in Landman's life story, as well as with the changes in politics and society since the democratic elections of 1994. From 1994 to 1999, Landman invited a reactionary response from readers by addressing them as gender and political activists. However, from the beginning of the first decade of the 21st century, from 2000, Landman addressed the readership from a perspective of the healing of society. The responses of readers in the letters to *Beeld*, both to the accusing and to the healing Landman, will not be analysed in terms of the presumed political and religious agendas of the readers, but will be presented under themes emanating from their letters in an unmediated fashion. The 'audience reception', as a methodology is applied contributing to advance readers' responses to a modern religious text.

**Contribution:** Contributing to an academic body of research, data gathered from 57 sources over 8 years, represent voices varying in race, gender and religious affiliation, providing for a minority of readers to be liberated through her voice. 'Audience reception', as a methodology, enhances the academic debate on the development of thought in a specific culture-religious dialogue.

**Keywords:** audience reception; African women theologies; Afrikaans readers of religion; Calvinism in South Africa; churches and healing in South Africa; pink lay theology; *Godsdiens Aktueel*; *Beeld*.

## Introduction

### Background and short literary overview

In November 1989, Dr Lilian Portefaix met with Dr Christina Landman in Uppsala, Sweden, with Landman being on an academic trip to visit researchers relevant to her own research. This was sponsored by the University of South Africa (UNISA) where Landman at the time was teaching as a full-time (tenured) senior lecturer. Portefaix has published a book in the previous year titled *Sisters rejoice: Paul's letter to the Philippians and Luke-Acts as received by first-century Philippian women* (1988). The topic of discussion between the two academics was 'audience reception'. 'Audience reception' places the focus of research not (only) on the author and his or her message, but primarily on the way in which the audience receives the author's message. Portefaix focussed her research on the way in which the women of Philippi received the message of Paul in his letter to the Philippians. Portefaix's research based on audience reception was philosophically informed (Portefaix 1988:3) by a South African scholar Prof. B.C. Lategan who published an article entitled 'Current issues in the hermeneutical debate' in 1984. In this article, he described 'audience reception' as a prominent development in hermeneutics or Biblical interpretation and how in the 1980s, 'the spotlight turned on reception', that is, on the reader rather than on the author (Lategan 1984:4).

The discussion between Portefaix and Landman almost 35 years ago influenced Landman's work and now is the focus of this article in which 'reading is realised as far from merely a passive acceptance of the message' (Lategan 1984:4). In short, the focus here will be on what Landman wrote in a religious column in the Afrikaans daily newspaper *Beeld* and why she wrote it the way

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she did; however, the investigation will primarily concentrate on how her (public) work was received by readers. This will contribute to the academic debate on the development of culture-religious response within an Afrikaans culture.

What has developed back then in New Testament hermeneutics in terms of 'audience reception' is employed in this article as the methodological advance towards readers' responses to a modern religious text. The modern text is the articles on religion Landman wrote in the Afrikaans newspaper *Beeld* between 1994, the year of the first democratic elections in South Africa, and 2002.

## The aim of the research

The aim of this article is to thematise readers' responses to the articles Landman wrote in the religious column *Godsdiens Aktueel* [Religion in Action] in the daily newspaper *Beeld* in terms of 'audience reception'.

Landman wrote the first of these articles on 27 December 1994. She was recommended by Neels Jackson, journalist of religion issues [*kerksake*] at *Beeld*, filling the vacancy in the panel after Prof. Johan Heyns was murdered on 05 November 1994. Until then the panel, writing weekly for *Godsdiens Aktueel*, consisted of six (white) men from the mainline Afrikaans churches and one from the Apostolic Faith Mission. With the change in 1994 on the South African political scene, *Beeld* wanted to broaden the religious views expressed in the paper. They wanted fresh voices representing variety in race, gender and religious affiliation (Jackson, email interview 04 April 2023). The first of these was the appointment of Landman.

