

Black Female Power

in

Dudu Busani-Dube's novels

Hlomu-the wife, Zandile-the resolute and Naledi-his love

BY

SINENHLANHLA FELICIA MEMELA

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SUPERVISOR: DR THULANI MKHIZE

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Declaration

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in the Graduate Programme in English Studies, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa.

I, Sinenhlanhla Felicia Memela, declare that:

1. The research reported in this dissertation, except where otherwise indicated, is my original research.
2. This dissertation has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.
3. This dissertation does not contain other persons' data, pictures, graphs or other information, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other persons.
4. This dissertation does not contain other persons' writing, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other researchers. Where other written sources have been quoted, then:
 - a. Their words have been re-written but the general information attributed to them has been referenced.
 - b. Where their exact words have been used, then their writing has been placed in italics and inside quotation marks, and referenced.
5. This dissertation does not contain text, graphics or tables copied and pasted from the Internet, unless specifically acknowledged, and the source being detailed in the dissertation and in the References sections.

Student Name: Sinenhlanhla Felicia Memela	Supervisor Name: Dr Thulani Mkhize
Student Signature:	Supervisor Signature:
Date: 25 November 2020	Date: 23 November 2020

Dedication

This research study is dedicated to all the great black women in Africa and the diaspora.

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Abstract

This dissertation examines the power of black females in Dudu Busani-Dube's novels *Hlomu-the wife*, *Zandile-the resolute* and *Naledi-his love*. The study also examines *Black diamond* by Zakes Mda and *Hunger eats a man* by Nkosinathi Sithole to evaluate their representation of black female characters. South African literature has a pessimistic portrayal of black female characters, and the representation of black female characters seems to be that of victimisation in various forms. The black female body has been a symbol of victimisation in literary textual representations. The study briefly looks at the background of how black females such as Sarah Baartman were victimised, both physically and in textual representation. It then explores the activism of females in South African history. Thereafter, the themes of power, motherhood, conflict and sexual love are analysed in detail. The research highlights the power and strength that black women possess as represented in Busani-Dube's work. Previous research studies focused on women as a homogenous group negating the cultural and racial differences of black women. Black women's vigour and courage call for scholarship thought and consideration. The study aims to affirm black women in literature and highlight their victories. The research methodology of the study is textual analysis, and the theoretical framework is African feminism. The analysis of the study demonstrates that black women are not only victims as they are generally portrayed in literature, but they are heroines and competent women who require positive recognition in South African literature and Africa as a whole. The aim of the study is to depict that black women have positive traits worth academic engagement.

Chapter One: Introduction

Historically and presently, the idea that men are generally the better sex than women still persists; as a result of this entrenched belief in men's superiority, men have gained financial support, power and many more opportunities than women. It has not been scientifically proven that men are better than women, thus men's superiority remains a social construct. Most communities and cultures in the world shape people's gender. Simone de Beauvoir as cited in Butler states that "gender is a performance, an individual is not born a woman, they become one" (1989:35). Lindsey (2010:4) echoes the same sentiments that "gender is an achieved status because it must be learned". This would mean a woman learns how to be and so does a man: the culture that one is born into socialises them into these gender roles and gender practices. A person can be assigned a specific sex at birth but grow to develop a different identity in terms of gender (Lindsey, 2010:4). Gender is what makes people feminine or masculine regardless of their biological make up. Factors such as race, social class and sexuality play a role in one's gender performance (Lindsey, 2010:1). Thus, the stereotype that men are superior to women is formed by social norms.

Women are often categorised as "flighty and unreliable because they possess uncontrollable raging hormones that fuel unpredictable emotional outbursts" (Lindsey, 2010:3). This illustrates that women are viewed as less intelligent because they sometimes freely express their emotions. In Haiti, women's status is considered insignificant because when baby girls are born, they are not welcomed into light using the lantern (Danticat, 1994:146). The women carry lanterns to welcome baby boys when they are born, but the same tradition excludes baby girls. In this context, one can look at this as a symbol that girls are literally born into darkness, which is symbolic because their lives will be filled with oppression, sexual violence and inferiority. This positions women as destined for subordination from birth and this is the reality in most cultures in the world.

Women have been marginalised in society, regardless of their race. One may say that as much as white women are marginalised on the basis of their gender, it is not the same for women of colour. White women face sexism as their challenge but women of colour face racism, classism and sexism. Black women deal with triple oppression that society has created. Sojourner Truth once suggested that "if the first woman God ever made was strong enough to turn the world upside down all alone, these women together ought to be able to turn it back, and get it right up again! And now they are asking to do it, the men better let them" (Truth, 1851: n.p). This

famous quote by a former slave and African-American human rights activist highlights the power that women possess as individuals and as a collective. If American history had such black women who understood their power and strength during the difficult times when women had no rights at all, then modern black women are capable of much more.

This dissertation will examine Dudu Busani-Dube's portrayal of black female power in her three novels: *Hlomu- the wife*, *Zandile- the resolute* and *Naledi- his love*. This extract below is taken from *Zandile-the resolute* and it portrays the power that the black protagonist of this novel has; her husband recognises her greatness and states:

It is you Zandile. You are the Resolute. You are timeless, you are unbreakable, you are rare, you are immortal and even when you die, you will live forever. Just when life thinks it is done with you, you rise back up, bigger and stronger. It is you. (Busani-Dube, 2015b:179).

This quote from *Zandile- the resolute* is a glimpse of how the author depicts the black female characters in her novels. In literature, black women have been largely excluded from the positive representation of the female species. In South African literature, black women are usually portrayed as domestic workers, victims of one form of violence or the other; they are portrayed as infected by sexually transmitted diseases and their objectified bodies are considered exotic. Novels written by women or men mostly share the same narrative of black women on opposite ends of the continuum; she is either depicted as rebellious against society's standards or simply a passive partaker in the social constructions of what constitutes a decent woman. There are a number of novels that illustrate black women's victimisation from rape, AIDS and domestic violence. *Stronger than the storm* by Lutz van Dijk is about a young black woman who is gang raped and is infected with HIV & AIDS. Thinasonke describes the horrific incident:

My blouse had torn in two places during the struggle. To my horror I realised that my breasts, which had only begun to form, were fully exposed to the view of these disgusting creatures who could not have been more than four or five years older than me, the youngest my age at the most. I could not stop them from tearing down my skirt and my panties. The biggest unzipped his trousers and threw himself on top of me so hard that the sharp things on which I was lying cut into my back. Then a fierce pain in my belly obliterated everything else. Now the second one pulled his pants down and bent over me. I no longer remember at what stage he entered me. But I will never forget his face coming closer to mine as though he wanted to kiss me (Dijk, 2000:29).

The representation of black women's bodies being violated in literature has become a common narrative. Black women seem to symbolise victimisation through their bodies and being. *Welcome to our Hillbrow* by Phaswane Mphe is a novel that has a black female character who

is a victim. Refilwe was an educated black woman who went to study abroad at Oxford University in London (Mphe, 2001:113). She is described as follows:

They had already known before they saw her that she was dying, because she had written a letter to her family to let them know that she had AIDS. She had also told them the story of her relationship with our Nigerian brother, and that he too had AIDS (Mphe, 2001:119).

Cry, the beloved country by Alan Paton is another novel that portrays a black woman as a prostitute. Gertrude is the protagonist's sister; she becomes gravely ill in Johannesburg and her brother has to take her home to KwaZulu (1948:33). Mr Msimang who wrote a letter to her brother reveals that:

She lives in Claremont, not far from here. It is one of the worst places in Johannesburg. I shall hide nothing from you, though it is painful for me. These women sleep with any man for their price. A man has been killed at her place. They gamble and drink and stab. She has been in prison more than once (Alan, 1948:34).

Gertrude's brother is horrified to discover that his sister is a liquor seller and prostitute (Alan, 1948:40). Black women seem to be the embodiment of gender-based violence in the world and in literature too. The character of Ojiugo in *Things fall apart* by Chinua Achebe depicts a young wife who is a victim of violence. The protagonist Okonkwo "ruled his household with a heavy hand, his youngest wife lived in perpetual fear of his fiery temper" (1959:17). The character of Okonkwo "walked to his obi to await Ojiugo's return. And when she returned, he beat her very heavily. In his anger he had forgotten that it was the Week of Peace" (Achebe, 1959:32).

Black women have been marginalised for centuries and there have been systems that were designed to oppress black people as a group and this oppression was worse for black women because it was not only racial but they also had to endure sexual abuse. According to Gqola (2010:6) "slavery, colonialism and apartheid are such oppressive systems that are moments along a continuum-they are not as separate, completely distinct and mutually exclusive periods as some scholars have written about them". These systems are deeply interconnected, they merely have different terms and occurred in different times, but they all had one vision, which was to enslave the black body. The above mentioned three systems had one common objective which was to objectify any human that was not white; historically, these periods are linked by the ideological belief in white supremacy. As these periods have passed, it is easier to look at them and reflect on the damages they caused by socially constructing a narrative that did not favour black people, especially black women. As a result, the power of memory and archived literature of history is going to be very significant in this research.

1.1 Un-fixing fixed identities: reimagining representation of black female characters

Morrison states that black people need to “journey to a site to see what remains were left behind and to reconstruct the world that these remains imply in order to yield up a new kind of truth” (1987:112 cited in Gqola, 2010:8). The past is a shadow of the present, forever there, moving, alive and participating in the now even when uninvited to. According to Gqola, post-apartheid South Africa has “witnessed notable shifts in the scholarly and identitiary treatment of black subjectivities” (2010:20). In the past, black people were infused with shame because of their skin colour and their bodies were considered hypersexual; thus, it is impossible to talk about race without talking about sex, these two are interconnected (Gqola, 2010:17). According to Wicomb the power of memory:

Presumably, has its roots in shame for our origins of slavery, shame for the miscegenation, and shame, as colonial racism became institutionalised, for being black, so that with the help of our European names we have lost all knowledge of our Xhosa, Indonesian, East African or Khoi origins (Wicomb, 1998:100).

The shame that Wicomb refers to is solely constituted by the idea that black bodies are devalued, especially under white supremacist rule of slavery, colonialism and apartheid. The devaluation of black bodies has been constructed for centuries. If what distinguishes “human beings from other beings in the living world is the spirit/ agency/ will, the black mind ceased to have will due to the circumstances” (Gqola, 2010:33). The time has come to re-imagine black female identities in post-apartheid South Africa, re-imagine them as agents of their own lives. There are fixed meanings associated with being a black woman, those meanings need to be unfixed. This goal can be achievable if black women no longer accept their victimisation, confront the past, and disown the identities given to them (Gqola, 2010:42). The start for such a project in this study is to analyse the unfixing representation of black female characters in Busani-Dube’s novels. Stuart Hall takes a stance that:

Representation here is closely tied up with both identity and knowledge. Indeed, it is difficult to know what ‘being English’, indeed French, German, South African or Japanese, means outside of all the ways in which our ideas and images of national cultures have been represented. Without these ‘signifying’ systems, we could not take on such identities (or indeed reject them) and consequently could not build up or sustain that common ‘life-world’ which we call culture (1997:5 cited in Gqola, 2010:45).

To extend Hall’s thinking, it is a similar thought that has represented black women in a certain way; black women have been framed as victims and intellectually dysfunctional. Black women’s body takes on more interest to society than her voice and experiences; the culture of

representation has distorted black women's agency and identity. Slavery, colonialism and apartheid have created the notion that has raised society to believe that the function of "women's bodies is to please men sexually and symbolically" (Gqola, 2015:8). These beliefs have been embedded amongst people so deeply that deconstruction needs a radical project and scholars who will not fear change. As Bhabha asserted in an interview with Kerry Chance "I think it is our intellectual responsibility to understand that the ground beneath our feet is shifting, sliding ground, and try to actually take account of that" (2001:3 cited in Gqola, 2010:48). Bhabha is referring to the change of culture that is taking place. The Black Consciousness Movement gave "black people pride in their black skin and one through which to contest the shame associated with everything black because shame can only exist if we accept it as our own, that is why it needs to be disowned" (Gqola, 2010:54). This movement stressed that unity was a counter-narrative to apartheid's policy of divide and rule, the same mindset is applicable to the representations of black women in literature; black female scholars and authors need to deny the victim label by producing texts that counteract such labels.

1.2 Slavery and victimisation - The example of Sarah Baartman

The black woman that will be discussed in this section is an example of how the period of slavery victimised black bodies. She is globally known as Saartjie Baartman, an enslaved Khoi woman, "transported to Britain to be exhibited naked so that anyone interested could gawk at her naked body in a museum" (Gqola, 2010:61). She was renamed as the 'Hottentot Venus', understanding the importance of a name in African cultures therefore, "in this study she will be referred to as Sarah-her baptismal certificate spells her names as such" (Gqola, 2010:63). The actual name recognises her as a person with agency, an individual born into a loving family. The minister of Arts, Culture and Technology, Bridget Mabandla shared the following sentiments:

There have been many misconceptions about Sarah Baaartman one being that she was a prostitute. Sarah was a slave and a victim of an extreme form of prejudice. It is proper to see her as a symbol for human rights and nation building, because she was one of us. The ceremony is to celebrate her memory through poetry, song and dance by providing a platform for all South Africans to express solidarity in her memory (as cited in Gqola, 2010:64).

Sarah, given her will, would not have wanted to be displayed naked for the world to analyse her most intimate body parts. She was a victim beyond human comprehension, but as a black woman it was her place to be objectified at that time; now as scholars it is our responsibility to

give her dignity in her memory, the human dignity that she was denied alive. The texts that black women write should depict Sarah as the victorious woman that she was, she was silenced alive but, in her death, she will speak through black scholarship of other women who are fighting the same battle on different grounds. Sarah Baartman's memory needs to be restored and show that her life was valued despite her circumstances, the texts previously written about her exotic body are to be challenged with counter-narratives. The female body, black or white, is always a "sexualised body, not the body that 'thinks', but it also appears to be a body that never longs for freedom" (Gqola, 2010:69). Diana Ferrus wrote a poem which Gqola (2008:60) asserts that in its very title, 'Tribute to Sarah Baartman', the poem unsettles expectation and marks itself as participating in an undertaking markedly different from many of those who have scripted Baartman". Gqola (2008:53) states that "Ferrus' poem, written in Holland in June 1998, would eventually be responsible for the release of Sarah Baartman's remains by the French government". Ferrus (2019) wrote a poem for Baartman as a tribute to her life, "a tribute is an acknowledgement, a mark of respect" (Gqola 2008:60), it humanises her as it reads:

I have come to take you home-
 home! Remember the veld,
 the lush green grass beneath the big oak tree?
 The air is cool there and the sun does not burn.
 I have made your bed at the foot of the hill,
 your blankets are covered in buchu and mints,
 the proteas stand in yellow and white
 and the water in the stream chuckles sing-songs
 as it hobbles along over little stones (I.1-9).

Line one sounds like a conversation that the speaker is having with Sarah Baartman, letting her know that the speaker has arrived to return her home. The first line indicates that she is a person who has a voice and has the intellectual capacity to comprehend words spoken to her. Gqola echoes these sentiments by describing that "taking her home is a gesture of intense emotional saliency. The meanings which attach to home challenge the status of Sarah Baartman as object, positioning her instead as a loved one" (2008:61). Home is a place that is significant for the uprooted and exiled because it is a space of belonging, acceptance and mostly of unconditional love. Moreover, "home is a space where one is always welcome, a sanctuary to which one has always access" (Gqola, 2008:61). The tone of the poem highlights a relationship between the speaker and Sarah Baartman, it sounds like the two are familiar with each other. Ferrus creates a possibility that the speaker is possibly a family member who has been concerned about her. The speaker reminds Baartman of the landscape of her home, gesturing that they come from

the same home. Line two makes her home sound like a liberated place with the use of 'veld', a reader can imagine the space she has to walk, run and be free to be herself. This line alludes to the confinement she may be experiencing in Europe. In line five the speaker informs Baartman that she will be comfortable at home because her bed is made. This line contrasts with the many texts that hardly describe her personal living space because the focus was on her body. Gqola (2008:62) affirms that "home is more than the physical dwelling inside which people live. It represents the psychic familiar which brings peace". The speaker evokes her sense of smell with the herbs of buchu and mints, a reminder that her home has protea flowers which she has not seen in a long time. The last two lines that speak of a 'chuckling stream' refer to restoration and her home has life as water represents life unlike the place of death that she lives in. Her home sounds safe and the speaker assures her of protection as the 'sun does not burn but the air is cool'. Gqola (2008:64) maintains that Ferrus does not have to mention her body because "it is enough that she is human, and to explore the obvious things that accompany that recognition". Ferrus (2021) further positions Baartman as a loved individual whom her family wants back home, she declares:

I have come to wrench you away-
away from the poking eyes of the man-made monster
who lives in the dark with his racist clutches of imperialism,
who dissects your body bit by bit,
who likens your soul to that of satan
and declares himself the ultimate God! (II.10-15).

Line eleven expresses anger with the use of 'wrench away', meaning that Sarah is displaced, alienated, stolen, endangered as a result she must be wrench away urgently. This poem is recognition, a symbol of honour to this woman who was ill-treated as an object. Such texts make Baartman an agent of social change in society, her spirit is fighting the battle of black women's representation. Sarah Baartman's story is evidence that narratives can be reconstructed, reclaimed and made positive. Gqola (2008:53) further notes that Ferrus's text makes it "impossible to view Sarah Baartman as anything but a concrete historical subject". Feminists need to challenge the literature about Sarah that "her body is like many others, recognisable, and therefore not the focus of their attention" (Gqola, 2010:89). Her observers labeled her body with many derogatory terms such as "primitive, savage, animalistic, and uncontrolled" (Levin, 2015:2). Books have been written about her exotic body, and in all this she had no voice. Scientific experiments were conducted, representations and theories of black women's body were created by the colonisers and exploiters. There are a number of principally

men who debated and have commented about Baartman as an object. These male “experts are neither female nor black but they do think that they have sufficient knowledge to contribute about Baartman” (Levin, 2015:4). The ‘experts’ and academics illustrate this by constantly referring to Baartman as a “victim and by situating her within linear history as a cultural artefact upon whom they feel privileged to comment” (Levin, 2015:4). Baartman’s body becomes rivalry amongst men, and she is continuously portrayed as a victim. The representation of black women is a project that black feminists need to focus on to transform culture and even the realities of black women. Sarah Baartman may have been a victim but the way other black women write about her and read her story will change her into a magically powerful black woman beyond the grave. Ferrus restores her humanity and portrays her as a loved woman. The approach to analyse Sarah Baartman’s life is significant for this research as the main objective is to depict the power of black women in Dudu Busani-Dube’s novels. In order to reconstruct and reclaim black women’s identity and power, one needs to look into the past to recognise the damage and confront it so that there is change.

In numerous representations Baartman is silenced and her function is purely to remain static while the world analyses and critiques her. Former South African president, Mr Thabo Mbeki read a speech at her funeral in Hankey that reveals how Baartman and “her body have come to represent the pain and suffering of all exploited black women and the psychic, cultural and emotional impact of racism and its legacy” (Levin, 2015:100). Thus, reinforcing the idea that a black woman is a public figure of victimisation, pain and suffering. As a result, this narrative is continuously growing. Through positioning her as a national icon and victim, Mr Mbeki also denies Baartman her dignity, humanity and sense of identity. He is doing the same thing that her exploiters and colonisers did. The woman is seen as being “inherently linked with the body, as a being that is inferior to the hierarchy of man and reason/mind. In addition to this, these binaries create blackness as a monstrous ‘Other’, something to fear or analyse in a laboratory” (Levin, 2015:102). One may wonder what she is a victim of, is she a victim of her own body or simply a victim of her blackness? Her victimisation is clear and evident in global history, even artworks have been created that are inspired by her body. Such representations of a black woman are the motivation for this research project; this shows that the black female has always been portrayed as a victim starting from the colonial era. This victim narrative has been so well constructed in society that even other black males and females are perpetuating it through different genres of art. When one reads a book, black women are portrayed as prostitutes, drug

addicts, victims of rape, AIDS and violence but it still remains that the black female is always on the negative side of the continuum.

This research considers how there is always a positive trait about black women that can be depicted in text; the power that they possess in some form or the other. Baartman may have been a victim due to her circumstances but no one tells the story of how defiant she was. During her lifetime, interracial relationships were forbidden in South Africa, but “Baartman had a love affair with a white soldier. She was pregnant, she moved in with him and they raised the baby together even though the baby died later on of unknown causes” (Levin, 2015:104). Such a stance of dating a white man while you are a black woman illustrates radical defiance in Baartman’s personality. Levin explains that “Baartman illustrates a sense of self-determinism that destabilised pre-existing norms and social behavior of the time” (2015:104). No one attempts to focus on this side of Baartman, who may have been silenced but her actions spoke volumes about the struggles of her time. She was a willful woman who clearly had a mind of her own. Baartman’s “historical context did not contain social and political structures that allowed someone of her race and gender to make her agency public, she did, however, continuously demonstrate acts of self-determination” (Levin, 2015:98). The research focuses on disrupting the fixed representations of black women. Baartman cannot remain in the shadows of a national victim, she had a sense of “political agency that unveils her as a person who, in one way or another, is constantly speaking and acting both within the past and present” (Levin, 2015:112). She is alive in every black woman; she continues to influence even in her death. Her spiritual presence can be identified in the primary texts: *Hlomu-the wife*; *Zandile-the resolute* and *Naledi-his love* of this research paper.

1.3 The significance of names in Zulu culture

The colonial and apartheid system condescended the vernacular names of black people, and disregarded the spiritual significance that an individual’s name has in their life. The primary texts in this research deals with Zulu as a term with two different meanings. Zulu is the surname of the eight brothers in the three novels. Then there is Zulu which is a tribe of some black people in South Africa. Therefore, it is important to be able to distinguish the different meanings when encountering these terms. The primary texts for this research are *Hlomu- the wife*; *Zandile-the resolute* and *Naledi-his love*. *Hlomu-the wife* is the first book in the series; it introduces the reader to the Zulu family that has eight brothers named Nkosana, Nqobizitha, Mqhele, Qhawe, Sambulo, Mpande, Ntsika and Mqoqiwokuhle (Busani-Dube, 2015a:77). The

first Zulu brother the reader is introduced to is Mqhele Zulu who is a taxi driver. But he is not “just a taxi driver, he owns the taxis along with his brothers” (Busani-Dube, 2015a:29). Mqhele’s name has a profound meaning and so does the names of his brothers. His name is given after an incident:

Our father said he named him Mqhele, as in crown, because he was told that the moment, he came out during his birth he cried so loud that all the nurses just wanted to stay away from him. They said he was a little fighter, didn’t want to be fed or bathed or dressed. So, dad reckoned he’d grow up to be like a warrior, a king of his castle (Busani-Dube, 2015a:332).

Mqhele’s name is based on his personality from the moment of his birth. In Zulu culture, the naming of a child is not taken lightly, it is a very important task and it is believed that the given name will lead the child to their destiny. Therefore, when naming a child, it is significant that the parents uses positive words and terms so that the child can grow to be a decent citizen. This serious task was done by “the males in the family, not just by any member of the family who felt like naming a child. In Zulu culture, fathers and grandfathers were the name givers” (Suzman, 1994:254). In “Zulu, Xhosa, Sotho, Tswana, and many other cultures, name givers traditionally chose personal names that pointed to a range of people and circumstances that were relevant at the time of the child’s birth (Suzman, 1994:253). As a result, in *Hlomu-the wife*, the eight brothers have names that show their destiny or values that the father believed in.

The oldest brother’s name is Nkosana, this name means ‘first born son’. It is always given to the first male child in the family, it comes with the responsibility of looking after your siblings and home. The second brother’s name is Qhawe which means ‘hero’, this name shows the child’s destiny that in everything he does he will be a hero or it could be that he was born when his father had just participated in a heroic event. The third brother’s name is Nqobizitha, this name means ‘conquer the enemy’. It could be possible that this son was born when his father had returned from battle and had actually conquered the enemy. But it is his duty to fulfill the meaning of his name by overcoming any enemies of the family that he encounters. The fourth brother’s name is Sambulo, meaning ‘revelation’; this name has a spiritual significance. It means that the father got a message of revelation either through dreams or visions about a certain aspect of his family life. The fifth brother’s name is Mpande, this name means ‘roots’ and roots are an important part of a plant to grow strong. The individual needs to be grounded in their cultural identity, their roots need to be solid. This name depicts pride in the Zulu tribal culture: a person with such a name needs to have a sound character. The sixth brother is named Mqoqiwohuhle, meaning ‘collector of good things’, a name that destines the carrier to only

have good things and success in life. The seventh brother is named Ntsika, meaning ‘pillar’; this name shows that this son carries the burden of being the pillar of the family and it is important to act in accordance with his name so that his father is proud.

1.4 A brief synopsis of the selected texts

Mqhele and his brothers work in Johannesburg but they come from KwaZulu-Natal; “he meets a Durban girl named Mahlomu who he falls in love with” (Busani-Dube, 2015a:16). Mahlomu is the protagonist in *Hlomu-the wife*, Mahlomu will be referred to as Hlomu hereafter. Hlomu is short for Hlomulile, meaning that you have won and are victorious. This novel takes the reader on a love journey between a black man and black woman in the famous city of Johannesburg. The story revolves around Hlomu, eventually she gets married to Mqhele as the title suggests *Hlomu-the wife*. The book is focused on Hlomu as a black woman, the decisions she makes, the challenges she faced and how she navigates her daily life in the Zulu family. All the characters that are in the story are there to support her narrative, it is about Hlomu telling her story and experiences of being a black woman in a big city such as Johannesburg when she is from KwaMashu township in Durban (Busani-Dube, 2015a:32). Hlomu is an educated black woman who has been brought up with an independent mindset. She confirms this when she discloses that nobody “ever really taught her about these things, referring to house chores. Her mother insisted on her going to school and having a career, not entertaining in-laws” (Busani-Dube, 2015a:51). Hlomu is covered in strength and her character is likeable to a certain degree as well as believable.

The second book is about another black woman named Zandile. *Zandile-the resolute* is also a love story with one of the Zulu brothers named Nkosana. Zandile’s name means ‘increasing’ or ‘additional’, it could have been the number of girls that were increasing or something else. Zandile’s story is slightly different from the other women’s narrative. In the first book titled *Hlomu-the wife*, the reader is introduced to a Zandile that is a shadow in the lives of the Zulu family. Once in a while, her name is mentioned but no one is willing to tell her story. In the second novel the reader learns that Zandile was in prison for murdering her mother. She yearns to be educated and in prison she discovers that she is academically sound. She has two sons with Nkosana who have grown without her as she was in prison. Zandile does not want to be controlled by anyone not even her husband as she states that this is the one thing, she used to fight about with Nkosana, him wanting to control what she does and when she does it. She considers, “I don’t know if it’s the insecurity or that he is used to having the last word with

everyone in his life” (Busani-Dube, 2015b:53). Before she was married to Nkosana she hated being caged into what he wanted, Zandile is a fearless woman who is a fighter. She tells him that “she is sorry but this is about her, he cannot stop her. It is time he let her fight her own battles” (Busani-Dube, 2015b:172). This book takes the reader on a black woman’s journey of self-discovery, healing and narrating her own story the way she experienced it.

The third novel in this series is titled *Naledi-his love*, and it is also narrating a black woman’s story. *Naledi-his love* is based on a Tswana black woman who falls in love with one of the Zulu brothers. Naledi’s name means ‘star’ which shows that her father thought she would excel in what she does, like a shining star. The reader is introduced to an educated woman who is a doctor by profession, and she explains that “she has a high IQ, that is how she got through medical school. She does not need other people’s imagination to stimulate her mind” (Busani-Dube, 2015c:12). From the first pages of this book, the reader can conclude that Naledi is defiant, and she is definitely not the kind of woman to be bullied by a man. At the mall in the parking lot, she parks in a man who took her parking spot, and she runs unnecessary errands just so that the man suffers (Busani-Dube, 2015c:6). She even says, “this guy hasn’t suffered enough. I think I will let him stand under that umbrella next to my car a little longer” (Busani-Dube, 2015c:6). She is not apologetic for her behaviour because she believes the man needs to learn his lesson, that he cannot take other people’s parking spots just because he is a man. This is her love story with the Zulu brother named Qhawe, the challenges in their relationship and how she directs her life with this man. The power that she possesses is evident in the story.

1.5 Female power in the world

On the 9th of August 1956, South African women marched to the Union buildings in protest against the extension of Pass Laws to include women. This memorable event took place 63 years ago before women had the rights they currently have. Legoabe argues that it “is important to acknowledge that South African women were already active or at least aware of the inequalities in society before the United Nations declared the Decade for Women from 1976 to 1985” (2006:144). These women united to speak in one voice, the voice of strength and liberation. One would assume that after so many years of fighting women are recognised for their achievements. The idea that women were at the “forefront of the resistant struggle challenges the dominant beliefs that freedom was acquired through the heroic acts of men” (Legoabe, 2006:144). Women in Africa have shaped the course of history as in 1985 the World Women’s Conference in Nairobi, Kenya was a milestone for all women in the African

continent. Despite all the negativity and labelling of black women, they have remained determined not to be broken. Black women; “are not voiceless, their voices can be heard through the many channels opened up by those who came before them, and they can now say they have some means and access to justice as well as the power to exercise their rights” (Legoabe, 2006:144).

The three primary texts are used in conjunction with a secondary text titled *Anatomy of female power* by Chinweizu. He clearly states how females have what he calls an invisible power, and he outlines how females use their power. He states that women are the ones who actually run the world but have been denied that status (Chinweizu, 1990:12). This idea resonates with the primary texts as the leading female characters run the businesses and households of the men they are married to, even though the men are the ones viewed as powerful and revered by society. In *Hlomu-the wife*, the main character ponders how she is going to improve Mqhele’s life because it needs a makeover. She decides that she has to work on his dress code, and later the car he drives (Busani-Dube, 2015a:47). She understands that she cannot change a man or even try to change him but the current situation needs to be changed. Often people will see a very well-groomed man who drives a lovely car, meanwhile the wife is responsible for his appearance. This shows what Chinweizu is at pains to illustrate, that society highlights and assigns power to the public sphere and diminishes the real power that exists in the private sphere.

He focuses on three main categories of female power which are Motherpower, Bridepower and Wifepower, these different types of female powers are relevant to the primary texts. Chinweizu believes that “every man has a boss as his wife, or his mother or some other woman in his life, men may rule the world but women rule the men who rule the world” (Chinweizu, 1990:12). Chinweizu argues that woman’s monopoly of the womb makes the mating encounter in her favour (Chinweizu, 1990:18). As women carry the child alone for nine months, that means they have total authority over that growing foetus. The growth of the foetus is at the mercy of the woman, even when the baby is born its first caregiver is the mother. Therefore, Chinweizu highlights that the mother has a huge influence on the baby’s development and how they turn out. The power of the mother is manipulative, it wants the boy child to seek praise and approval from the mother. According to Chinweizu the final appeal a mother would make to an undutiful and rebellious child would be: “Whatever you may become and wherever you may go, I bore you, for nine months, in this womb; and fed you, till you were weaned, with

these breasts” (Chinweizu, 1990:26). That person must be an exceptionally unimaginative and remorseless child who would not respond with repentance and obedience to this irresistible pull at the human heart-strings. As a result, its only human that a boy child would return crawling to beg for forgiveness from the mother. The child is always yearning for the mother’s warmth and smile.

In the nursery, the mothers channel boys towards certain kinds of behaviour, and guide them away from others (Chinweizu, 1990:20). This female power starts from birth and when boys grow up, they move from Motherpower to the Bridepower. “From puberty onward, nothing disorganises the male mind more quickly or thoroughly than the sight of the beautiful female body” (Chinweizu, 1990:36). According to Chinweizu, “the craving for the female body is so strong that the boy gets overwhelmed, which will lead him to do anything that can get him as close as possible to the female body” (1990:36). The boy can cross fire with his bare feet and do everything that is classified as insane just to touch the female body. After all, he was nurtured by the female breast so his subconscious knows the warmth it carries, but now he is craving for a different kind of warmth. Chinweizu argues “women dress well, paint themselves, fix their hair and accessorise their bodies so that they attract the male species, the beautification of the female body is done for the sole purpose to lure men to her” (1990:36). Chinweizu concludes that:

Glamour bathes the body with an illusory beauty; its purpose is erotic provocativeness; its function, during courtship, is to arouse a man’s aesthetic appetites, and thereby lure him into a trap a woman has set to catch a nest slave. The sexiness of her own body, as enhanced by glamour’s tricks, is a woman’s frontline weapon in the battle called courtship (1990:36).

Chinweizu’s belief is that “when women from a young age take time to look their best it is not just a frivolous activity; it is a matter of finding a partner that they will control” (1990:37). Men tend to think they are the ones doing the courting or the finding but according to Chinweizu “women know their prey and they do everything to get their attention” (1990:37). When the man walks up to a woman to talk to her she had already marked him as her target the minute she laid her eyes on him. It is the woman’s strategy to actually find the man that will marry her. From the Bridepower the man will move to the Wifepower. When the man has married her, she will manage him, his finances, home and everything that pertains to his life. The man will go out to work hard for her and she will make sure he does not escape to another female manager. Chinweizu states that “once the nest slave has been brought home, the poor fellow is managed ruthlessly. He is given his assignments and made to perform them” (1990:67). In

managing her husband, “the wife brings the highest level of professionalism and she has a group of professional colleagues supporting her in this job” (1990:37). Hence the saying that behind every successful man is a powerful woman. Wifepower is the highest level of female power because the man chooses it himself, unlike Motherpower, the baby boy is just born into this form of power. Therefore, according to Chinweizu, men are constantly within one form of female power which reiterates that women are powerful, but in this research the emphasis is on the power of black women.

1.6 Theoretical framework - African feminism

The principal theory applied in analysing the selected texts is African feminism. African feminism is innovated by African women who reside on the African continent. It addresses their conditions and challenges which they encounter as African women. For African women, feminism recognises the dignity of women and men, that their value is both equal in society. Both genders deserve respect and acknowledgement. As Adichie (2014:48) states, that her own definition of a feminist “is a man or woman who acknowledges that there is a problem with gender and it needs to be fixed by everyone”. The contexts and settings of the primary texts are in South Africa. The leading characters of each novel are black women who are faced with daily challenges that are not comparable to Western females. Feminism is a term that has many different meanings to different people in different cultures. Western feminism is very individualistic and seems to prove a point that women are as good as men, if not better in many aspects of life. In the process of proving female capabilities, women tend to appear bitter and angry towards the male who is far more privileged than her. There are quite a few contrasts between African feminism and Western feminism. In African feminism, “motherhood is important, the responsibilities of a mother are valued and most women enjoy being mothers” (Lewis, 2001:6). The idea of carrying life is generally viewed as empowering by most African females, as a result, the role of a mother is significant in the family and society. The three characters of the chosen novels all have children which shows that the author is also highlighting that aspect of their daily lives.

Some scholars argue that ‘feminism is feminism, full stop’ (Atanga, 2013:301). However, it is very important to note that feminism in Africa has its own specificities due to the unique challenges that women face in that context (Atanga, 2013:301). Africa is “very diverse as it has many countries with different cultures within, it cannot be treated as a single entity because

women from countries like Tunisia, Morocco and Algeria tend to face different problems from women of the Sub-Sahara” (Atanga, 2013:301). Due to the different cultures, women face different challenges and for this study the focus is on black South African women. It is significant to contextualise the framework for this research, as there are many feminisms but not all are relevant to black African women.

Western feminism is often seen “as anti-men, anti-child and disruptive of the natural state of the family and sometimes synonymous with lesbianism” (Atanga, 2013:303). As a result, African feminism has distinct characteristics when compared to Western feminism. These feminisms may have a similar broad goal but some realities within the African context are different. Some African academics have criticised Western feminism for focusing on male privilege, subordination of women and fighting battles against men, whereas men can also be feminists as long as they believe in the dignified treatment of women. African feminism entails creating spaces for women to participate in the management of their societies, this includes empowering women through access to resources such as health, education and housing (Atanga, 2013:308). Contemporary African feminism involves:

Rewriting the identities of African women not only as passive victims of male dominance and patriarchy or as preoccupied with the concerns of their ‘Western’ sisters, but as active social, economic and political agents in the developments of their countries, having the freedom and ability to combine some traditional practices as mothers and wives with public roles (Atanga, 2013:309).

African feminism does not gloss over gender inequality; the women want to be part of the decision making, they want their ideas and thoughts to be valued and not just get dictated to by males. One female character, Naledi, states that she does not like it when her fiancé makes decisions on his own about her life without consulting her. She finds it shocking that he thinks he can decide where she stays and which car, she drives without asking her (Busani-Dube, 2015c: 64). All she wants is to be consulted when it comes to decision making, especially the ones that concern her. African feminism wants women to work together to empower each other and also actively participate in decision making. African culture has the dynamic of extended family members that should be accommodated in the nuclear family. In *Hlomu-the wife*, Hlomu mothers children that are not her own (Busani-Dube, 2015a:130). Qhawe prepares Naledi for marrying into his family:

You are marrying into my family. The word “I” doesn’t exist with us. You have nine children, ten including the one you are carrying and one grandchild. You are responsible for every single person in my family, just like every single one of them would drop

everything for you. That's how it works, that's who we are, I thought you'd figured that out by now (Busani-Dube, 2015c:280).