## Methodology, philosophy and practice

### Research population

Between 27 December 1994 and 15 March 2023, a period of almost 30 years, Landman published 222 articles in the religious column of the Afrikaans daily newspaper *Beeld*. The research population for this article is the readers who responded to Landman's articles in letters in *Beeld* for the first 8 years only – that is, the 57 articles written between 27 December 1994 and 02 December 2002. Responses in other Afrikaans newspapers and magazines, such as *Insig*, *Volksblad* and *Burger*, which related to the *Beeld* articles, will also be considered.

### Scope of study

These responses are considered to be an academically responsible body of research for two reasons. Firstly, the responses to these articles stretch over a period of 8 years during a time when there have been changes in the way Landman expressed herself, as well as in the ways Afrikaans readers thought about religious issues. Secondly, the responses to 57 articles are enough to form a body of research that can be studied responsibly within a specific period of time.

## Data collection

The responding letters, the data for this research, have become available through Landman's private collection and have been quoted adequately.

## Authors' consent

As this article uses published material only in the public domain, it was not necessary to obtain the consent of authors to publish their material.

## Interpretation of data

Data will not be 'interpreted' in terms of any political, social or religious agenda that the responding letter writers might have had. The responses will be given unmediated – that is, without the author mediating them through interpretation. The responses will be organised in themes coming from the letters themselves.

## Terminology 'Afrikaans'

Under the term 'Afrikaans' readers and letter writers are understood as those who read newspapers and magazines that are written in Afrikaans, one of the 11 official languages of South Africa. In the period under discussion, the Afrikaans readers of the Afrikaans newspapers and magazines mentioned were mainly white and reformed; but political and religious affiliation will not be presupposed in the interpretation of the data. Only themes that come forth from the reader responses will be considered and presented as research results.

## Terminology 'audience reception'

'Audience reception' is a methodological perspective that concentrates on the responses of a readership to an author's writings. Here, reader responses will be arranged under themes, and attention will also be given to how the author reads her audience.

## Overview of the Landman articles with thematic reader responses 1994–2002

### 1994: Landman inviting and receiving reactionary responses from readers on race and gender

**Author background:** In 1980. Landman was appointed a lecturer in the Department of Church History in the Faculty of Theology at the University of South Africa (UNISA) at a time when there were no academically trained women theologians in South Africa. By then, she has obtained two master's degrees, one in Classical Greek and another in Theology (BD). Previously, she was shown away at the seminary at the University of Pretoria (UP) because of the then policy of the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) that women were not to be ordained as ministers of the Word.

In 1980, also, UNISA appointed its first black Professors in Theology, one of them being Simon Maimela. Landman was greatly influenced by black liberation theology and that of

her other colleagues such as David Bosch. Although Liberation Theology was mainly pietistic, Landman at the same time was influenced by her colleagues in Old and New Testament, such as Willem Vorster and Ferdinand Deist, who upheld a rather liberal reading of the Bible. It is, ironically, from both a (black) liberational and (white) liberal point of view that Landman wrote her articles in *Beeld*.

Moreover, in 1984, Willem Vorster as head of the then Institute for Theological Research at UNISA held the first theological conference on gender in South Africa. The papers, including that of Landman, were published in a book of conference proceedings entitled *Sexism and feminism in theological perspective* (ed. Vorster 1984). Landman found herself being called a 'feminist' without this being the intent of her research and her teaching early and medieval church history at this stage.

However, her fate as a woman theologian was sealed when the 'Circle of African Women Theologians', a pan-African group of African women theologians under the chairmanship of Prof. Mercy Amba Oduyoye, the then Deputy General-Secretary of the World Council of Churches, was launched in Accra, Ghana, in 1989. Landman eventually attended all of their pan-African meetings till today and was one of only two white women – the other being Denise Ackermann – to be allowed as a member of the Circle till 2013. This established her as a theologian with a focus on women, albeit not as a 'feminist' but as an African woman theologian.