African feminism does not view marriage as a prison for women, but as a valuable institution between males and females. African feminism encourages “women to embrace their femininity, put on lipstick if they want to, wear high heels or just remain natural if that is what they like” (Adichie, 2014:39). Therefore, African feminism recognises that women are not a homogenous group. Africa is a continent with many different cultures and languages; as a result, each culture has its own traditions and rituals that are performed within the families. Busani-Dube shows the different types of traditions and belief systems that black people have in South Africa. The primary novels portray how the leading females have to participate in traditional rituals that they view as important. African feminism does not neglect or look down on these issues of tradition because they are part of African people. Hlomu highlights the purpose of one of the rituals, she explains:

Umemulo is sort of a 21st birthday for a girl, a confirmation by her parents that she is no longer a girl but a woman and that she can go out and live her life. The next step after it, in sequence is marriage. In our Zulu culture, a ceremony called umhlonyane is performed for a girl when she starts her period, umemulo when she is 21 and umncamo on the night before her wedding (Busani-Dube, 2015a:84).

Such ceremonies are unfamiliar amongst Western feminists, which makes African feminism relevant for this research project. According to Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi (1985), black women's struggle is different compared to white women's fight against patriarchy. Ogunyemi (1985) portrays this concept through black women's writing in Africa and America. The author uses writing as her symbol for black women's challenges and that they are not only fighting the institution of patriarchy but, other issues that make up their daily experience. These issues are racial, cultural, economic and political (Ogunyemi, 1985). She posits how black women deal with double consciousness in their lives, their need to express their African culture but also the desire to incorporate the Western methods of daily life. The primary novels of Busani-Dube depicts this double consciousness of the leading females, they have traditional weddings in the rural areas as well as Western weddings in the suburban areas; it is clear that they are trying to merge the two worlds, issues white women are not confronted with.

Hlomu emphasises the purpose of one of the rituals, she mentions that “see in our culture, you are not married into the family until you have had gall of an animal sprinkled on you by the eldest member of your husband's family at the husband's home and home is not where he lives, home is his father's house” (Busani-Dube, 2015a:92). Oyeronke Oyewumi (1997:5) illustrates

“various topics concerning the black female, African cultures, gender, languages and how Western ideologies contrast with African thinking”. Oyewumi states a very significant point, that as long “as social actors such as the poor, blacks, females and many more are presented as groups and not as individuals there is no escape from biological determinism” (Oyewumi, 1997:5). The primary novels for the research constitute of black leading females but the author has successfully portrayed each woman as an individual that makes her own choices regardless of the fact that they are all black and female. Oyewumi clearly shows that Western thought society was seen to be inhabited by bodies, “only women were perceived to have bodies, men had no bodies; they were walking minds” (Oyewumi, 1997:6). This thinking is challenged in the primary texts, because the women are depicted as more than just bodies but as thinking minds that exercise power and agency.

Susan Arndt defines African feminism and its goals, she shows the three main literatures of African feminism- reformist, transformative and radical African feminism (Arndt, 2002:33). In reformist literature, men are criticised as individuals, not as representatives of men. It is assumed that society is capable of reforming and reformist texts usually have a happy ending. In transformative African feminism, men are criticised much more sharply than in reformist. It is believed that there is a possibility for them to transform and become better people. Radical African feminism believes that men are fundamentally sexist and deeply immoral as a result these texts are normally violent and the men die tragically or are simply powerless. *Hlomu-the wife* falls into the category of radical African feminism. Hlomu shouts “OMG! I married a demon” (Busani-Dube, 2015a:241). This category portrays domestic violence and Hlomu warns her husband that if he ever hit her again, she will open a case with the police (Busani-Dube, 2015a:44). *Zandile-the resolute* expresses radical African feminism beliefs. The book shows violence performed in the novel, as Zandile reveals, “see Sbani a person had to die that night, it was either you or my mother, I had to choose who lives between the two of you, I chose you” (Busani-Dube, 2015b:47). The men in the family acknowledge that they kill people, but they do not kill women (Busani-Dube, 2015b:202). *Naledi-his love* is different from the other two in that it is transformative African feminism. Naledi’s father utters these words, “In case you haven’t noticed times have changed. If I ever believed none of my daughters would be capable of being chief, I would have found a woman to bear me a son soon after your mother left” (Busani-Dube, 2015c:242). This text expresses the belief that men have the potential to transform for the better.

1.7 Research methodology

Textual analysis will be employed as my research methodology. Belsey (2013:160) states that textual analysis as a research method involves a close encounter with the work itself, an examination of the details. The three primary novels tell stories of black women's experiences in South Africa. When one reads a text, they bring their own extra textual knowledge which contributes to the meaning of the text. To understand the primary novels on a deeper level, the reader needs to understand the inner workings of Zulu culture, relationships between black women and black men, black female history in South Africa and the changes post 1994. This additional external knowledge makes the reader identify where the sympathies of the novels lie, make judgements and draw their own conclusions. An Afrikaner policeman in *Hlomu-the wife* asserts, "that's the problem with you people, money goes to your heads. Who told you that you could be rich? You are supposed to be maids and garden boys, I will put you all back in your place" (Busani-Dube, 2015a:130). Such an utterance is demonstrating the thinking instituted by the apartheid system, which legitimises how black people were treated. This policeman is basically saying that black people cannot handle money, they deserve to be poor so they can be compliant. The novel is not about the past injustices of apartheid but the subtext shows how some white people still thought apartheid was right, twenty-five years later into democracy. The remark made by the policeman can only have deeper meaning if the reader understands South African history, the relationship between black and white people during the apartheid regime.

Belsey (2013:160) highlights that we cannot interpret something without knowledge from elsewhere. Therefore, this shows that the reader brings their own background and textual references to inform the text. What question is raised by the text? Does the reader have an answer to it? Belsey (2013:173) describes textual analysis as a tool that concentrates on the finer details of the text that normally one may overlook. Textual analysis highlights that texts are part of social events. The three primary texts ask whether black women's experiences are valid? Textual analysis as a tool shows the relationship between text, reader and other external texts which give meaning (Belsey, 2013:166). When looking at the primary texts, it is clear that certain social events occurred to inspire these novels. Textual analysis will help show how the black female is represented in the text. This tool will add value in contrasting how black male authors represent the females in their narratives.

1.8 Aims and Objectives

The aim of the study is to examine the power of black female representation in Dudu Busani-Dube's novels *Hlomu-the wife*, *Zandile-the resolute* and *Naledi-his love*. The research aims to analyse the agency, voices and validate the experiences of black females in their character representation. The first objective is to analyse the power of each black female. The second objective is to find points of connections of the characters' struggles and the differences of their struggles. Thirdly, it is to study how each character deals with sexual love, conflict and motherhood. The research questions are as follows: how is the power of each character represented in each novel? What are the points of connections of the female characters' struggles and how are they different? How does each woman deal with sexual love, conflict and motherhood?

1.9 Contribution

The research will contribute to the continental African feminist group; there is not much focus on black South African feminists who are writing about their own experiences, such as Gqola or centring the narratives of black women in their writings like Busani-Dube. The roles of women have changed in the world and fairly recently and rapidly so in South Africa since independence from apartheid. South Africa is amongst the few countries globally that has transformed the status of women in national parliament. The representation of women in parliament is substantial considering the history of this previously marginalised group. Women are slowly being recognised for their political and decision-making power. The political or public sphere reflects the private sphere. As the public sphere is changing, this shows that the private sphere is also changing, women are finding their voices. This societal change is reflected in literature and needs rigorous scholarly engagement in order to highlight and produce a consolidated body of literature by black women.

The portrayal of women in literature can have an impact on society, on how the world reacts to females. But most importantly the depiction of black women also influences how they are treated in society. Literature can reflect reality but it can also be allegorical to that reality. The books that are read reinforce how certain genders are seen, and the level of respect they deserve. The portrayal of women can effectively contribute to cultural change, treatment of women, violence against women and women's social worth. As Robbins opines:

And if literature is one of the privileged sites of representation, if the images presented in literary and artistic texts are powerful because of the power accorded to literature, images of women are the obvious starting point to begin a critique of the place of women in society at large. Representation is not the same thing as reality, which is, of course, part of the problem. It might also be seen, however, as part of the solution. The analysis of literary representations of women and their differences from real women's lives might well be a fruitful place to begin a politicised analysis of that reality, through the means of representation. Furthermore, representation might not be the same thing as reality, but it is part of reality. The images we see or read about are part of the context in which we live. If we can read these images differently, against the grain, as it were, we can go some way to altering our perceptions of reality, we can see a need for changes and when we have seen the need, perhaps we can bring it about (2000:51).

The above quote proves that in the context of this research, black female representation has to change in order for reality to change. Children need to have black female characters that epitomises power, black female characters that are admirable. I examine the primary texts with the view of drawing out black women's strengths and strategies in their experiences, it is an approach that demonstrates that black women's lives and experiences matter.

1.10 Thesis outline

Chapter Two: Representations of black women by black male authors

Chapter Two of this research study will focus on the representation of black women by black male authors. Zakes Mda is an acclaimed South African black male author, he has won a number of literature awards in South Africa and the United States of America. His awards include the Amstel Playwright of the Year Award (1979), the Commonwealth Writers Prize for Africa (2001), the M-Net Prize (1991) just to name a few. Some of his novels are studied at tertiary institutions, as a result it is appropriate to look at such an acclaimed writer's representation of black women. *Black diamond* is a well-crafted novel published in 2009, and this novel is chosen because of its focus on black people's rise in the economic sphere in South Africa. It is a story of how black people are economically empowered but for this research, I will be analysing the representation of his female characters especially the black females. The white female characters will be contrasted to validate how black females tend to be inferior even amongst other female groups. His black female characters perpetuate the narrative of inferiority. Authors that are older such as Alan Paton of *Cry, the beloved country*, and Chinua Achebe of *Things fall apart* and many more books have portrayed black women negatively, yet a young writer like Nkosinathi Sithole, challenges these male narratives.

The second black male author is Nkosingithi Sithole. His debut novel won the 2016 Sunday Times Literary award. *Hunger eats a man* published in 2015 is chosen because the narrative is of black people's lives in South Africa. This novel's portrayal of black females is different compared to Mda's black female characters, Sithole's black females have a voice, power and they have been represented positively which is the main objective of this research. Such black female representation is unusual from a black male author, but this novel will support Busani-Dube's stance on her female characters. The female characters in Sithole's novel are not victims, they do not tolerate violence against women and, they take the law into their own hands. They epitomise powerful black women.

Chapter Three: The power of black women

This chapter will focus on how the power of each female character is represented in the novel. The character of each woman express power that cannot be hidden or ignored. This chapter will analyse how the female characters' struggles connect and how they differ? All three female characters are married to the Zulu brothers. Each brother has his own unique personality but the one trait they share is controlling or protecting their women. The women are supportive of each other and try to create that sisterhood relationship which African feminism encourages. Hlomu, Zandile and Naledi are all black women, they are all great in their own right; they portray strength that has not been seen in black female characters in South African novels. These characters depict diversity amongst black women, both in their thinking and cultural background. Naledi comes from a Tswana culture where Hlomu and Zandile are from the Zulu culture. The three women will firstly be analysed as a group of black powerful women and then as individuals who differ in their challenges but nonetheless conquer them.

In this chapter a memoir of a black South African woman Ayanda Borotho, *Unbecoming to become* will be used to support the theme of power amongst black women. The book is about her journey of redefining herself as a black woman, reclaiming her position in a society that has victimised her. It is about unbecoming the stereotypes, rejecting cultural conditioning that oppresses woman, challenging patriarchal institutions and becoming the queen that she was created to be. It describes the power that black women have as individuals.

Chapter Four: Representations of motherhood, conflict and sexual love

This chapter examines how each woman deals with motherhood, conflict and sexual love? Hlomu, Zandile and Naledi are three black women with different personalities even different backgrounds, as a result they employ different strategies when it comes to sexual love, conflict and motherhood. Hlomu's relationship with Mqhele and their love will be analysed, and the dynamics of their relationship. Mqhele beats her up but she stills remains with him. Hlomu's character will be analysed as to how she deals with conflict with her husband Mqhele, her awareness of her emotions and thoughts will be analysed, and that she is very much conscious of her actions. Hlomu has a loving mother as a result mothering other people and children comes naturally to her. Naledi's relationship with Qhawe will be examined and her response to love. Naledi deals with conflict differently compared to Hlomu she tends to walk away, that characteristics will be analysed. She grew up without a mother as a result, the effect it has on her as a girl child influences the way she looks at pregnancy and motherhood. Zandile's relationship with Nkosana will be analysed, and the way she reacts to his love patterns. Zandile is confrontational when it comes to conflict so her conflict management will be analysed. The relationship she tries to forge with her children because they were raised by Hlomu since Zandile was in prison will be examined. Zandile's character is very complex when it comes to motherhood because she murdered her own mother, all those dynamics will be analysed. The spaces they create to manoeuvre their complicated lives as black women will be studied.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

This concluding chapter will tie together the unity and uniqueness of the female characters. The representation of black females will be further highlighted, and the impact of change in the representation of black female's narrative on society and reality moving forward. Culture is constructed by people, it changes, it is fluid and it can be restricted to fit new ways of living. The culture of black women being patronised about their body structure, hair and everything that has to do with themselves has to come to an end. Culture is learning and unlearning racial and gendered ideologies. In post-apartheid South Africa, black women have opportunities that aim to redress the past injustices, as a result they can express the power that lies within them. Black girls also need black female characters with superpowers who are saving the world, instead of images perpetuating the narrative of black females as maids carrying white children.

Poverty images are associated with a black female face; such beliefs need to be challenged by the literature that is produced by black scholars.

Chapter Two: Representations of Black Women by Black Male Authors

2.1 The portrayal of black women in *Black diamond*

Men have been dominating most spaces that influence society at large. They have even written about women and their experiences, making their observations the whole truth of reality. As women had been marginalised there were no alternative voices to counteract the narratives that men were expressing. In South Africa and even worldwide, Zakes Mda is an acclaimed author that has produced a number of books and plays. He is considered by scholars to be amongst the “most powerful writers in South Africa” (Lombardozzi, 2005:213). As a result, his extensive experience and knowledge in literature has made him the perfect writer to analyse the portrayal of his black female characters. The book that will be used for this analysis is *Black diamond* which was published in 2009, when South African women had rights and were taking up positions of power. Mda’s female characters do not depict progress that has occurred for women as a group.

Mda’s novel is about the uprising of black economic power in post-apartheid South Africa. The main character is Kristin Uys, a white woman, who is a magistrate and she lives alone with her cat. She is on a one-woman crusade to wipe out prostitution in town for reasons that have personal significance to her. She charges Stevo Visagie for contempt of court and gives him a six-month sentence; Stevo is a known pimp in the community. Stevo orchestrates revenge while in prison and Kristin receives menacing calls, her home is invaded and vandalised. The chief magistrate assigns her a body guard who is Don Mateza. A black man who was a freedom fighter during the days of apartheid, now he is a security guard but his girlfriend is trying very hard to make him into a so called ‘black diamond’. Black diamonds are an elite group of black people who are wealthy and have influence in the country. The story shows Don’s struggles of being a former freedom fighter post-apartheid and his promiscuous habits. The female characters are indeed stereotypes of women in society. Mda admits that he creates his own reality as he sees it implying that he also creates his female characters as he sees them. He pertinently points out:

I write about women the way I write about all my characters. I do not make any conscious effort to portray them any differently. What comes out of that exercise then is not contrived. When I write about women, it is as I have observed them, and I write about them naturally (Naidoo, 1997:260).

The above statement by Mda is concerning as writing about women naturally is actually unnatural. This implies that Mda does not see a problem with inequality in society or it does not bother him because he is not affected. Women were not created as an excluded group or weak group, but cultural norms make women appear in that manner. As a result, an author that claims to have an interest in women's empowerment surely must be conscious of the female characters he depicts. The images of women that Mda observes are socially constructed by the patriarchal system to strip them of any potential they may have. As he points out, he does not attempt to portray women differently which is evident in his novel *Black diamond*. Vasquez as cited in Ogundipe-Leslie suggests that the relationship between art and society cannot be denied because art itself is a social phenomenon:

First, because the artist, however unique her primary experience might be, is a social being; second, because her work, however deeply marked by her primary experience and however unique and unrepeatable its objectification or form might be, is always a bridge, a connecting link between the artist and other members of society; third, because her work of art affects other people-contributes to the reaffirmation or devaluation of their ideas, goals, values-and is a social force which, with its emotional or ideological weight, shakes or moves people (1994:47).

It is the responsibility of the artist to be conscious of the message he is communicating and how he is doing that. As much as artists are expressing their thoughts and ideas creatively, they also have a social responsibility to positively or negatively impact the lives of people. Therefore, it is disappointing that an artist of Mda's calibre perpetuates stereotypes that contribute to many social issues affecting women. Mda's female characters are created and "portrayed within a political and universal system which perpetuates their exclusion from power and keeps them in servitude" (Lombardozi, 2005:215). There is hierarchy amongst the female group, white women are portrayed as a marginalised group but they are represented more positively while black women are mostly at the bottom of any representation. Collins states that "black women's political and economic status provides them with a distinctive set of experiences that offers a different view of material reality than that to other groups" (1990: 183). The opening line of the text introduces Kristin Uys as a white woman who is a magistrate (Mda, 2009:1). The first impression one gets about Kristin Uys is that she is a good-looking woman as "her blonde hair is tied in an old-fashioned schoolmarmish bun. But the austere look and the severe dress code fail to disguise her fine features" (Mda, 2009:2). This emphasis on looks has become a norm in literature, a woman's appearance tends to be more important than her intellect. But Kristin's character is portrayed more favourably than any other female character in the story. Her character has a name and a respected profession, which is not the

same representation when comparing her to some black female characters in the story. The black female character of Tumi is also depicted as successful, “she was one of the top models in South Africa and she now owns a model agency” (Mda, 2009:13) but her modelling profession focuses on women’s beauty and appearance. Tumi’s physical features are not described because as a former model the reader can assume that she is a beautiful woman. The stereotype of objectifying women’s bodies is evident in Mda’s narrative. Regardless of their race, but the attention of the mentioned women is on their appearance which is a common narrative that needs to be challenged. Their bodies are not described realistically but they have been idealised so that the woman reading their description aspires to be like them. Tumi is described as “alluring in a skimpy nightie; her tall shapely figure and her catwalk gait attest to the fact that she was indeed once a top model” (Mda, 2009:15). There is a huge contrast in how male writers define female bodies and how female writers write about their own bodies. In *Hlomu-the wife*, Hlomu describes herself as, “I am not a thin girl, I am not a big girl either, but I am masculine even though I’ve never set foot in a gym all my life” (Busani-Bube, 2015a:25). Busani-Dube’s character of Naledi describes herself as follows:

Now you have to understand that I am a big girl. Yes, I have issues with my weight, mostly because I’ve always been that fat kid and all my nicknames are about being fat. But also, I’ve always been the pretty girl. I may have extra kilos on my thighs and hips and ass and waist but honey, there is not a single drop of cellulite, not even a centimeter of stretch mark. Hell, I’d pay a lump sum if you found a single scar on my body. I am fat but fit, and firm, and fresh and damn sexy!” (2015c:54).