Finally, in giving the background to Landman's first articles in *Beeld*, it should be noted that Landman published a controversial book *The piety of Afrikaans women* (Landman 1994b) early in 1994, just before the commencement of the *Godsdiens Aktueel* articles. After an intensive study during 1990/1991 in missionary archives in the Netherlands where South African missionary documents are held, Landman wrote this book to indicate that the Calvinist theology on which the then DRC based *apartheid*, was as sexist as it was racist. She proved this from the lay theologies in the ego-texts (diaries) of Dutch-Afrikaans women since 1652 when Reformed theology came to South Africa through colonisation. The official launch of the book was on 25 May 1994 when Prof. Cornel du Toit from the Institute for Theological Research handed over the book to Landman publicly. However, the book became well-known, not because of its intention to liberate Afrikaans women but because of a reference in the book to the Women's Monument in Bloemfontein. Without explicitly referring to the phallic form of the monument, Landman referred to the 'erection' of the monument and claimed that it was not 'erected' to honour the Afrikaans women who died in concentration camps built by the British during the Anglo-Boer War but to draw attention to the political issues of the Afrikaner nation in which women played – and were still playing in 1994 – a submissive cultural role.

It was the sister newspapers of *Beeld*, namely, *Burger* (in the Cape province) and *Volksblad* (in the Free State) that focussed on the 'erection theme' of Landman's book, which *Beeld* took

over and published on 28 July 1994 (Korrespondent 1994:13) under the caption '*Ereksie-etiket is swak smaak en skokkend*' [erection reference is in poor taste and shocking].

The 'audience reception' in terms of letters to the Afrikaans newspapers mentioned was, as could be expected, extremely negative. They constitute the first theme of response to Landman's work.

## Readers' response

### Theme 1: Woman's role is prescribed in the Bible and that role is not feminist

In a letter to *Beeld*, published on 09 August 1994, G.J.B. Kruger from Rustenburg interpreted the Women's Monument in Bloemfontein not as an 'erection' but as "*'n suil wat hemelwaarts wys*' [a column pointing to heaven]. He referred Landman to the Word of God and suggested she fell on her knees, asking God to show her what he really expected from her as a woman:

Dan sal sy haar Goddelike roeping kan vervul en haar plek langs die sy van die man kan inneem en sal sy die vroulike rol kan vervul soos God dit vir haar bepaal het. Nie soos allerlei woelgeeste vandag die vroulike rol wil sien nie. [Then she would be able to fulfil what God had called her for, to take her place at the side of the man, and not according to how some trouble-making women want to see the role of a woman today.] (p. 13)

P.H. Du Preez from Kimberley (1994:13 [author's emphasis]) found Landman involving sex and feminism with the Women's Monument to be '*heiligskenis*' [desecration] and referred her to '*ons staatspresident wat nog altyd vroue gehad het (wat) hulle plek op alle terreine volgestaan het*' [our state presidents who had wives who fulfilled their roles on all levels of womanhood].

Pierre Coetzee from Verwoerdburg (1994:13) felt that he had exposed Landman's '*feministiese Weltanschauung*' and asked her '*Wil u nie maar 'n Emily Pankhurst trek en voor 'n donkieren op Dendron inhardloop nie?*' The reference in which Landman is asked to run in front of a donkey and kill herself is ironically to the British suffragette Emmeline Pankhurst who is confused here with another suffragette, Emily Davison. The latter ran in front of King George V's horse at the 1913 Derby to grab its reins in order to make a public statement for women's right to vote but was killed when struck by the horse.

On the sideline, it can be mentioned that W.J. Venter from Ballito Bay published a letter in *Insig* (1994:30) expressing his opinion that Afrikaans women have not been forced into a '*neerbuigende houding*' [submissive attitude] as Landman was quoted to have said, but sadly that they have willingly accepted it.

### Theme 2: Criticism against Afrikaans women's role is an attack on Afrikaner identity, and is done only by feminists, lesbians and other man-haters

The issue of the social status of Afrikaans women was, as an unknown person remarked, a real job creator. Journalists,



especially freelance journalists, feasted on it. *Agenda*, an Afrikaans actuality television programme, hosted a programme on 12 September 1994 with Afrikaans women, including Landman, who confirmed the submissive socio-cultural position of Afrikaans women and bemoaned its Calvinist origins. There was a loud outcry against this programme and the Afrikaans newspapers published numerous letters of readers, mostly women, who complained, among other things, that the programme was a deliberate effort to put the Afrikaner's culture and faith in a bad light (e.g. Mrs. Daphne Van Heerden from Bellville in *Burger* 26 September 1994). The participating women were called 'onvroulik' [unfeminine] and 'manne-haters' [women who hate men]. *Agenda* was obligated to invite more culturally stable Afrikaans women to its next programme on 19 September 1994 who pronounced themselves as representing the majority of Afrikaner women who were content with their roles of romantic submissiveness. The response to this programme in Afrikaans newspapers was largely positive, with George Claassen (sr) from Bloubergstrand (1994:12) calling the women of the second programme 'skerpsinnig en intelligent, met weldeurdagte en oortuigende argumente in keurige Afrikaans, vriendelik, godsdienstig, onberispelik gekleed ... wat die ware beeld van die Afrikaner vrou na vore bring' [sharp and intelligent, with good arguments in good Afrikaans, friendly, religious, well-dressed ... a true image of the Afrikaner woman]. However, Ansie Pienaar from Westdene (1994:12) called the programme a 'skouspelagtige vertoning van raserige, kloekende en kekkelende vroue' [a show of cackling women] who put themselves in opposition to the women of the first programme whom they named 'feministe en lesbiërs wat gemeenskappe vernietig' [feminists and lesbians who destroy societies]. Pienaar quoted one of the women to have said that 'die man is die skepper en die vrou die baarmoeder' [the man is the creator and the woman the uterus].

It thus seems that the fear of 'feminism' has landed among Afrikaans religious readers, both men and women, although that was a word seldomly used by Landman. As a member of the Circle of African Women Theologians, she referred to (African) women theologies and not to feminist theology, especially not to label her own theology.

Nonetheless, between August 1994 and November 1994 several 'alternative voice' reviews of Landman's *The piety of Afrikaans women* were published in the media that strongly recommended that the book should be read and internalised by Afrikaans men and women. One was in *Beeld* itself by Joan Hambidge. She reviewed the book under the provocative heading 'Wat sê die eerwaarde broers?' [What do the reverend brothers say?] in her column *Op my literêre sofa* [On my literature couch] in *Beeld* (1994:13).

Another powerful review was by the resistance poet Antjie Krog under the heading 'Piety of oppression and pain' in *Democracy in Action* (1994:27). The renowned South African woman theologian Denise Ackermann (1994:120) also published a book review in *Kronos* 22, pointing to the new

ground the book was breaking in religious studies in South Africa. Cecile Cilliers tried a few positive words in her review in *Insig* of September 1994.

It was under these circumstances that Landman started contributing to the religious column *Godsdiens Aktueel in Beeld* in December 1994. Her 'circumstances' were informed by (black) liberation theology, (white) liberal hermeneutics and (African) women theologies, while carrying a public image – albeit a contested one – of a culture-destructive feminist.

### Theme 3: Landman's views on God as being without gender, on abortion and on divine punishment are un-Biblical

Landman's first article in *Godsdiens Aktueel in Beeld* on (27 Desember 1994 [1994a:8]) was published under the heading 'Calvinisme is lekker: Swart vroue het dit weer op regte pad geplaas' [Calvinism is fun. Black women have placed it on the right road]. With this article, Landman wanted to indicate that the Calvinism she criticised in *The piety of Afrikaans women* was the local, white *apartheid* Calvinism, but that the Calvinism of African women theologians – whose voices were unfamiliar to her readers up till then – worked with sound and healthy Calvinism.

The second article (1995a:8) was even more 'alternative': 'God is nie 'n vrou: Belangrike insigte van feministe' [God is not a woman: Important insights from feminists]. The article addresses the presumed big fear of readers: that 'the feminists' were proving that God was a woman. The article argues for God as being genderless as well as for God's 'motherly' characteristics.

Landman also wrote articles on the pros and cons of abortion from a woman theologian's perspective, for example, 'Feministe en kind: Pligte teenoor kinderregte versaak' [Feminists and child: Duties towards children forsaken] (1995b:8) and 'Fetusse, voel hulle naby aan God?' [Does a foetus feel close to God?] (1995c:8). Abortion was publicly discussed at the time and shortly thereafter legalised (*Choice on termination of Pregnancy Act* 1996). However, Afrikaans readers did not approve of Landman's articles on the subject. A woman, A. Du Plessis from Glenstantia remarked in a letter to *Beeld* (1995:13) that the only reason a theology professor like Landman should stay alive was because foetuses too should be granted life.