The female writer acknowledges the issues that women have with their weight but at the same time, these women still exude confidence and appreciate their beauty. Feminists scholars assert that women’s magazines “promote an unrealistic, unattainable beauty ideal that is contingent upon personal dissatisfaction in order to ensure a constant market” (Murray, 2012:100). If Kristin is not working as a magistrate, she stands naked and examines her body, soon she transforms herself into a ‘whore’ (Mda 2009:159). The women are described as sexual beings who use their bodies to please men, including the magistrate. The other female characters are prostitutes; they have no names. These characters are described as “garish and wear exaggerated make-up”, even the black male drunks who spend their time in a tavern have names, an identity that humanises them. But the female species is described as “the small group-consisting of five hookers, three drag queens, and about ten women in black who call themselves the Society of Widows” (Mda, 2009:3). Busani-Dube gives her female character choice, Hlomu says, “I haven’t discovered the beauty in make-up yet so I look the same during the day as I do at night” (2015a:25). African feminism rejects the notion of representing women

as sexualised beings, but promotes the view that they are first women and foremost human (Mikell, 1995:407). In some writer's works such as Mda, most single women attempt to find economic success through prostitution. However, as the woman does not belong to one man but to whoever can afford her price, prostitution is not a dignified strategy to liberate women. Mitifu argues that:

This kind of emancipation is generally rejected by African female writers who define prostitution rather as a form of exploitation of women by men, a way of life that degrades and enslaves women. Women writers urge African women to find pride in hard work, to assert themselves, and to become financially independent (1997:102).

In an ideal world, this type of freedom for women would not be permitted, because it still objectifies the woman's body. The woman's body does not belong to her but to the man; so, the woman is still a sexual slave even if she is paid. As a result, male authors should not portray female characters as prostitutes in their narratives because such representations contribute to gender inequality. Naledi is a good example of a hardworking woman who is financially independent. She is a doctor, a respected profession and she can maintain herself with her salary (Busani-Dube, 2015c:7). Therefore, prostitution is not a solution for women's emancipation, it intensifies the problem because it feeds men's sexual appetites, the female is still exploited and so is her body. Women can be represented in a better perspective as having work ethic, commitment and ambition in their professions no matter how menial their jobs are.

The character of Don Mateza who is a security guard at a private company is an excellent example of hard work. Mda has portrayed this black man in a manner that earns him respect from the reader. Don knows that working hard, even to the extent of personally performing tasks that his girlfriend deems demeaning is his ticket to obtaining the CEO promotion at the VIP Protection Services (Mda, 2009:12). Da Silva asserts that "women are usually made peripheral to all of that and function either as symbols or as instruments for the male hero's working out of his problem" (2004:130). This belief is evident in Don's life; the two women he is involved with support his goal of achieving the black diamond status. Tumi is determined to groom Don, "not only into the clean, fresh and urbane man he is today, but into a Black diamond" (Mda, 2009:18), and Don is aware of her hopes. Don's romantic relationship with Kristin is an escape from Tumi, Kristin appreciates Don's cooking unlike Tumi (Mda, 2009:27), and the problems he has with Tumi disappear when he is with Kristin. Da Silva points out that African feminists recognise the "necessity of constructing an oppositional thought in order to empower oppressed men and women or the whole oppressed society in Africa", and the character of Don reveals that even men are oppressed to a certain level (2004:135). Don as

a black man has pressure to be financially stable but the reality is, he is struggling, his job cannot afford him the luxuries of life. He is behind with instalments of the sport car he bought, and he also lives in his girlfriend's apartment (Mda, 2009:16).

However, Mda fails to portray women in this story as individuals who have different experiences that need to be addressed. The women are:

Broadly representative of a broad range of marginalised and exploited social groups. Such typification allows for insight into the experiences of the lower classes of which women form a large proportion, but they rarely highlight the specific predicaments that face women as a gendered constituency. (Lombardozzi, 2005:214).

This often results in the problematic issues in women's lives being seen in terms of broader issues and for this reason they do not get the emphasis they deserve. Women appear as a homogenous group that has a common problem which is far from the truth and realities of their lives. Mda assumes that women hate each other which gives patriarchy power to prevail. Kristin discloses, "I hate the whores for the power they can unleash in their bodies to render men so insane that they part with fortunes, and with their wives and families" (Mda, 2009:75). This utterance gives the impression that women are constantly competing for men's attention no matter the cost. Despite Tumi's busy schedule, she will not miss going to the gym, "she must stay in shape and must look as good as any of the youngest models in her stable" (Mda, 2009:77). Mda's text fulfils the female stereotypes that exist in society and they perpetuate the culture of victimisation amongst females. The women as a group are portrayed to be at war with each other. This is characteristic of Western feminism but is challenged by African feminism. The objectifying of the black female is reiterated by a black male author who writes:

For a wife these men prefer a beautiful young thing with not too many brains. Someone they can display at cocktail parties where, pray to God, she must not open her mouth lest she says something stupid or, worse still, something that will betray her common origins and lack of education and finesse. Someone who will get all her fulfillment from shopping, and whose greatest achievement in life will be featuring in the society pages for nothing more than wearing particular French and Italian labels with poise. Someone who will be completely dependent on him and will be dead scared of being sent back to the poverty of Soweto or of some village in Kwa-Zulu Natal if she ever showed the slightest sign of rebellion. Someone whose main task in life is to stand next to him and smile. Until she is replaced by a younger version when the skin begins to sag a little (Mda, 2009:79-80).

Mda clearly creates his female characters as he sees them culturally constructed. The above quote emphasises the objectifying of black women, it intensifies the stereotypes that already exist. The narrative that black female characters are only useful to support men, look pretty and definitely not be intellectual is patronising to all black women. Tumi's character is successful

but she was “discovered as a model before she matriculated in high school and then never had the incentive to complete her studies after she established herself as South African’s top black model of the time” (Mda, 2009:81). The character of Tumi definitely fits the stereotype of a black woman who needs to stand next to her man and not open her mouth. Mda complicates the character of Tumi and other female characters by attempting to give them a voice but that voice is not sufficient to liberate them from patriarchy. He is subconsciously aware that culturally and socially there needs to be change in the representation of women, they need to have a sense of agency even in books which may influence the reality of so many women. Perhaps as a man, he fears being labelled as a feminist if he makes his female characters powerful and challenges the status quo created by men.

Mda believes that “social change can come about when oppressed people regain their dignity through economic and social domination” (Lombardozzi, 2005:217). His belief is contradicted by the portrayal of his characters, because the oppressed people are women especially black women. Through his portrayal of Tumi’s character, he attempts to express the social change he believes in. Tumi is described as a “fighter in her industry, she fights for black models who are sidelined for editorials and runways” (Mda, 2009:151). Mda is unintentionally “validating a black woman’s standpoint” (Collins, 1990:186), Tumi has created a self-defined standpoint in her industry. The character of Tumi is flat as a result, and the glimpse of power that she exudes is not developed. Tumi reflects inner strength that makes her emerge victorious at the level of her character. She is an example of a woman who is striving for excellence. Mda provides points of reference for the culture of “black independent women bent on securing their economic and personal autonomy” (Lombardozzi, 2005:217). Mda believes that “black women in particular need a voice and a space within which they can express themselves and create their own identity in the changing South Africa or Africa” (Lombardozzi, 2005:217). Tumi remains confrontational in the storyline as she says to her boyfriend, “once you become a black diamond, black sisters are no longer good enough for you!” (Mda, 2009:247). Tumi has an indomitable spirit but the challenge is that the storyline does not centre on her spirit. The protagonist of the story does not have agency, instead the black male bodyguard rescues her from her woes. Kristin is a “changed woman. She no longer has her schoolmarmish bun, and her golden locks are flowing as carefreely as she seems to be. Her mature beauty has blossomed and she glows” (Mda, 2009:225). Mda makes the female protagonist transform for the better through a man, it is a man that makes her smile again, discover her sense of purpose in life and a man liberates her from her woes. Mda denies Kristin the ability to find a solution to her

problems through her inner strength. She is surrounded by the “unsympathetic male gaze, by men who view her as a crazy oddity” (Lombardozzi, 2005:222). Kristin is surrounded by the male gaze of Mr Naidoo who thinks she is behaving oddly. He misses the old Kristin who was carefree but he negates the experiences she has been through that resulted in this cold Kristin; those experiences were manifestations of a man. The character of Kristin as a protagonist is not inspiring for women’s movement. While Busani-Dube’s protagonist Hlomu has been empowered with self-awareness and courage to acknowledge the influence that external factors such as a man have on her. She notices that she has “learnt two things-that this man is going to control her and that he can easily charm her into forgiving him for things she had no business being angry about in the first place” (Busani-Dube, 2015a:27).

However, Mda’s supporting female characters are empowered with different strategies to manage their lives. The women in Stevo Visagie’s life are protesting for him to be released from jail. Aunt Magda proclaims that “if mass action worked for Mandela, it would surely work for the Visagies” (Mda, 2009:4). The character of Aunt Madga independently finds a solution for her problem without a man’s assistance. Women from the community who have benefited from the Visagie family joined the protest for Stevo to be released. This strategy highlights what women are capable of when they work together, and Mda depicts this. Ma Visagie is described as the matriarch of the family and Stevo’s mother is given agency in this matter. The female group protesters seem to “favour Ma Visagie because even though her voice is rough and out of tune, it is so loud that the powers that be cannot ignore it. That’s what protest is all about anyway: to be heard” (Mda, 2009:22). Mda does not allow these female characters to accept their adverse situations. The women in this text are competing against one another. The Visagie women are challenging Kristin’s authority, Tumi and Kristin are threatened by each other’s relationship with Don. Kristin tells Don that, “I know I can’t compete with her. I can’t see myself replacing a beautiful black woman in your life. I know you’ll be happier with Tumi” (Mda, 2009:244). Such sentiments are encouraged by male autonomy, if women are occupied fighting against each other, then they cannot resist the real enemy which is the patriarchal system.

Mda tries to redeem the character of Don from his promiscuous ways by making him a domesticated man. Don is described as cooking for the love of it, and “like most boys growing up in Soweto those days, he learnt that there was no work for boys or girls. There was work” (Mda, 2009:57). Mda complicates this black male character by demonstrating characteristics that have the potential to progress towards literary representations that are not gender-biased.

He commented during an interview that “the world that I was writing about was the world I created ... I am the God of that world, so I can make things happen the way I want them to happen. Whether in the so-called objective reality things happen in that way or not, is not the issue for me” (Lombardozi, 2005:225).

For an individual who claims to be God in his writing process then genuinely representing black women in a manner that is dignified should not be difficult. As a God in his narratives, he can empower the oppressed groups and contribute towards social change; deconstructing stereotypes and making spaces for black women to practice agency. It should be his duty as a black man who understands the oppressive systems of which he has once been a victim. Since he claims not to be concerned about the reality of things, then he can imaginatively create a surreal world for his female characters to be victorious. Mda is capable of creating assertive females, Aunt Madga tells “the television reporter that is was her strategy to take the mass action” (Mda, 2009:124). Lombardozi acknowledges that Mda has “given women their own space from which to speak, and within which they are able to achieve both on a personal and political level” (2005:225). The female protesters are taking up their spaces in the public sphere to influence systems. In the private space, Mda’s female characters are running households. He describes one of the characters in an admirable manner. He writes that “there can only be one alpha female in the Visagie household, and that is Ma Visagie herself. Not even Stevo can be an alpha anything, though he fancies himself as some sort of boss” (Mda, 2009:191). The character of Ma Visagie has been given a platform to defy male autonomy in life. She tells “other protesters that she is a Visagie and she is afraid of nothing” (Mda, 2009:66). Ma Visagie’s character can be compared to Busani-Dube’s protagonist, Naledi, who is also fearless. After blocking a man’s car for taking her parking spot, the man responds to her, “it’s not every day that I meet a woman who blocks my car, makes me stand in the rain for two hours and gives me R50 to buy myself a life” (Busani-Dube, 2015c:17). More narratives need black female characters like Naledi who challenge patriarchy and male autonomy.

Mda is capable of making his black female characters powerful beings in his narratives. Tumi affirms Mda’s potential “this is the new South Africa. The sisters are doing it for themselves, as they say. You don’t need a guy with big bucks, you make your own” (Mda, 2009:78). The utterances made by the female character deconstruct the notions of servitude and subordination. Some scholars argue that the women portrayed by “female writers have a common goal that stresses the importance of education as the only way out of male dependency” (Mitifu, 1997:99). Busani-Dube is indeed contributing to this goal of female writers with her character

Zandile who is described by her lecturer as the smartest student he has ever had (2015:300). Berrian concurs that “the image that African women writers portray of themselves differs from the one created by the male writers” (1982:331). Mda and Busani-Dube’s black female characters can be contrasted in that Busani-Dube’s characters have power to challenge the status quo and she allows them to do so. She gives them liberty to inspire other black women, while Mda’s black female characters have the potential to defy stereotypes but he denies them that power as their creator. Writers have the ability to make their black female characters admirable and influential in society. Hlomu, Naledi and Zandile are Busani-Dube’s black female protagonists who are reconstructing and redefining their narrative. This reveals the slow progress of challenging gender and racial stereotypes in literature. The characterisation that perpetuates black female victimisation should be challenged by both female and male writers. As Da Silva states, “Molara Ogundipe-Leslie, a Nigerian feminist writer believes that the commitments of the African woman writer to the empowering of the African woman is to deconstruct the African woman stereotyped images and fight against several forms of oppression that women still suffer in Africa and this goal can be achieved in literature” (Da Silva, 2004:131). Therefore, women and men writers should take on this project of empowering black women characters in their narratives.

2.2 The portrayal of black women in *Hunger eats a man*

Nkosinathi Sithole is a South African black male author. He is an academic and his knowledge and experience in the field of literature, make his award-winning book suitable for this study. Sithole’s representations of black women in his narrative will be examined. The story is about a black man called Father Gumede, who is known as a priest. He loses his job as a farmhand, and as a result, he becomes despondent and enraged cutting off all ties to the church and politics. He is determined to make a living at whatever cost. The first page introduces the priest who is described as contemplating the land that has been his home for more than twenty years (Sithole, 2015:1). It is crucial to note that the focus of the man is on his mind and thinking, nothing is mentioned about his appearance. This is similar to the representation of the male characters in Mda’s *Black diamond*. The similarities of male character representations appear to be a norm in writing for both these male writers. However, Busani-Dube challenges this norm in *Hlomu-the wife*; the black male character of Mqhele is described as “bug-eyed dude”, it is not often that a male character’s physical appearance centres the storyline (Busani-Dube, 2015a:7). The stereotype of most novels written by men is the focus on the woman’s physical

features as Sithole does with the character of MaDuma. She is the Priest's wife and she is described as follows:

She is not really beautiful, but she is also far from ugly, MaDuma has lost almost all her back teeth and her cheeks are now sunken. However, this does not interfere with the fairness of her features. Priest thinks her eye-glasses make her look more beautiful than she actually is (Sithole, 2015:2).

The first impression the reader gets of MaDuma is the confusing description of her physical appearance, at least her body is not sexualised like Tumi's character in *Black diamond*. Sithole can be commended for the realistic portrayal of this black woman who lives in the rural areas. Murray argues that for a "woman to be properly feminine or considered beautiful, she must manipulate her appearance to conform to very specific ideals of beauty" (2012:91). MaDuma's character does not conform to any beauty standards, unlike the character of Tumi. MaDuma is an assertive woman who speaks her mind to her husband. She tells her husband to look for a job in a stern voice, having decided to forsake her former politeness (Sithole, 2015:10). The black female character of MaDuma dictates to her husband her opinion. She roars to her husband as she declares, "don't bring your hunger to me. I've got my own problems!" (Sithole, 2015:2).

Sithole creates the character of Nomsa who is leading the Grinding Stone, Gxumani Women's Organization to epitomise power (2015:74). Sithole acknowledges that women as a group are facing many different challenges in their communities. As a result, they need to think of strategies to deal with these problems, and to do so he gives the female characters agency. He highlights the issues that they face which they find solutions to from their inner strength. The group of women are a powerful unity that are taking the initiative in their community. Nomsa's character is admirable and she is an activist. Other women love and fear her, they describe her as being very strict about punctuality (Sithole, 2015:74). Sithole's writing is different from Mda's because he highlights the issues that women face in society, he even offers them solutions for their difficult circumstances. The women are agents of change in their lives; they fight the oppressive systems in their communities.

Sithole's black female characters have a purpose of empowering women with a sense of resilience and avoidance of victimhood. Self-pity and helplessness are not the emotions to indulge in. Rather dwell on courage, a sense of self-worth and commitment to relentless struggle to attain the objectives of a powerful black female. One of the characters, MaMchunu, prays as follows at a Grinding Stone meeting; "we also pray that you liberate us from male

oppression and protect us and our daughters from men who have become animals who rape and kill us” (Sithole, 2015:75). The issue of rape and killing of women in this narrative is highlighted as a specific problem; it is not covered as a broad social problem without a distinct term. The group of women discusses extensively the rape and killings of the female species, issues that affect them on a personal level. Nomsa who is heading the meeting starts by reading newspaper clippings that have horrific stories of women’s suffering at the hands of men. She takes twenty minutes reading the excerpts which involves some kind of violence against women emphasizing the important points (Sithole, 2015:76). She gets to a particular story and reads:

This is about a seventy-year old man who raped his six-year-old granddaughter. Thanks to our efforts against the patriarchal legal system, the bastard is serving a life sentence in jail. It’s a pity, though, that this is likely to be the shortest life sentence ever. But we hope that the filthy thing will continue his sentence in hell if he dies soon (Sithole, 2015:76).

Sithole displays the power that these women have; they have a fighting spirit against injustice and he portrays them as victorious women. They are not submissive women who are accepting the behaviour of men as normal, instead, they act. The more black female characters are represented as heroines, the more potential there is for the written text to impact culture and society for the better. The initiative that women are taking is breaking the stereotype that women need a male saviour as frequently depicted in most narratives including Mda’s character of Kristin. The plot of *Hunger eats a man* suggests that women should participate in life fully as men’s equals, as people who can reconstruct and redefine the labels given to them. Nomsa continues reading the newspaper articles until she gets to the local newspaper, *The Eye for people*. The article is written about a man in Ndlalidindoda (Hunger eats a man), Mr Dlamini, who has been raping his eleven-year old daughter for a very long time (Sithole, 2015:78). Nomsa expresses her anger by adding, “to prove that this is an animal, when he was asked why he did such an evil thing, he said it was his duty as a farmer to taste his fruits first, before selling it in the market!” (Sithole, 2015:78). Gqola affirms that “some men admitted that they saw nothing wrong with raping” (Gqola, 2015:2). It is clear that these men were not ignorant of their actions but they “raped because they could, and in this decision was the implicit statement that some women did not matter, therefore violating them is permissible” (Gqola, 2015:3).

In radical feminism texts, the “women characters suffer physical and psychological violence at the hands of men” (Arndt, 2002:34). It is apparent that men view women as weak individuals who will not attempt to challenge their power. This is the main reason there is an urgent need

to portray black women's strength unapologetically. The characterisation of the Grinding Stone women inspires action even from the readers; the women in the meeting cannot help but utter their disbelief at what is happening in their own community. Nomsa reads another story which is as bad as the previous one; this story is about a "young man who was found raping his disabled mother" (Sithole, 2015:78). Newspaper articles and even television news of such horrific crimes against women have become very common. The nation will get shaken for a period of time and women will protest outside court but after a while it all subsides. Sithole is challenging society and even the different feminisms that exist. He uses radical feminism to solve the crimes against women. In radical African feminist texts, it is argued that men discriminate and mistreat women (Arndt, 2002:34). MaDuma proposes:

We think it's no use lamenting these violations without action. Instead of recounting these evil violation deeds and in the process hurting ourselves even more, we think it's better to pay a visit to these men you have just spoken about (Sithole, 2015:78).

It is important to highlight that these women are not acting on emotions; they are very aware of their actions and even possible consequences. Nomsa ponders MaDuma's words that taking the law into their own hands is problematic, it involves violence, and violence has harmful repercussions (Sithole, 2015:79). In the text, "sisterhood or solidarity among women is shown as a possible source of solace or a vague anchor of hope, it actually gives them courage" (Arndt, 2002:34). It is a possibility that Sithole is depicting that women are as capable of executing violence as men are, making women equal to men not just subordinates or victims. The Grinding Stone women agree that they must not kill these men but remove what makes them behave like animals as:

MaShandu is assigned the duty of cutting off Muntukabani's balls. She now has her sharp knife, and as she holds it in her hands, she feels some unknown force take over her body. She remembers her late abusive husband and recalls that she had held a knife like this when she, with her two daughters, stabbed him to death. That happened many years ago, but right now, as she is holding the knife in her hands, she hungers again for the blood of a man. She calls forcibly for Muntukabani to come out, and when he doesn't, she breaks open the door and enters. She does her job so sharply and neatly that it is only after she has finished that she thinks about the horror of holding a man's private parts (Sithole, 2015:84-85).

The man is left powerless because the weapon that he was using to exercise his power has been removed. Gqola states that "rape is a crime of power, and in patriarchal societies, all men can access patriarchal power" (2015:12). Sithole as a black male writer is highly praised for breaking stereotypes: firstly, his storyline does not have prostitutes. Secondly, he allows a different feminist position "where women kill men who violate women, where women do so for themselves and in defence of one another" (Gqola, 2015:10). The Grinding Stone women

“are speaking for the women who cannot speak for themselves and they are using the only language men understand-violence” (Sithole, 2015:105).

Gqola believes that “rape is not a moment but a language, and she desires to untangle, decipher the knots, codes of this language, to surface its structure, understand the rules, vocabularies and what it communicates” (2015:22). Sithole denies the rapist the willpower and humanity that makes them different from animals. A man is found by the Grinding Stone women having sex with a dog in front of his mother (Sithole, 2015:83). As a male writer, he is clearly communicating to the male species that rape is not humane, it is an act performed by animals; he is warning men that they are beyond disgrace as a group. Sithole indeed interrupts all the narratives of rape culture as understood. He empowers the black women in his storyline. The struggle against women’s oppression and violence will not go away until it is minimised; the representation of black women in narratives will contribute towards diminishing these structures against women.

Boyce-Davies (1986) provides a framework of the characteristics of African feminism. One of them is “that it respects African woman’s status as mother but questions obligatory motherhood and the traditional favouring of sons” (Boyce-Davies, 1986:8-10). In Sithole’s text, Nomsa is married to Bongani, a man that desperately wants to have children even if it means “going to the traditional healer to gets herbs to impregnate her despite her contraceptive pills” (Sithole, 2015:89). The traditional healer is angered by Bongani’s dilemma as he shouts, “if I was your father, I would not let your wife piss on your head like this. You are a disgrace to the male population” (Sithole, 2015:92). African institutions of tradition do not give a woman a choice if she desires children or not; it is an expectation as a married woman. African feminism challenges this notion that a woman must be forced to have children, Nomsa does not want to have children, she asserts that she is not a slave to bear children (Sithole, 2015:21). The character of Bongani is depicted as someone who fears his wife because she is “tall and tough”, and as a schoolgirl she demonstrated her fighting abilities (Sithole, 2015:87).

Using Bongani’s character, Sithole highlights that not all men are monstrous, as a result, they deserve to be treated as individuals because they are also fighting their own battles. Nomsa “appreciates her good man who understands her and does not abuse her because of her attitude towards pregnancy and sex” (Sithole, 2015:105). Nomsa’s character is complicated by her reasons for not wanting children. She tells her “husband that when she was young, she was raped by her own father until she got pregnant, her mother forced her to abort the baby and she

made a vow to never have children in honour of her dead baby” (Sithole, 2015:115). Nomsa’s passion for women’s rights is understandable since she was a victim, but Sithole denies her the victimhood label; she overcame her obstacles and is inspiring other women to be agents of change in their lives. Her character depicts strength and has the potential to make a difference in other women’s lives.

Bongani is empathetic towards Nomsa’s tragic experiences; he tells her “I would not have pushed you and tried all these ploys to get children. If I had known all of this, I would have been a different man towards you” (Sithole, 2015:115). Bongani’s words show that he is an understanding man who loves his wife unconditionally, but he was pressured by the traditional system to prove his manhood. According to Da Silva, “African feminists recognise the necessity of constructing an oppositional thought in order to empower oppressed men and women or the whole oppressed society” (Da Silva, 2004:135). It is evident that Bongani is pressured by tradition to have children as a way to prove his manhood, but the empathy he has for his wife’s childhood challenges tradition. African feminism is an inclusive movement that recognises men and women of Africa in a common struggle to emancipate themselves from Western ideologies and practice what works for them in an African context without disempowering women. Initially, Bongani thought that Nomsa does not want him to be a man (Sithole, 2015:20). Therefore, manhood also needs to be redefined beyond producing children.

Sithole tries to defy the stereotypes that are common in gender discourses, however, the idea that women are at war with each other is evident in *Hunger eats a man*. MaDuma is seeking employment but decides against it when she “realises that she cannot manage to work for a black person like herself, especially not for another black woman. She believes that black people, especially black women, oppress other black women if they have the privilege of being their employer” (Sithole, 2015:74). The typical black female characters of domestic workers are also included in this storyline, but they are not the centre of the plot; “these are normally women who work as domestics, cleaning and washing for their masters and also taking care of their children. Sometimes these lucky women can be seen taking their young masters to school or creche” (Sithole, 2015:73). Black women need to occupy better positions than domestic workers when it comes to employment. The protagonist of Hlomu in Busani-Dube’s book is a qualified journalist in Johannesburg (Busani-Dube, 2015:5). In *Zandile-the resolute*, the main character is determined to complete her law degree even though her husband is against it (Busani-Dube, 2015c: 96). Positive and affirming representations of black women, by artists who are influential in society is very significant for this project; it is not an answer but it is a

tool that is work in progress towards a goal. Robbins writes a critical analysis of the portrayal of female characters:

In their insistence that images of women are not autonomous, art and cultural historians have traced developments in ideas about representation. They show that ideal images of femininity have a history that maps onto cultural changes through time; the ideal is not then a fixed entity, timeless and immutable, but something that has changed through differing social and historical circumstances, and something, therefore, that can change again: perhaps this time through the agency of female subjects reclaiming their images for themselves (2000:66).

Robbins demonstrates that female images need to change. Females in general but black females in particular, need to reclaim their power and deny misrepresentation. The victim position of black women in the past was determined by the context of the time. Now times have changed; black women are powerful and making a difference; these images need to be replicated in fiction. MaDuma tells her priest husband, “I have made up my mind. I am going to see a sangoma (traditional healer). I don’t care what people say. In times like this, one needs things that are tangible” (Sithole, 2015:121). The focus is not on the traditional healer but on MaDuma’s initiative to act for her family. Her husband’s character is a pathetic man who only has pride, and pride is not feeding his hungry family. During such testing circumstances, the man is only concerned about not getting the bishop promotion (Sithole, 2015:121). MaDuma may be a rural black woman but she is utilising tools that are available to her to assist her family financially. She informs her husband, “I have spoken to many women who have actually got the money. Tomorrow, I am going to register Zandi. R100 for free is better than nothing” (Sithole, 2015:139). The female characters are finding practical solutions to their problems of hunger in Ndlalidindoda. Sithole has made these black women courageous, in their context they are depicting power that is not frequently portrayed in texts. His characterisation of the black female is similar to a certain degree to Busani-Dube’s representation; although, he does have a few stereotypes, his text largely depicts empowered black women.

Sithole highlights women’s contribution towards the struggle against poverty which is the main theme in *Hunger eats a man*. The roles that black women play in their communities are seldom discussed or accorded spaces of recognition, the acknowledgements tend to be given to men. Da Silva believes that the “deconstruction of stereotypes in literature is a tool to empowering black females” (2004:131). The black female characters in *Hunger eats a man* are written as courageous people who use their strength and power of creativity to ensure that their dreams of escaping unhealthy environments and poverty are fulfilled as depicted by MaDuma. Sithole illustrates a portrayal of black women that is consciously and intentionally written to express

social change, reconstruct the historical position of power that they have and reject the image of victimisation. The black woman in African literature must be given the platform to voice her ideas in the economic empowerment and political spheres of her society. The protagonists in Busani-Dube's narratives show the battles that black women face and most significantly she gives them strategies to fight their battles.

Scholars such as Molaria Ogundipe-Leslie (1994) argue that a female writer has a commitment and responsibilities in her art. Her two primary responsibilities are "first to tell about being a woman; secondly, to describe reality from a woman's view, a woman's perspective" (Ogundipe-Leslie, 1994:57). Busani-Dube fulfils these responsibilities with her female protagonists, each title of the book is named after the female protagonist of the story. Each woman is narrating her story and experiences in her way which makes the story authentic. In *Hlomu-the wife*, the protagonist introduces herself, "My name is Mahlomu Dladla. I was born and raised in KwaMashu Township in Durban" (Busani-Dube, 2015a:32). This black woman owns this narrative and she will tell the story in her way which will relate to other women. The characterisation of black women can make other women either feel valued or devalued in society. As a result, the craft of writing by women is vital in the literary canon. Ogundipe-Leslie states that a black woman carries six mountains on her back; the symbol of a mountain is a metaphor of all the struggles that the black woman goes through (1994:30). The "first is oppression from outside, second is the heritage of tradition, third is the backwardness, fourth the man, fifth the race and the last one is herself" (Ogundipe-Leslie, 1994:35).

The second mountain, the heritage of tradition is illustrated in *Zandile-the resolute*. The women live double lives, one life is in Johannesburg in the suburbs and another is in the rural areas of KwaZulu-Natal in Greytown where they perform traditional functions (Busani-Dube, 2015b:254). Traditionally, Zandile is expected to return to her father's house for the lobola negotiations even though she left her home in an appalling state after committing murder. Her father says to the lobola negotiators that "he wanted a goat to cleanse his house because Zandile splattered blood all over it by killing her mother" (Busani-Dube, 2015b:265). Tradition hinders black women in their lives as Zandile observes that "it's a good thing white folks don't have to pay lobola and go through all these ceremonies that we go through, otherwise he'd be broke by now" (Busani-Dube, 2015b:267). She is referring to the white man who is getting married for the third time. The mountain of tradition that women carry is a burden because it does not contribute to women's emancipation. It actually hinders their progress and success in the name of respecting tradition.

The fourth mountain, the man is evident in *Hlomu-the wife* and *Naledi-his love*. Hlomu is physically abused by her husband, Mqhele. He represents the fourth mountain as outlined by Ogundipe-Leslie. Hlomu suggests:

Maybe it's my fault. I made him angry by not responding to him. Maybe I should have followed him to the bedroom when he came in, to find out what happened. Maybe I shouldn't interfere in family matters. I sound like a typical abused woman right now, don't I? (Busani-Dube, 2015a:97).

The actions of men towards women transform men into mountains, heavy burdens to carry every day. But what makes Hlomu different from other abused female characters is that she is aware of the abuse, the internalised inferiority of gender is challenged by her intellect that refuses to be subjected to violence. Busani-Dube gives the character of Hlomu courage to return the violence she has been enduring from her husband. Hlomu mentions, "I feel him rising from where he is sitting and coming closer to me. My foot lands on his stomach, he almost falls on his back but manages to balance, I couldn't stop myself. I've just hit my husband" (Busani-Dube, 2015a:189). She also verbalises her frustrations about his actions as she tells him "Mqhele, you can't beat up women, no matter what they do to you, there's just no excuse for it" (Busani-Dube, 2015a:248). In *Naledi-his love*, men are also depicted as the fourth mountain. Naledi cannot enjoy her new relationship with Qhawe wholeheartedly because she has fears from her past relationship. She contemplates, "he's going to beat me! I know he will! What have I gotten myself into? Please not this! Not this again! My ex sometimes did this when he was about to hit me. He drove to a secluded place where no one would see us" (Busani-Dube, 2015c:87). The insecurities and fears that she has were created by a man, which validates Ogundipe-Leslie's fourth mountain.

The fifth mountain that the black woman carries is her race. In *Zandile-the resolute*, the white Afrikaner policeman affirms the mountain of race that a black woman carries. He claims, "that's the problem with you people, money goes to your head. Who told you that you could be rich? You are supposed to be maids and garden boys, I will put you all back in your place" (Busani-Dube, 2015b:132). A black woman's skin colour hinders her success and it also positions her as a subordinate amongst other women. Busani-Dube is not focusing on race but she shows a glimpse of racism that black females face. The women that are married to the Zulu brothers are all each other's support system, Busani-Dube provides friendships as a necessary tool that helps them conquer any obstacle they may face.

Sithole is a black male author who represents his female characters in similar ways as Busani-Dube. The women understand their problems and the authors give them agency to face their challenges. Gertrude Fester asserts that more black women writers need to contribute to the literature. She critiques the black females as she declares:

But where are the black women writers? One often hears. All too soon the commission has to be assigned, the same well-known white writer gets the contract and so the cycle continues. But black women are all around-washing dishes, cleaning floors, typing in offices, rearing children and nursing the old and infirm ... doing everything but writing. As in most professions and careers, the position of black women writers starkly reflects the inequalities of the broader society. Black women are on the lowest rung of the ladder of power, privilege and opportunity. The majority of black women are still uneducated and concentrated in jobs like farm labourers, domestic workers and 'unskilled' work (Fester, 2000:3).

Fester validates the purpose of this research study by acknowledging that black women need better representation, and only black female writers can authentically tell their own stories. Black women writers are required to represent themselves better than they have been in the past. Women should champion their cause to achieve success. Being at the lowest of the hierarchy has to come to an end because there are many influential and powerful black women in South Africa and worldwide. The challenge is not solely for black women writers but also black male writers to reject the stereotypes of black women. Chinua Achebe (cited in Ohale, 2010:12) expresses his thoughts on the empowerment of female characters by declaring "I'm saying the woman herself will be in the forefront in designing what her role is going to be, with the humble cooperation of men". Therefore, women cannot expect men to champion their liberation and empowerment when they are not leading the project. Black women are powerful, and such characteristics should be realistically depicted in literature so that cultures are positively influenced. Black women are multifaceted people; therefore, it is a misrepresentation to portray them only as victims. Moreover, Chukwama Helen (cited in Ohale, 2010) describes the female character in African literature as:

...a facile lack-lustre human being, the quiet member of a household, content only to bear children, unfulfilled if she does not, and handicapped if she bears only daughters. In the home, she was not part of decision-making both as a daughter, wife and mother even when the decisions affected her directly (2010:2).

The linear portrayal of black female characters is criticised by African feminists because it is not a true reflection of women's capabilities. Robinson (1991:11) argues that "women's self-representation most often proceeds by a double movement: simultaneously *against* normative constructions of Woman that are continually produced by hegemonic discourses and social

practices, and *toward* new forms of representation that disrupt those normative constructions”. Robinson highlights that a female writer has to reconstruct her identity in literature and also deconstruct the female victims that have become the status quo. Therefore, the woman writer has to challenge the voiceless female characters, and also the action that revolves around a male character as depicted in *Black diamond* in the character of Don. African feminists are disrupting the status quo and reclaiming women’s rights and position in society including their representation in literature. As a result, writers such as Busani-Dube are characterised as the “new homegrown intelligentsia, educated, erudite and probing, fired with the zeal of having a voice and being heard” (Ohale, 2010:3). Their efforts to present “brand-new, assertive and individualistic females have helped to salvage the lop-sided image that male writers have created” (Ohale, 2010:3). Busani-Dube’s female characters demonstrate “positively assertive, resilient, resourceful and encouraging” individuals in her novels *Hlomu-the wife*, *Zandile-the resolute* and *Naledi-his love* (Ohale, 2010:4). Nkosinathi Sithole is amongst the few male African writers who are elevating their female characters, centralising them and focusing on purposefully empowering them. African feminists are suggesting that the deconstruction of female representation should not be limited to adult literature but also extend to children’s books (Ohale, 2010:7). Children are socialised and conditioned from a young age by the stories they hear and read.