It is interesting that the article that evoked the most readers' response during 1995, the first year of Landman contributing to *Godsdiens Aktueel*, was on divine punishment. In 'Straf God mense? Om dit te dink is 'n bygeloof' [Does God punish people? To believe that is superstition] (1995e:8), Landman argues that the God of the Bible never punishes people, but only leads them away from their own ignorance. God has not punished his Son, and what we regard as God's punishment today, such as infertility or unwanted pregnancies, is not divine punishment but either nature or the consequences of

our own decisions. Some readers, such as J.H. Goosen (1995:13) felt liberated by this, while others felt that Landman has been trying to change the Bible. Carol van Niekerk asked (1995) whether Landman wanted to outshine the Bible. JLV from Wonderboom (1995:13) wrote that stating that God did not punish is to undermine the doctrine of atonement. If God does not punish, from what are we to be saved? J.A.N. Venter from Mountain View in Pretoria (1995) felt that this is a feminist ploy because Landman in particular advised women not to attribute their societal misery to God's punishment as much of this is 'man-made'.

#### Theme 4: The lay theology of the pink ladies is more spiritual than Landman's 'feminism'

The 1990s saw an upsurge in the publication of books in the popular Christian market written by lay women mainly for white middle-class Afrikaans women. Landman called these books '*pienk boekies*' [pink books] because of the pink roses regularly found on their covers. Landman felt that the books 'pinkified' women into roles of subordination, calling it God's will, and in an article in 1995, she called them 'bad pornography' in her article '*Slegte pornografie: Van kaless tot godsdiens-stukkies*' [bad pornography: nakedness as well as religious pinkness] (1995d:8), because '*hulle stel vroue onvoorwaardelik bloot aan die samelewing se behoeftes en stereotipes*' [they blatantly expose women to the needs and stereotypes of society]. Legalising pornography was a hot media topic in 1995 and was eventually legalised in the *Films and Publication Act 1996* (South African Government 1996). However, readers were not impressed by Landman calling pink piety pornography. J.C. Marais from Middelburg, for instance, strongly objected to the equalising of the subjugation of female bodies in pornography and the subordination of women by lay pink women authors. He read these books with his wife and found them to be more spiritual than Landman's theology (1995:13).

The pink book market expanded and in April 1998, a magazine was launched for the same market, called *Finesse*. Landman continued her struggle against what she saw as the dangerous Christian stereotyping of Afrikaans women and the subjugation of their religious minds. She therefore wrote an article in which she expressed her concerns about this magazine entitled '*'n Oog op Finesse*' [An eye on Finesse] (1998a:8). There were letters that appreciated Landman's voice, such as that of Anonymous from Tamboerskloof who, on behalf of Christian women, cried out not to be fed with *koeksisters* [a traditional Afrikaans treat] anymore because women were hungry for change (1998:13). Sofia Engelbrecht from Wespark thanked Landman for speaking on behalf of the silent majority of Afrikaans women (1998:13). However, many letters of resistance were published, such as that of Mrs. C.B. Combrinck from Noordbrug, Potchefstroom, who suggested that there were signs in Landman's writings that she was not a believer in the Christian faith at all (1998:13).

At the same time, Landman (1998b) published a book *Nagstukke* in which she retold the stories of women in the

Bible and in subsequent church history from a liberative point of view. While the pink ladies were writing '*Dagstukkies*', daily devotions for every day, Landman wrote '*Nagstukke*', which were daily devotions for every night. The book received good reviews in the media, such as an article written by Suzette Truter for *Sarie* (1998:38) under the title '*Pienk is sy nie*'. The book established Landman as a credible alternative voice for women.

This was to change soon.

#### Theme 5: Women's resistance voice has become out of bounds and should be ignored

During the 1990s, Landman experienced freedom of expression as a liberal theologian unattached to the supervision of a church. However, a significant number of readers' responses to an article she wrote in which she – albeit rather tongue-in-the-cheek – recommended polygamy to Afrikaans couples show that Afrikaans readers regarded her as out of bounds.