Chapter Three: The Power of Black Women

3.1 Black women's influence in South African history

The word power has different meanings for different people, depending on their experiences and frames of references. The systems, institutions, races, cultures and individuals in positions of power are clearly defined in society and globally. Strengths of marginalised groups such as black women tend not to be highlighted in the records of history. Many black women possess reasoning capabilities, therefore in a just society they require the same credit that would be given to men. History books highlight men's achievements and white women's victories, and black women are known as the victims. The images of poverty, femicide, unemployment, illiteracy and many more other social challenges tend to have a black female face. Borotho argues that "society mirrors what the media projects" (2019:342). However, the black female did not choose this victim image to be projected about her, because she understands that she is more than her circumstances. As a result, she needs to voice who she is and what she is capable of. Borotho (2019:388) defines the black woman as:

You who is born of power
You who is clothed in strength
You who is rooted in love
Fountain of wisdom
Pain could not defeat you
Lies could never destroy you
You who blows breaths of healing
You who breaks chains with her whispers (VI.23-30)

The above stanza is a celebration of black women's divine power, their abilities and wisdom. They are full of love, unconquered and victorious in life. History has made black women believe that they have always been victims; their roles are in the private spaces submitting to men. However, the Zulu monarchy reveals a different perspective from the mainstream history, it had "female dynasties, regents and rulers who took up positions of leadership through periods of nation-building and wars of resistance" (Shamase, 2014:1). The most well-known and popular woman in the Zulu monarchy was Queen Nandi, the mother of King Shaka Zulu. King Shaka was "one of the Zulu kingdom's greatest kings in Southern Africa" (Borotho, 2019:379). Queen Nandi faced many social obstacles in her life, but she was described as a "strong-willed, and domineering character" (Shamase, 2014:6). Queen Nandi was humiliated and rejected by her community due to her out of wedlock pregnancy. Ntuli (2020:6) asserts that "Queen Nandi was one of the greatest single parents who ever lived", when confronted with trials and

tribulations she gave her son hope. She instilled the values of unity and will power. Despite her challenges, she was her son's strength and she persistently raised him alone to be the greatest king known in Southern Africa. Shamase states that "Nandi was aware of the norms and values governing the behaviour of girls and women, but chose to ignore the rules. She sat as she pleased and this was an indication that she had a mind of her own. Nandi would do whatever pleased her in her personal space" (2014:6). Makhosazane Xaba celebrates Queen Nandi's character and leadership by defending her legacy through a poem that reads:

...It will not even mention Nandi. It will focus on her relationship
with her sisters Mawa and Mmama, her choice not to marry,
her preference not to have children and her power as a ruler.
It will speak of her assortment of battle strategies and her charisma as a leader.
It will render a compilation of all the pieces of advice she gave to men
of abaQulusi who bowed to receive them, smiled to thank her,
but in public never acknowledged her, instead called her a mad witch (Xaba, 2020: II).

Queen Nandi represents a black woman who did not conform to society's standards. She advised men on battle strategies however, writers focus on her son's strength and ability negating the woman that was in the background. Shamase (2014:4) argues that most women in the Zulu kingdom were "operating behind the scenes". The same men that took her advice in the private spaces, ridiculed her in the public spaces to appear masculine. Ntuli (2020:2) points out that "through the patriarchal lens of historians, women are presented as the weaker gender and inconsequential. Their role is generally overlooked in the building, maintaining, protecting and sustaining the monarchy". The poem reveals that she had a beautiful stable relationship with her sisters. She contributed to the success of the Zulu kingdom even though history always gives her son all the accolades. She is described as a woman that "never lost hope in life; she was resilient; she never succumbed to pressure, and she knew her worth. She instilled these values on her son, shaping him into one of the greatest leaders ever lived. Nandi always reminded her son that, despite his circumstances, he would one day be greatest king" (Ntuli, 2020:8). King Shaka was aware of his mother's role and position in the kingdom hence, after her death "Shaka and his people were thrown into a general hysteria. Thousands of people and cattle were killed and there was an enforced year of mourning" (Shamase, 2014:5). The poem portrays her as a courageous woman, and Zulu history is not complete without recognising her power and greatness. African feminism's main objective is to create opportunities for women to actively participate in the management and decision making of their society. Ngobese (2016:5) affirms that "it was a fact that tracing from King Shaka's time, there were female regiments that were assembled from different regions". This fact portrays women's

participation in warfare and Shaka's contribution in gender equality. Queen Nandi was an influential individual in the management of the Zulu kingdom. Her bold and uncompromising character earned her respect from both men and women.

Chengu's (2015) historical perspective resonates with the research study's objective of examining black female power. He explains that "unbeknown to many, most of human history took place in Africa, where women were equal, if not superior, to men. For thousands of years, African societies were matriarchal and they prospered" (Chengu, 2015: n.p.). Zulu culture and history did value and cherish women. Black women living in Africa were liberated and were treated with dignity. As a result, there are many African heroines such as "Queen Aminatu one of the greatest warriors of Zazzau, Makeda Queen Sheba of Ethiopia believed to have killed the serpent king, Queen Nefertiti of Egypt popular for her feminine beauty and power, Queen Ranavalona the First of Madagascar known for her defiant character against colonialism and Queen Cleopatra of Egypt world's famous female ruler" (Borotho, 2019:376-378). These women are evidence that African women were powerful even if history does not highlight their leadership and intellect. They are the predecessors of resistance, activism and greatness that is within black females. Borotho asserts that "these are powerful women who existed through history. There are many we don't know of, and many we will never know of, but the little history we have must be preserved for our girls to know, that just as this Divine Feminine power existed then, it still exists today" (2019:379).

Another black woman who portrayed greatness in Zulu history is Princess Mkabayi. The princess was a twin at birth, but she exhibited a stronger character than her sister, which resulted in many people disapproving of her (Ntuli, 2020:3). She also had a brother Sensangakhona who was king after their father's death. When her brother also died, Princess Mkabayi declared herself a regent for Sensangakhona, and her goal was to continue the Zulu traditions and culture. Ntuli (2020:3) maintains that "this was unheard of in Zulu history but men succumbed to her guile and domineering character". She devoted her whole life managing the Zulu kingdom because her parents had worked hard to build the monarchy. Princess Mkabayi played a significant role in the development of the Zulu kingdom and she legitimises the African feminist movement because she:

Assumed powerful attributes that were associated with men, thereby contradicting the stereotype that women were docile and submissive. She was a brave, quick-in-the-head who was prepared to take risks. It could be argued that Mkabayi lived in a male-dominated traditional setting. She survived in a cutthroat environment where her decisions were questioned with cynicism because of her sex. She was in a position

where men were supposed to rule the country and women obeyed the rules (Ntuli, 2020:4).

Women's historical contribution is evident when Princess Mkabayi's life is examined. She was an active participant in her community, she was the decision-maker and she made a great leader despite her sex. Her rulership was equally great to male rulers if not more powerful, however such narratives of black women are not highlighted. Princess Mkabayi was considered approachable by her people; they could inform her about their challenges and grievances. Some scholars argue that her rule was founded on womanist ideas and values as womanists are "concerned about the entire community and are holistic in approach, which means that both men and women can come together in a dialogue to define and address the needs of the entire community" (Ntuli, 2020:5). This idea is characteristic of African feminism values too, as a result Princess Mkabayi was "presented as a radical, hard core feminist" (Ntuli, 2020:6). She did not regard herself as an object whose purpose in life was to sexually please men and live in the confinement of her home doing domestic duties.

Young black girls deserve to read narratives about the great female warriors of their kind. To recognise themselves in historical characters so that they are empowered to overcome any challenges they face. Black girls need to understand that in their ancestry lies power and therefore, that same power is within themselves. Borotho reminds the black women that "our identity is who we are. It is deeply rooted in our femininity as African women. Femininity is our greatest strength, and it is our greatest power" (2019:372). As a result, the narrative of shame and weakness associated with black women has to be deconstructed.

Furthermore, Winnie Madikizela Mandela is another black female warrior in South African history. She was married to Nelson Mandela, after a while of separation they divorced. Winnie may have been married to the most popular political activist during apartheid, but she was an activist on her own right. She was outspoken, courageous and respected by many South Africans because she endured "incarceration, torturing, banning and harassment" for the freedom of black people (Pohlandt-McCormick, 2000:585). It is believed that she was responsible for the Soweto Uprising in 1976, a black student protest against the imposition of Afrikaans as the medium of instruction at schools (Pohlandt-McCormick, 2000:588). This protest changed the course of history, because the students were successful even though some lost their lives. The 1976 uprising greatly influenced the language policies as currently known in South Africa. Krog (2009:59) draws similarities between the treatment of Winnie Madikizela Mandela and Sarah Baartman. She discerns that both "endured the horrors of European eyes,

were desecrated beyond their death”. However, their tribulations do not define them, as Borocho affirms:

These titles glorify the perpetrator, by taking away what I am and redefining me by what was done to me. It happened to me but I didn’t become it. This is what owning my power means. It means owning my narrative and which parts of my life define that narrative (2019:325).

Therefore, these black women are a testament that challenges will arise but one cannot be viewed through the lens of the unfortunate incident. When black women own their narrative, they leave no space to be redefined by others. The power of black women in South Africa has existed for many years, it simply has not been highlighted as much as their victimhood. It is imperative that girls understand “that they are their own power, and that power is a state of being, not an outward action or anything outside of them” (Borocho, 2019:367). As a result, defining their narrative is imperative for the preservation of their identity. Busani-Dube’s black female characters echoes the power of their ancestors who represent black female power and greatness.

3.2 The power of black female characters in Busani-Dube’s novels

Black women do not have the dignified representation that white women have in literature. Generally, black girls read about white heroines who are so far removed from their world, that the heroine does not resemble them or their circumstances. Chimamanda Adichie introduces the danger of a single-story, in her TEDTalk, she refers to the African continent and how it is subjected to a single narrative (Adichie, 2009a). Black women locally and globally have been victims of narratives. There are many stories written about black women’s hair, bodies and; lives by white women and male authors who write from a single lens of understanding. Adichie pinpoints that “we can’t talk about a single-story without talking about power” (Adichie, 2009a). The individual that writes a single-story position his or herself as superior to the subject they write about. Hence, “they appropriate the rights and authority to record the stereotypes that are created by a single-story” (Adichie, 2009a). Adichie further highlights that “power is the ability to not just tell a story of another person but to make it a definition of that person” (Adichie, 2009a). This chapter will examine the agency and strength that the black female protagonists are endowed with in *Hlomu-the wife*, *Zandile-the resolute* and *Naledi-his love*.

Adichie identifies that “the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue but, they are not complete” (Adichie, 2009a). There is an urgent need to challenge stereotypes about black

women by narrating multiple stories that depict their experiences, not reduce them to a single-story of victimisation. These single stories are created to bring shame to the subjects about their experiences, making them appear mindless, primitive, irrational and worse of all making them believe the single-story as their truth. In literature, many books have been written featuring black female characters; and in most of them the black woman is undignified and helpless. Adichie points out that the danger of a single-story is that “it shows people as one thing, over and over again and they become the stereotype and the consequence of a single-story is that it robs people of their dignity” (Adichie, 2009a). Sarah Baartman was portrayed as a penetrable object, destructible, defeated and denied humanity. Mothoagae (2016:67) argues that “such a stereotype narrative about Africans was linked to misconceptions, rumours, and lies. The outcome of this was that people who never went to Africa and met Africans accepted these stories as truth and were cited in the scientific literature of the day”.

Busani-Dube portrays the danger of a single-story with her character Zandile; but she also gives her character strength to reject the single-story. Referring to media headlines about her, Zandile observes that, “this is how they’ve summed up my life, who I am and what I am” (Busani-Dube, 2015b:152). The media labelled her as a jailbird and convicted murderer without knowledge of the full story. Zandile’s character rejects this single-story by approaching the journalist who published the story. She then narrates her side of the story because there is never a single-story about anything or anyone. There are dimensions of truths that wait to be unravelled by individuals who are courageous enough. Zandile threateningly states to the journalist, “First of all, Bruce, I didn’t ‘finally agree’ to come here. You’ve never asked me to come here. But this morning, I decided, after watching my life story and experiences being distorted, I decided that I needed to come out here and tell it myself” (Busani-Dube, 2015b:172). The character’s pronouncement reveals that the male journalist, Bruce, has made it appear as though he initiated the interview with her thus seeking to maintain a position of power. Bruce’s mindset is similar to the white supremacists who believed themselves to be subjects and everything else as objects to be studied. The man initially thought he was the subject that produces knowledge and he can disseminate it as he desired. He attempts to write her narrative from a patriarchal perspective to promote masculine power. However, Zandile unravels his arrogance and lack of ethics which he demonstrates by writing incomplete truths about her.

Adichie’s *The thing around your neck* maintains the vanity of single-story writers with the character of Mr Cobbledick. He is described as having an “expression of a person who thought

himself better than the people he knew about” (Adichie, 2009b:120). Bruce, the journalist, is such a person. Zandile problematises his stance as follows:

See, that’s the problem. You’ve concluded that all the information you have is true. But none of those people you’ve spoken to know me. I did share a cell with that woman for months but everything she said to you was a lie. We got along very well; we became friends. She contracted TB and was moved to a single cell in the prison hospital. She asked to see me on the day she was released, she wanted to say goodbye and wish me well. I only told her the story of why I was in prison once and that was it (Busani-Dube, 2015b:173).

By doing this, Zandile is reclaiming her life and identity. She is taking control of her story and telling it her way. Collins (2000:99) asserts that “finding a voice to express a collective, self-defined Black women’s standpoint remains a core theme” in black communities, as Zandile attempts to define her position as a black woman. The process of reclaiming one’s story is not easy; it requires the subject to be so angry that she acts. Zandile asserts that “they haven’t seen anything yet, I am going to shock them today, they will know me” (Busani-Dube, 2015b:170). She is fuming about the single-story told about her life; it is undignified and unfair. A South African black feminist Olwethu Makhathini justifies the anger of black women, she argues that “I am angry because I care. I am angry because I want to be and feel free. I care about how the world is invested in breaking my people and me. I want to fuck it all up. Set everything on fire and start all over” (2017:187). Thus, the one-way black women deal with their anger is to challenge the single stories; narrate positive experiences and write the narratives that counteract single stories about themselves. Chima affirms that “only a handful of literary contents can be accounted as having a correct fictional representation of women outside of her traditional roles and cultural expectation” (2015:7).

The danger of a single-story is its manifestation of shame on the individual. Zandile is demonised as a cold-blooded murderer, and her name has been dragged through the mud (Busani-Dube, 2015b:170). Acclaimed Kenyan feminist and poet Shailja Patel points out that when “you want to understand how power works in any society, watch who is carrying the shame and who is doing the shaming” (cited in Gqola, 2015:38). In the novel, Zandile, a black woman, is being shamed for her past actions, and a man is doing the shaming. Gqola also agrees with Patel as she adds that “shame is a function of oppression. It has everything to do with who is valued and who is invisibilised in any society, and shame is the product of dehumanisation” (2015:38). The culture of shame plays a similar role as violence because it victimises the powerless. Busani-Dube depicts how information can be distorted to fit the structures of power,

and the shame grows until the shamed are invisible. Shame silences a person, and it is a “social and psychological phenomenon” (Scheff, 2003:241).

Zandile has been depicted as a cold-blooded murderer and is socially excluded from the community. This enhances the emotion of shame within her. At the same time, it is psychologically defeated by a person who chooses to confront the dark world of shame. Zandile maintains that she refuses to be a sorry case, it means she psychologically decides to conquer shame (Busani-Dube, 2015b:169). She chooses to acknowledge shame and it seems, “it could be the glue that holds relationships and societies together, and unacknowledged shame is the force that blows them apart” (Scheff, 2003:258). Her acknowledgement of shame liberates her, and it also lifts the emotion of shame which transforms her from a monster to a fallible human. Zandile breaks her silence and shame by narrating her story to the journalist thus:

Now, like I told you, I’ve had to fight all my life, that’s why I am still standing. I am currently fighting for my children to love and accept me, for my past to leave me and set me free, for my mistakes to stop haunting me. I am here fighting for my dignity, for all these people you’ve been feeding false information all week to see me as a human being who is trying to get a second chance in life (Busani-Dube, 2015b:174).

Zandile’s strength lies in her ability to liberate herself, to reject her single-story and acknowledge her past mistakes. Her refusal to be defined by society is admirable. Owning her shame is a bold decision, and it disempowers society from victimising her in the future. The media will no longer have sensational news to write about her because she has taken ownership of her story, she has also redeemed herself to the public. Her husband tells her, “No Zah, you did well, you did great. You stood up, and I am proud of you, for all this” (Busani-Dube, 2015b:176). Busani-Dube gives Zandile’s character inner strength that rises above shame and Hewett highlights that:

Claiming a voice is an internal act that results from tapping into the authority derived from an individual’s lived experience. It does not depend upon external sources of power, whether institutional, cultural, or discursive; to the contrary, it often challenges them (2005:88).

Zandile has an unfathomable spirit that transcends social norms and rules. This unleashing of inner power by a black female protagonist is rare. She is fearless and most importantly, she articulates her thoughts in her private space and the public sphere. Busani-Dube makes this character heard, visible and recognised and she liberates her from all institutional, cultural and psychological subjugation. For the first time in years, Zandile can sleep peacefully and with the bedroom door closed (Busani-Dube, 2015b:176). The character of Zandile draws our

attention to inner power and challenges known stereotypes about black female characters as victims who are powerless in directing their trajectory for their own benefit. As Maya Angelou identified that “there is nothing that can dim the light which comes from within” (cited in Curry, 2014). Borotho concurs that:

I don't empower you. I recognise that you are powerful. Women need platforms and opportunities to express the power that already exists in them. We are already powerful in every way, shape and form. Our power is not dependant on what the next person does for us. Our power is dependent on us recognising that we are already powerful. No one can ignite what is not already with you (2019:107-8).

These sentiments by Borotho portray that black women are powerful; they simply need to awaken to their strength. Furthermore, Maya Angelou's reassuring words resonate with all of the female protagonists in Busani-Dube's trilogy. Chinweizu's study in *The anatomy of female power* provides an in-depth analysis of the different powers that women have. Hlomu's strength lies in being a great wife and mother, but she desires to occupy political spaces so that traditional roles do not define her. She understands that she has opportunities and the ability to achieve a career. According to Chinweizu, females have five pillars of female power which they utilise to their benefit (1990:14). These pillars are the “women's control over the womb, her control of the kitchen, her control over the cradle, psychological immaturity of man and tendency to be deranged by own excited penis” (Chinweizu, 1990:14). Hlomu is good at preparing her husband food to eat. She hands him a home-cooked meal with chillies and juice on a tray (Busani-Dube, 2015a:150). Chinweizu believes that the “power of the kitchen is also great, for it is the power over hunger. Hunger can break the hardest will, can reduce the headstrong man to whimpering obedience; can scatter a mighty army without wasting even a bullet” (1990:19). Hlomu seems to have the power in the kitchen that Chinweizu believes in. Her husband tells her that he has missed her cooking; he cannot fathom how he has survived without her cooking (Busani-Dube, 2015a:33). As someone who has great cooking skills, it is not surprising that Hlomu wants to open her own restaurant.