Landman published this article '*Poligamie, ditsem!*' [Polygamy, that's it!] (1999c:8) after she has attended the 8th General Assembly of the World Council of Churches in Harare, Zimbabwe, the previous month (December 1998). At this meeting, there were heated conversations on churches from Africa applying for membership whose leadership was polygamous.

Landman was obviously not prepared for the enormous reaction this article would provoke. There were horrified readers taking this very seriously as Christians, as well as light-hearted columns by men dreaming of more than one wife (e.g., André le Roux '*Op die man af*' *Sarie* 24 February 1999). In the 2 months following the publication of the article, Landman was invited to 32 radio and television shows, for example, that of Felicia Mabuza-Suttle, as well as published interviews by *Korrespondent*, '*Beeld-rubriek week oral opspraak*' [Beeld-column makes waves] (1999:12). Although there was a public display of horrification at the idea of a man having more than one wife, the Department of Home Affairs received so many calls and applications from Afrikaans men wanting to marry another wife that they gave them Landman's office number. In a time before cell phones, when calls could be evaded, Landman answered numerous calls in her office daily from angry wives, inquisitive men and journalists. Her 'call for polygamy' – which it was not – received printed media space even in English papers and went international, for example, in the *Folha de S. Paulo*, a Brazilian daily newspaper, under the heading '*Theóloga receita poligamia contra divórcio*' (1999a:16). She was also chosen as Forum Toastmaster Club's Communicator of the Year (Pretoria News 1999b:7) and classified as one of South Africa's 50 most influential women by *Sarie*, '*SA se 50 invloedrykste vroue*' (Le Roux 1999b:20).

In the meantime, Landman published a Bible study on Song of Songs entitled *Lirieke van die liefde* [Lyrics of love] (1999b)

which incidentally had a pink cover and was non-polygamous (see Izak De Villiers Beeld 17 November 1999). She continued with her articles in *Beeld* on topics of the day, for example, giving religious commentary on the announcement of a state lottery which was to commence in March 2000, 'Gou 'n staatslotery' [The state lottery is here] (1999a).

Although the polygamy issue increased Landman's public image, it undermined her as a voice speaking for women, and although Landman explained that polygamy should be an option taken by women, the ecclesiastical community took the gap to try to silence her. Furthermore, the media made an effort to report on her public 'utterances'.

## Theme 6: Readers react with caution to Landman's words of healing

In April 2000, Landman published a book *Woorde wat heel maak* [Words that heal]. It tells the stories of women who suffered verbal abuse, with the book offering healing from the Bible. Landman, originally a Medievalist, academically turned oral historian during the latter part of the 1990s. Landman found that interviewing people who went through traumatic times in the history of the country led to these people being retraumatised. Convinced that oral history cannot be practised in South Africa without the interviewer having counselling skills, she enrolled for a second doctorate in 2000 in practical therapy. Practical work for this was done at Kalafong Hospital on Wednesdays until she received the degree in 2008. In an article 'A woman's journey with the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa: 25 years', Landman (2019:5) confessed that she experienced a 'second conversion by the poor, traumatised and ill'. Liberal theology was of no use where people suffered. Thus, she also wanted to reflect upon in her articles in *Godsdiens Aktueel* as white readers too were in need of healing.

However, two media reports undermined Landman's newly found theology of healing for Afrikaans readers. The first was Neels Jackson reporting on the front page of *Beeld* (2000:1) that Landman said at the Andrew Murray Johannesburg congregation of the DRC that sex before marriage should be compulsory. Three days later, on 02 September 2000, Landman again found her on the front page of *Beeld*. Landman was giving a sermon at a DRC congregation in Bloemfontein focussing on partnership in the Bible and today. She referred to cases of verbal abuse in relationships where women had nervous breakdowns because of the names their husbands called them. She was forthwith accused of using offensive language from the pulpit. An avalanche of letters and articles on the Bible and sex, the church and sex, explanations of what really was said, what a true Christian is, whether the church still has a say over people's sexuality and what has happened to free debate ensued. Because this was not readers' response to an article Landman wrote in her column, this will not be discussed here. Suffice it to say that Landman suspected that the formal outcry from the DRC was to neutralise her voice for the conference on women ministers of the Word and *proponente* [women who are candidate ministers] in the DRC that was

held later in September of that year. This indeed happened at the conference called 'Moeder kerk en haar dogters' [Mother church and her daughters].

Landman continued to publish articles on healing in her column such as 'n Herlewing kom: Moet net die skade uit godsdiens haal' [A revival is coming after taking the harm out of religion] (2001b:13) and 'Genesing eerste' [Healing first] (2001a:13). Readers might not have trusted this healing voice, and responses to her articles became scarce. A letter by J. Viljoen published in *Beeld* on 29 June 2002 was headed 'Eerlikheid Landman se sjarme' [Honesty is Landman's charm].

## Summary of readers' responses

### Theme 1: Woman's role is prescribed in the Bible and that role is not feminist

Response 1: A major response among Afrikaans readers was to refer Landman back to God and the Bible. The Biblical notion of womanhood among *Presence and thought: Essay on the religious philosophy of Gregory of Nyssa* readers was not that of Landman who also quoted the Bible in her favour. For readers, the Bible held a romantic view of women's subordination which both men and women should live.

Response 2: Several readers felt that they have exposed Landman as a feminist which was the reason for excommunication.

Response 3: A minority of readers felt that Afrikaans women had to blame themselves for internalising subordination and that Landman was correct in exposing this.

### Theme 2: Criticism against Afrikaans women's role is an attack on Afrikaner identity, and is done only by feminists, lesbians and other man-haters

The first two themes were established even before Landman started writing in *Godsdiens Aktueel* and were related to the publication of her book *The piety of Afrikaans women*.

Response 4: Readers referred Landman back to Afrikaner history in which women, contrary to Landman's research, were prominent and strong while maintaining their Biblical roles.

Response 5: Readers engage in binary name-giving. Good Afrikaans women were religious, friendly and tasteful in what they said and how they dressed. Alternative voices were lesbian, feminist and man-hating.

### Theme 3: Landman's views on God being without gender, on abortion and on divine punishment are unbiblical

Response 6: Readers referred Landman back to what a theology professor should be, that is, one who was appointed to speak with the voice of the church and true theology. In the one true theology, God was male, abortion was sin and God punished those who did not adhere to his Word.



Response 7: Readers felt that Landman, as a true feminist, was trying to change the Bible.

#### Theme 4: The lay theology of the pink ladies is more spiritual than Landman's 'feminism'

Response 8: Readers expressed their preference to lay women's pink piety as opposed to the theology of Landman that seemed to be that of an unbeliever.

Response 9: Some women readers supported Landman, finding a voice to say that they no longer wanted to be fed *koeksisters*.

#### Theme 5: Women's resistance voice has become out of bounds and should be ignored

Response 10: Readers found Landman to be out of bounds, proclaiming polygamy and pre-marital sex. This happens when women are no longer recognising established authorities.

#### Theme 6: Readers react with caution to Landman's words of healing

Response 11: Readers ignored Landman's voice and the theology of healing.

## Conclusion

In the aforementioned, Afrikaans readers' responses to Landman's articles published in *Beeld* between 1994 and 2002, six themes were distinguished and thematised. Readers' responses were classified into 11 types of responses. The responses mainly reflected surprise and horror at Landman's alternative voice and wanted to have it removed. A minority of readers were liberated by her voice.

On 18 November 2006, Landman was licenced in the Uniting Reformed Church in Southern Africa. On 18 May 2008, she was ordained in Sakhelwe, Dullstroom, as a minister of the Word. In 2010, she was elected as Actuarius of the Northern Synod of this church.

With this, her voice changed.

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### Competing interests

The author declares that they have no financial or personal relationships that may have inappropriately influenced them in writing this article.

## Author's contributions

C.L. is the sole author of this research article.

## Ethical considerations

The author used letters already in the public domain to thematise readers' responses. The letters are responses to newspaper articles published by newspapers. This article followed all ethical standards for research without direct contact with human or animal subjects.

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## Data availability

Data sharing is not applicable to this article, as no new data were created or analysed in this study.

## Disclaimer

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of any affiliated agency of the authors.

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