Hlomu is a protagonist that is self-aware, she understands everything that happens in her life is connected to the choices she makes or has made. This is reflected in her retrospective thoughts “I try to imagine what my life would be like if I hadn't gotten in that Sprinter” (Busani-Dube, 2015a:145). The Sprinter is a car that Mqhele was driving when he was still courting her. Hlomu's mind is imagining a different life had she not entered his car, which has led to a relationship, marriage, children and challenges. Hlomu comprehends that she is an active

participant in her life, not a victim of anything. The consequences in her life are a result of her actions and decisions made, she does not blame an invisible force. The characteristic of being aware of her feelings and thoughts makes the reader empathise with her. She is lovable because she is not perfect but her character is also believable. She tells her friend, Xolie, that she has to get her life back in order, she has to find something worthwhile to do with her time. She tells herself that being a housewife is not going to work and explores the idea of opening her own restaurant (Busani-Dube, 2015a:248). She desires to be more than a wife and mother, and the writer gives her the platform to be a business woman, wife and mother. Busani-Dube allows Hlomu to occupy all the spaces of power that she wants to occupy, both personal and political. The character of Hlomu depicts multidimensional characteristics of not only being an abused wife but also an achiever. The restaurant is her personal achievement as she mentions, “this must be the biggest thing I’ve ever done for myself and I am super excited” (Busani-Dube, 2015a:271).

African feminism believes in the idea of sisterhood, women supporting each other and rejoicing in each other’s accomplishments. Xolie gives Hlomu a gigantic hug and tells her that she is proud of her for starting the restaurant (Busani-Dube, 2015a:275). Feminist scholar, hooks, suggests that sisterhood is powerful, she writes:

We all knew firsthand that we had been socialised as females by patriarchy thinking to ourselves as inferior to men, to see ourselves as always and only in competition with one another for patriarchy approval, to look upon each other with jealousy, fear and hatred (2000:14).

Busani-Dube rejects this notion of females competing against each other, by making her characters compassionate and loving towards each other. They are committed to supporting one another, Xolie volunteered to go with Zandile to her home so that Zandile confronts her past. She lovingly tells Zandile, “you’re going to stay here and face this” (Busani-Dube, 2015b:283). These women share their dreams and encourage each other to achieve them. Hlomu suggests that the female characters need to go into the world and become whatever they want to be (Busani-Dube, 2015b:55). Xolie started an organisation that focused on female health, these black women are not victims or typical housewives (Busani-Dube, 2015b:96). They are living goal-driven lives that break the strict boundaries of traditional roles. It is also critical to understand that in all the three novels men are not the enemy but rather the patriarchal system that benefits men only. As a result; men have a choice to support their wives in their career aspirations. The writer redeems the character of Mqhele for beating his wife, by making him committed to his wife’s dreams. He responds to the journalist, “I think it’s more important

to me than it is to my wife. Just seeing her so happy and doing what she's always wanted to do. I am hoping this is the beginning of an empire and I know she is more than capable of it" (Busani-Dube, 2015a:274). Chima mentions that female writers are in a battle to get their voices heard. As a result, they create their female protagonist to "transcend the stereotypical limitations of the roles attributed to her character by the male creative fiction, by being politically emancipated and dynamic" as demonstrated by Busani-Dube's depiction of Hlomu (2015a:13). Hlomu is good at taking care of everyone. Chinweizu claims "to the management of her husband, a wife brings the highest possible professionalism" (1990:67). The character of Hlomu makes Chinweizu's thoughts valid as she teaches her husband how to use cutlery properly. She reminisces:

I remember I taught him to use a fork and knife the night before he went for his first formal meeting with mining company bosses. That meeting led to them getting the biggest business deal they had ever had, millions. He didn't even know the difference between a steak and a butter knife, I had to keep reminding him that knife on the right hand, fork on the left (Busani-Dube, 2015a:259).

At the beginning of the novel, Hlomu portrays the typical submissive traits of a woman. She cleans the house; she is a virgin and Hlomu is aware that this man is going to control her (Busani-Dube, 2015a:25). Hlomu's character is complex and complicated, and at first, she appears as a victimised wife. She narrates her physical harm, "I stay in that position, I am scared of getting another slap if I move my arms from my face. My crying and screaming doesn't stop him from hitting me on the back and thighs with his open hand" (Busani-Dube, 2015a:37). The reader is introduced to a black female character that can be labelled as the battered wife but one who understands that she is being abused. She goes on to explain the emotional and psychological effects of being abused. She states that "the physical pain is nothing compared to the feeling of being degraded, exposed, unworthy that comes with it" (Busani-Dube, 2015a:38). The writer does not portray all black men as abusers which would be a single-story, instead she gives the female protagonist a father that is her sanctuary in challenging times. She decides to go home to see her dad, the one man she is sure would never hurt her (Busani-Dube, 2015a:41). According to Rhoda Asikia Ige:

African women generally view Western feminism as negative feminism in that its radical posture demonises men and its effort at the militant transformation of the patriarchal institutions in society; in the same vein African feminism is seen in the light of the positive feminism, a movement that fosters gender complementarity and accommodation in human relationships (2016:12).

The men are not the enemies but the patriarchal structures in society. Hlomu is so confident in her father's protection of her that "he'd literally walk to Joburg to find Mqhele and beat him to a pulp if he ever found out what he did to her" (Busani-Dube, 2015a:41). As much as most black men have been stereotypically known for being violent and abusers, the writer portrays another type of black man who is protective and would protect his daughter from harm. Hlomu arrives home and decides to cut her hair because she needs change in her life (Busani-Dube, 2015a:42). Black women's hair is political and she is also making a political statement by cutting her hair. Odeyemi suggests that hair is political because "it represents the derogatory descriptions of natural hair of people of African descent that is tightly coiled, knotted or curled" (2016:542). Hlomu takes ownership of her body by cutting her hair because:

Hairstyles serve as important cultural artifacts, because they are simultaneously public (visible to everyone), personal (biologically linked to the body), and highly malleable to suit cultural and personal preference (Versey, 2014:810).

Hlomu has been beaten, her body has been invaded by physical violence. The only feature that she feels she can still control is her hair. Cutting her hair is symbolic of her being in control of her body. She rejects silence and articulates her feelings to her husband by declaring that if such an incident reoccurred, she will inform the law authorities (Busani-Dube, 2015a: 44). She demonstrates courage and bravery because abused victims are known for their silence and feelings of shame. Hlomu contemplates how she did not tell her brother about her husband beating her. She reflects, "I never told anyone, it's what abused women do, I know, they don't tell" (Busani-Dube, 2015a:52). The writer makes Hlomu self-reflective; she is well aware of options and choices at her disposal; thus, she makes an informed choice to remain with her husband.

Hlomu's power is that she has the ability to make other people do what she wants. Chinweizu would call this characteristic matriarchal power. He acknowledges this ability as:

...the power to manipulate from hidden and protected places. She is the back-seat driver, giving instructions from the owner's corner. She is the supreme executive, excellent at delegating the most burdensome and dangerous jobs to her chief lieutenant, alias the patriarch (1990:76).

Indeed, Hlomu has absolute power in the Zulu family. The men in the Zulu family are violent individuals, they are violent with each other and other people. The older brother in the family takes the role of a father figure so he disciplines the younger brothers if they do wrong. Nkosana, the older brother, is doing his duty of disciplining the younger brother, but Hlomu disapproves. She thinks, "this is not going to continue. Not in this house. Not as long as I am

part of this family” (Busani-Dube, 2015a:98). The physical punishment that the family is accustomed to comes to an end when Hlomu joins the family. She does not even need to talk; her silent glare speaks for her. She narrates that, “Nkosana looks at me, I don’t budge. I fix my eyes on his” (Busani-Dube, 2015a:96). The outcome of the glaring contest is that Nkosana ceases punching and beating the younger brother up. The other male members of the family were unable to stop the older brother, but Hlomu does this with just a look.

The Zulu family Hlomu married into lives in Johannesburg; they escaped Greytown in rural KwaZulu-Natal, a long time ago due to political violence. When Hlomu forces them to return to their home in Greytown to confront their past, no one challenges her, instead the whole family drives there. She even understands that “if this backfire, if these men turn out to be worse than they already are after this, it will all be my fault. Maybe they will wish I never came into their lives. I might regret this more than I already do” (Busani-Dube, 2015a:105). She knows the supreme power she has in the family and how to utilise it. A journalist that was dating one of the brothers wrote an article about the family. Her observations were that Hlomu has influence over all of them, “she made me disappear, kicked me out, and she knew exactly why” (Busani-Dube, 2015a:211). Chinweizu believes that women are more ferocious than men when it comes to the things they value; however vulnerable and emotional they may appear; it is all a façade (1990:94).

Hlomu legitimises Chinweizu’s claims by rationalising her actions. She reasons, “my instincts never fail me. I know it. Last night I stood in a room full of men and ordered the killing of four people. It was me; I did this” (Busani-Dube, 2015a:161). The matriarchal power can make men do anything, including killing. In a single-story; women are mostly portrayed as individuals who are incapable of violence or inflicting pain. Busani-Dube challenges the single-story by depicting female characters who execute violence. Hlomu is furious with her husband, so to express her fury she smashes the expensive cars that the family owns. She gets in the car even though other cars are blocking her, and her mind wants to get out of the garage. She then, “starts the Q7 and reverses, I press the accelerator harder and ignore the crashing sound. I am going to get out of here, even if it means tearing the bloody Porsche blocking my way into small pieces! I am getting out of here and I am getting out now” (Busani-Dube, 2015a:310). The writer defies the stereotypical African woman who is “monotonous, docile, naïve and rural who uncontestably accepts the social norms binding her to her male oriented society” (Chima, 2015: 13). The character of Hlomu shows growth and development throughout the narrative. Busani-Dube challenges male writers such as Mda in their limited portrayal of women who perpetuate

incomplete truths. The male gaze and point of view displays women as a homogenous collective lacking individual experience, this is the main reason black women writers need to occupy writing spaces. Salami advocates for black female writers to tell their stories in their own voices as she states that:

It is equally crucial that black African women shape the discourse. To make sense of Africa today-of its complex socio-economic politics, cultural trends, ongoing conflicts, educational prospects, increasing religiosity, post-colonial discourses and so on-women must be encouraged to step forward as thought leaders and authors of creative non-fiction. To enable that, it is key that we understand that it is not because women have not had something to say or because their writing about society is less popular than men's, but rather because they have been written out of the 'malestream' literary sphere. It's high time to write them back in (2014).

Busani-Dube is contributing to the canon of black South African writers who are breaking their silence, who are portraying female protagonists with dynamism, strength and independence. Hlomu's character displays resilience and "plays an essential role in the unfolding of the plot and the overall appreciation of the story's narrative" (Chima, 2015:13).

Furthermore, Busani-Dube challenges the mentality that women's bodies are designed to gratify men's appetites sexually. Zandile and Hlomu are both represented as active sexual agents; they enjoy sex and the pleasures it gives them. Busani-Dube's female characters are not ashamed of sexual topics, and they even teach each other how to have an orgasm. Zandile tells the ladies that if you have been in prison for seventeen years, you learn to satisfy yourself and "there is nothing a finger can't do" (Busani-Dube, 2015b:390). She goes on to teach her cousin how to masturbate; she instructs her, "cross your legs, bend forward a little, now squeeze tight. Not the legs, squeeze where the thighs begin" (Busani-Dube, 2015b:390). Zandile is comfortable with her sexuality, and she is not ashamed to talk about it. Her cousin learns to satisfy herself, and she feels the pleasure of the orgasm for the first time in her life.

Hlomu depicts ownership of her body and sexuality by sleeping with another man. She describes the other man as "gentle, so slow, and so patient. He waits until I am done before he finishes" (Busani-Dube, 2015a:361). Representation of women indulging in sex and masturbation changes women from being sex objects to active participants in sex. Female bonding is absent in most African literature written by men; women are portrayed competing against each other. Busani-Dube creates sisterhood as one of the strategies that assist these women in dealing with their challenges and patriarchal structures, and it is a tool that benefits

them. Positive female representation and experience is vital in literature because it enhances women's confidence and breaks the stereotypes of victimisation. The character of Hlomu is an embodiment of female power. Chinweizu compares powers:

Whereas male power is hard, aggressive and boastful, female power is soft, passive and self-effacing. Whereas male power is like an irresistible force, female power is like an immovable object. Whereas male power acts like a storm, full of motion, sound and fury, female power is like the sun-steady, quiet and uncontestable. Against resistance, male power barks, commands and pummels, whereas female power whispers, manipulates and erodes (1990:22).

Hlomu's character depicts the anatomy of female power that Chinweizu observed years ago. His analysis of women's power is evident in Busani-Dube's female protagonists; each protagonist is different but they all have positive characteristics to contribute in the fight against patriarchy.

Naledi is an educated black woman, she grew up without a mother and she has been in an abusive relationship. She explains that my "ex-boyfriend, he's been stalking me for the past year. Before that he used to beat me, told me I was fat, that I was nothing before him and every other thing you can think of" (Busani-Dube, 2015:19). Her past makes her sound like a typical battered girlfriend with a low-esteem. However, Naledi's attitude in life is encapsulated in the fourth stanza of Maya Angelou's (2017) poem, *I Rise*:

Did you want to see me broken?
Bowed head and lowered eyes?
Shoulders falling down like teardrops,
Weakened by my soulful cries? (IV.13-16)

Despite her previous abusive relationship, Naledi rises and becomes better, she will not allow another man's insecurities to break her. She has a high self-esteem, and she knows that she is intelligent and beautiful. The character of Naledi challenges most traditional and female behavioural stereotypes in society. When she attends a baby shower, she discloses, "it doesn't help that my best friend is a man, and I was raised by a man, I always feel lost during these things" (Busani-Dube, 2015c:22). She has not been socialised by females and she is not the type of woman who loves baby showers hence her discomfort.

Through Naledi's character, Busani-Dube shows a glimpse of black women's rape experience. In Naledi's narrative she was almost raped but that does not make it any less traumatic. She shouts at her male friend, "Tsietsi, I was almost raped and killed just three hours ago, so no I don't want to talk about it" (Busani-Dube, 2015c:38). Gqola investigates how rape is exerting

power on the female body (2015:3). Adeolu Oluwaseyi Oyekani provides an in-depth analysis of rape culture:

In some societies where rape is common, it is not unusual to hear arguments extenuating the act or blaming the victim outright. This suggests certain cultural attitudes and practices that are not tenable in a decent and civilized society. Enlightened members of such societies, feminists in particular, may play a vital role in bringing about the desired attitudinal change, especially when prosecution and punishment seem to get entangled in technicalities that make conviction difficult (2014:9).

Feminists such as Gqola concur with the above sentiments that “we seldom reflect on how to shift public behaviour in today’s adults, and even less on how we can individually-and collectively-sabotage rapists and hold them accountable” (2015:6). As a female writer, Busani-Dube handles the rape matter with sensitivity, Naledi’s employer decides that she will send a counsellor to her house (2015c:39). The author also gives Naledi psychological strength to think, “no actually, it’s not my fault, he’s crazy and he needs help” (Busani-Dube, 2015c:39). Literature has the power to give solutions to society’s problems, and it can also change our perception of everyday human experiences. Through the character of Naledi, rape is highlighted as a threat to females and how it dehumanises women.

At the beginning of the novel Naledi states, “I’d rather be safe than sorry. I’ve had too much heartbreak in my life. I don’t trust men. Period” (Busani-Dube, 2015c:27). She still has justifiable fears when it comes to men, but she rises above these fears. She rises above the fear and her traumatic experiences. The writer makes her love and trust again; she does not make her character hate men. Naledi affirms:

I trust him. I trust that he loves me and that he’ll protect me. I feel like I’m a top priority to him, like he cares about every single bit of me. The way he holds my hand in public, it’s like he’s always trying to show-off that I am his. He says I am beautiful, he says it all the time and he’s quick to notice when I’ve changed something, like hair or nails. He listens to my stories about work and he eats my not-so-nice food (Busani-Dube, 2015c:98).

The character of Qhawe who is Naledi’s boyfriend has flaws but he treats her well. It would be untrue to conclude that all men are abusers, rapists and killers but Busani-Dube creates an alternative masculinity that loves and cares. Society portrays “black men as stereotypically aggressive, hostile and intimidating” (Hazell and Clarke, 2008:9). These images reinforce society’s beliefs and expectations from a specific gender or race group. The fight against female violence is not a battle of women alone because males participate in executing this violence. As a result, both women and men must fight together for women’s emancipation from violence.

The writer deconstructs the notion that all men are violent, by creating Qhawe who does not believe in violence. He states that “you don’t solve problems with violence. Trust me, I know what I am talking about, especially not with your siblings” (Busani-Dube, 2015c:158). Qhawe comes from a violent family, but he chooses not to exercise violence on his girlfriend. In this narrative, Busani-Dube redeems some male characters, by making them partners with the female protagonist in her quest for equal rights. A feminist scholar, hooks writes that:

So far the feminist movement has primarily focused on male violence, and as a consequence lends credibility to sexist stereotypes that suggest men are violent, women are not, men are abusers, women are victims. This type of thinking allows us to ignore the extent to which women (with men) in this society accept and perpetuate the idea that it is acceptable for a dominant party or group to maintain power over the dominated by using coercive force. It allows us to overlook or ignore the extent to which women may not commit violent acts as often as men does not negate the reality of female violence. We must see both men and women in this society as groups who support the use of violence if we are to eliminate it (2000:63).

It is the responsibility of both women and men to interrupt the narrative of violence. In Busani-Dube’s text, it is the male characters who interrupt this narrative of violence. Qhawe is horrified to hear that Naledi thinks he would hit her, he asks her, “Naledi you think I’d hit you? Is that how little you think of me?” (Busani-Dube, 2015c:87). As the novel progresses, it demonstrates Naledi’s strength, she does not allow her past to prevent her future happiness; even though she still has fears but each day she is learning to trust again.

3.3 Representations of black female bodies

Female writers have a responsibility to portray women’s bodies in their various shapes and sizes, making sure to highlight their diverse beauty. Female writers must reject the skinny model type as the ideal body which all women must aspire to become. Hlomu describes herself as masculine, and this image is commendable because women are not the same (Busani-Dube, 2015a:25). Zandile looks at Naledi and compares her to another woman; “she was glamorous, this one is simple, so simple that she’s tied her relaxed hair up in a bun. Oleta was tall and slim, this one, I’ll put her at size-42 maximum. She’s a big girl, a big and beautiful and lovely girl. Everything about her is just calm and natural” (Busani-Dube, 2015b:308). Borocho states:

The narratives about black beauty, black female capabilities, and our place in society, are mainly narratives that didn’t come from us. Even though in recent years black African females are starting to rewrite the narrative for themselves, much still needs to be done (2019:353).

Naledi's character exudes confidence in her full figure body; she is beautiful; her character shows an alternative perspective to society's stereotypes. Unfortunately, the media only displays images of skinny girls as beautiful which "can have a significant negative impact on the body esteem and self-esteem of young black girls in particular who encounter these media images" (Hazell and Clarke, 2008:21). Naledi's character challenges the beliefs and attitudes that only skinny or slim female bodies are beautiful. Furthermore, a newspaper article is written about her and it reads:

She isn't bad looking but she's not exactly what we expected from Qhawe. The man is known for his love of magazine cover perfect type. Now, we're not saying the good doctor, (yes, at least she has brains) will take up two chairs at family dinner tables, but we are saying she is a bit of a downgrade from Oleta" (Busani-Dube, 2015c:209).

Such media texts have become the norm and they imply that since Naledi is big she is not beautiful; as a result, her brains compensate for her big figure. Magazines focus on female appearances; they perpetuate the stereotypes of an ideal female body or beauty. Chima (2015:21) notes that "when little margin is left for alternatives, and any form of contrary expression beyond the pre-established norms are repressed, people accept the stereotypical perceived status quo as the standard of living, which in turn become a popular habit that is hard to break away from". Busani-Dube dismisses this ideology by creating a female character who wants to start a magazine that will be an alternative to the mainstream. Gugu tells her husband that she wants to start a magazine but "not about shoes or hair or all that stuff that's in women's magazines these days. I want it to have real stories and real people and...it's been my dream since I was a young girl" (Busani-Dube, 2015b:215). Images and texts play a role in people's perceptions and beliefs about themselves and other people. Female writers need to utilise their writing platform to redress past narratives about black women. The power that black women have in undeniable, however the media distorts it casting self-doubt. Some individuals acknowledge black female's strength:

We are all born with our own unique power. Some call it light, some call it shine, some call it greatness, some #BlackGirlMagic. Every single one of us is born with it but many of us hold back to our own detriment, because we allow the media to define for us and then doubt our own authenticity (Borocho, 2019:340).

Naledi is strong-minded and has the courage to stand up for herself under any circumstances. In her relationship with Qhawe she does not settle for anything less than her worth. Qhawe claims, "I've tried my best to prove to you that I love you, that I want to be with you for the

rest of my life but it's been pointless. You are not ready for commitment; you are not ready for anything so I am not going to waste my time trying to turn you into something you're not" (Busani-Dube, 2015c:334). Naledi is smart, feisty and gorgeous and she understands her value. Her father takes responsibility for raising Naledi to be a strong woman, a woman who can walk away from an unpleasant situation. He tells her, "I know that because I know you. I raised you like that. I raised you to be firm and to stand up for what you believe in, but that's not the only way to approach life" (Busani-Dube, 2015c:384). Naledi takes her father's advice and returns to Qhawe's house. She observes that, "it's strange how he seems so...comfortable, like I never left, like I've been here with him the whole time. But I feel the space, the time we spent apart, I feel it, I'm struggling to connect" (Busani-Dube, 2015c:389).

Musa Dube aptly writes, "I am concerned that when our children approach the library for research, they will have nothing but self-hatred thrown back to their faces" (1999:219). Therefore, the project of transforming black female narratives is crucial for the next generations so that the cycle of victimisation is deconstructed. Black African female writers need to be allowed the platform and time to define themselves. He continues to argue that "one reads books that were written about her, but not for her" (Dube, 1999:224). It is the duty of the female writer to write for herself about herself, stories that will make the young girls proud of her black self. Ramose "states that blackness has a beauty that surpasses the splendour of the enigmatic beauty of Leonardo da Vinci's Mona Lisa." (cited in Mothoagae, 2016:73). He concludes that "the beauty of the black woman is not destined ineluctably to end up in prostitution. Under conditions of slavery or under cover of secrecy, the conqueror failed to resist the beauty of the [B]lack woman" (cited in Mothoagae, 2016:73). Therefore, it was her beauty that intrigued Sarah Baartman's conqueror.

The greatest strength that runs through *Hlomu-the wife*, *Zandile-the resolute* and *Naledi-his love* is sisterhood. Naledi grows up without a mother, but Busani-Dube creates a female figure to advise her on matters of love and relationships as a mother would. Her step mother counsels her "your father adores your husband; he thinks you're in good hands and he will be broken if he finds out what was happening. I am not saying go back to him, if you think that you have reason to leave, do so, but that reason must not be his past because you are not in his past" (Busani-Dube, 2015c:361). The women in the trilogy are continually supporting and advising one another. Amongst other positive traits each female protagonist has, the spirit of unity and sisterhood is their greatest strength. Chinweizu highlights this sisterhood because he argues

that “a wife has a support of her professional colleagues-her circle of friends and relatives” (1990:67). This kind of support legitimises women as the “ultimate rulers of the world” (Chinweizu, 1990:68).

3.4 The black female characters’ common struggle

The female protagonists of the trilogy are all connected by their relationships with the Zulu brothers; as a result, they have one common struggle. Hlomu is married to Mqhele, Zandile is married to Nkosana and Naledi is about to get married to Qhawe. One trait that all these brothers share is their domestic dictatorship over their wives and girlfriends. Hlomu mentions, “but first, I am going out tonight. I am going to dress up, and I am going to look gorgeous, and I am going to be wild. This is freedom, no security following me around and no Mqhele wanting me to be a Stepford Wife all the time. He has been stalking me with phone calls and SMSs” (Busani-Dube, 2015a:357). This shows how Hlomu is yearning for freedom to be alone and do whatever she desires. The protection she gets is suffocating her spirit, and she desires to be wild and free. Zandile is different from Hlomu because she challenges her husband’s protection, she tells the ladies that she has been resisting Nkosana’s control tendencies for a long time (Busani-Dube, 2015b:53). Her husband does not want her to have a cell phone, instead of accepting his wish she thinks to herself, “I don’t understand this but what I know is I am going to get one whether he likes it or not, and I am going to get my license renewed and drive myself to places” (Busani-Dube, 2015b:72). Chima, a male scholar identifies “a society that recognises male supremacy in all its aspects, where a woman is perceived to be at the disposal of satisfying a man’s ego and ambition” (2015:20). Fortunately, for Zandile’s character, the writer gives her the strength to reject the male supremacy unapologetically. She is continuously fighting her husband’s dictatorship, maintaining that “he just wants to control me, control my movements and keep me where he can see me. I was in jail for many years and I refuse to be imprisoned by his jealousy and possessiveness out here” (Busani-Dube, 2015b:89). Naledi labels Qhawe’s dictatorship as stalking, and he defends his habits by responding “I told you, it’s not stalking, it’s keeping checks on what is mine” (Busani-Dube, 2015c:126). Naledi is very outspoken and she is aware of his controlling habits, she even tells him “the problem, Chawe, is it’s always your way or no way, that’s the problem. What you say goes and you don’t believe in compromise” (Busani-Dube, 2015c:280). Naledi is Tswana and as a result, she cannot pronounce the Zulu clicks so she calls him Chawe instead of Qhawe.

Hlomu, Zandile and Naledi are assertive females and each day they resist the struggle of dictatorship over their lives. Some days are better than others.

These black women also have the media as their common struggle because “the consumption of media images plays a significant role in how we understand ourselves as individuals and as members of a larger collective of Black women” (Patterson et al., 2016:41). The Zulu family is wealthy and has eight identical men of different ages, and the media has an interest in this family. As a result, Hlomu warns Zandile that “we don’t go around causing drama in public places because everybody is always watching us, we make news, we make stories, we sell newspapers, people are always trying to find our bad side and it fascinates them” (Busani-Dube, 2015b:55). Zandile is not used to such a life and she refuses to allow the media to control her behaviour, and therefore she goes to the media house to challenge the stories they have been writing about her (Busani-Dube, 2015b:176). Patterson et. al. and other scholars point out that “when passively consumed, media has the capacity both to educate and, more dangerously, to *miseducate*” (2016:46). As a result, Zandile resists media texts and images that reduce and define black female subjects.

Furthermore, Hlomu is forced to resign from her job even though she loves it because the media is interfering in her personal life. She tells her husband that “it’s only the beginning love, it will never stop. I have to send my resignation letter, I can’t be a journalist anymore, I’ve become the story” (Busani-Dube, 2015b:209). Hlomu’s “everyday activism occurs in both public and private spaces, in official and unofficial contexts” as she tries to protect her family (Patterson et al., 2016:43). Naledi was out on a yacht with the female family members, they were all wearing bikinis but the media chose to take pictures of her because she was the largest female (Busani-Dube, 2015b:196). She feels humiliated as she cries, “Ntate I don’t care much about what they said, but why did they have to splash pictures of me like that? Now the whole world has seen me naked” (Busani-Dube, 2015b:210). She is devastated by the images the media has displayed of her naked body. Feminist hooks argues that “the issue is not freeing ourselves from representation. It’s really about being enlightened witnesses when we watch representations, which means we are able to be critically vigilant about both what is being told to us and how we respond to what is being told” (1997:8). Media avenues are guilty of broadcasting images “that limit the uniqueness and power that Black women possess. Because of this, Black women have traditionally used family networks and Black community institutions as places from which to push back against these limitations of media

representation” (Patterson et al., 2016:61). Busani-Dube is giving alternative strategies of how to resist negative images and texts from the media. She demonstrates various techniques, firstly she has a black full figure female who declares, “I am a size 42, I can’t be walking around in a bikini” (Busani-Dube, 2015b:333). Naledi is intelligent, beautiful and Hlomu compliments her that she has a gorgeous body. Hlomu fails to comprehend why she would want to hide her body. As a result, Naledi is taking ownership of her body as it is and appreciating it. Secondly, the writer highlights the crucial role of sisterhood amongst female relationships. In a newspaper article Naledi is compared to a hippo because of her body size, Zandile enhances her confidence again. She comforts her by stating, “you shouldn’t take anything people on social networks say about you personally, the reason they attack people they don’t know is because they are miserable in their own lives. This will blow off and soon they will be attacking someone else” (Busani-Dube, 2015b:345). Female relationships that are compassionate and promote love are significant in resisting patriarchy. Thirdly, the female characters desire to tell their own stories to produce complete truths about themselves. Gugu has a dream of starting a magazine about genuine stories and it will surely promote the beauty of different body images (Busani-Dube, 2015b:215). And lastly, confronting the media platforms with your account, removes shame and stigmatisation because the person takes ownership of their narrative. Zandile confronted the journalist that was writing the incomplete truth about her (Busani-Dube, 2015b:174).

3.5 The black female characters’ individual struggles

Despite their common struggles, as individuals they have different challenges that distinguish them. Zandile’s main struggle is that her children do not know her as their mother. She discloses that another woman raised her children; she did not have an opportunity to fulfil all the responsibilities of a mother to her children (Busani-Dube, 2015b:28). She has to deal with her children’s detached emotions towards her, but watch them love and respect another woman as their mother. Zandile reflects on the advice she has received, “they say I shouldn’t pressure him-that he will come around eventually-but I think about him, about both of them every day and I’m desperate for their affection” (Busani-Dube, 2015b:94). Zandile has anger management problems and she declares: “I did anger management classes in prison. He was happy about it-that was when I realised that my temper tantrums were worse than I thought” (Busani-Dube, 2015b:77). Zandile is angry about many things and her anger goes back to her childhood. She reminisces about a warden that was kind to her, she compares herself to this warden “her story was almost similar to mine, bad childhood, bad parents” (Busani-Dube,

2015b:48). In confronting her past, she discovers a painful truth about her birth. Zandile asks her aunt why her parents never loved her, which can also be the root cause of her anger (Busani-Dube, 2015b:315). Her aunt tells her she was a product of rape; she continues to narrate:

Sometimes I would hear her cry at night. She never loved your father, not a single day in her life. Sometimes I think she came close to killing him in his sleep, but you know how she was; she never took the leap (Busani-Dube, 2015b:316).

Zandile is trying to understand her past so she can be liberated to move into the future, but the truth she encounters is not what she anticipated. As a result, her anger grows with every truth she discovers, she explodes at anyone rude to her. She furiously informs Hlomu that she is a fighter and she will not accept indecent behaviour from anybody (Busani-Dube, 2015b:57). Dela Gwala identifies rape as a root cause for anger in black women, “other women speak of rage as if it were a gift” (2017:206). Gwala views anger as “a potent reservoir of power to drive the engines of change and progress forward” (2017:206). Zandile’s anger drives her to be fearless however, her anger makes her unapproachable to other females. Naledi describes her “Zandile is great and all but there’s something intense about her. I don’t know if it is age or the things; she’s been through in life, but she’s not exactly a warm person by nature” (Busani-Dube, 2015c:186).

Hlomu is a strong woman but that does not mean her life is perfect. She is physically abused and sexually assaulted by her husband. Her husband rapes Hlomu, but the problem is that no one would believe her. Gqola (2015:31) affirms that “sex workers, wives, slave women and men are all categories of people that have at different stages been placed in the category of impossible-to-rape”. Hlomu as a wife also falls into this category, and unfortunately “people who are placed in the category ‘impossible-to-rape’ are routinely disbelieved when they report rape” (Gqola, 2015:31). She is conscious that her love making is not a symbol of their oneness as she reveals:

That morning I woke up with bruises and missing braids. That wasn’t making love-that was him trying to release all his anger. He held me tight, pulled my hair and dug his fingers in my skin and when he let out, he growled, like some animal. I allowed it all, painful, but I just lay there and sacrificed myself (Busani-Dube, 2015a:75).

It is evident that Mqhele is exercising the power that he has over his wife; sexually and physically. The above account is similar to rape marks that some victims may have, including the emotions of helplessness. Scholars have investigated that “sometimes rape leaves bruises

on skin, cuts, tears. Sometimes it leaves invisible scars only. The body that seems whole, then, can work against the experience of violation narrated by the violated woman” (Gqola, 2015:29). Hlomu’s sex with her husband resembles the idea of rape closely, she even discloses that “unlike always, he didn’t wait for me. It was all about him; it was for him” (Busani-Dube, 2015a:240). Her body is violated in the name of love-making, it is objectified to please her husband despite her pain. Gqola (2015:11) argues that “rape is a crime of power, and in patriarchal societies, all men can access patriarchal power”. The writer is highlighting that rape occurs even in marriage, a topic that most people would consider prohibited and private. Most rape incidents occur in spaces that are familiar to the victims and with people they trust, people who are meant to protect them. Hlomu’s physical abuse is so severe that she has fears of death, she responds “he is going to kill me eventually” (Busani-Dube, 2015a:263). Hlomu is fearful but it does not thwart her progress or ability to love and laugh. She suggests, “I want to live again, laugh again, care again” (Busani-Dube, 2015a:266). She is making a conscious decision to live and be a victorious black woman.

Busani-Dube has created Naledi to display an alternative body image that is beautiful despite its size. However, Naledi still has insecurities about her body. She knows that she is beautiful but she feels like people judge her body image which is her biggest struggle. She discloses that:

I order a salad. I have this thing of not being comfortable eating in public because I feel like people are watching and judging me, especially when it’s something like Nando’s or KFC. It has everything to do with my weight. My father says I was born big-boned, like his sisters and all my sisters. He always says even if I tried to lose weight, I will never really be slim. Some people are made big, others are made tiny...(Busani-Dube, 2015c:6).

The above quote illustrates her body image, and the media reinforce these beliefs. The newspaper article was written about her taking up two chairs at a family dinner table (Busani-Dube, 2015c:209). Naledi’s feelings are perpetuated by health scholars who believe that “fatness is socially constructed as a failure to make appropriate lifestyle choices and to exert self-surveillance and self-control, thereby making those who are not slender deserving of their fate” (Kwate and Threadcraft, 2015:4). However, her father seems to have a contrary belief and he even tells her that “she is beautiful inside and out” (Busani-Dube, 2015c:6). Her father’s reassurance helps her challenge the negative thoughts about her body image. The writer also gives Naledi’s character the confidence to know her value despite her weight. She suggests to Qhawe that “next time you feel like bullying a woman, choose your victim carefully” (Busani-

Dube, 2015c:8). These female protagonists may have challenges but they break stereotypes. Glinton-Meicholas (2019:162) declares their unconquerable spirit:

Yet, here I am
Refusing reduction
Head unbowed, tongue unchained
Resisting devaluation
Of self-forged coinage (II. 1-5).

The black female character in Busani-Dube's novels is indeed refusing victimisation, negative images and representation that make her doubt her strength. Chima (2015:12) draws our attention to the African female writer's predicament to be recognised. And when she has the platform to speak, she must not succumb to submissive, subordinate and slavery representation of her black female characters. The contemporary black female writer needs to continue literary activism that was started by her predecessors, giving agency and power to her black female protagonists. Black women are reclaiming their private and public influence in society and literature needs to reflect this. The contemporary black female writers must remember the past to amend misrepresentations of black females. It is time to unlearn all the victimisation fixed in black female's minds, because black females are not born victims. The female writer should not be afraid to remember Sarah Baartman as a human rights activist. Black female historic humiliation should be defied in literature moving forward.

The black South African women such as Queen Nandi, Princess Mkabayi and Winnie Mandela to name a few, are predecessors of rising above systems and structures that did not support them. The black women's strength has not been erased; it has been distorted to fit the truths of those writing about them. Bhabha asserts that it is the scholar who has to acknowledge the changing landscape in society (cited in Gqola, 2010:48). The writer has to transform images and representations and break stereotypes about black women. Hlomu, Zandile and Naledi have been controlled, physically abused, imprisoned and raped, they have not only survived but emerged triumphantly. Indeed, black women in *Hlomu-the wife*, *Zandile-the resolute* and *Naledi-his love* are powerful and have a victorious spirit which transcends the historical and literary victimhood. As Borotho declares that black women have a responsibility to reclaim their power:

By unlearning the lies and relearning a different truth.
By rewriting the narrative and challenging stereotypes.
By deconstructing conditioning and rewiring the mind.
By restoring our power back to self.

By Unbecoming to Become (2019:389)

In conclusion black women must restore their powerful position because it is evident that they were not born victims, but society created the narrative. Therefore, black women must focus on their glorious future and write their own stories. The female characters of Hlomu, Zandile and Naledi illustrate the power of black women which has always been in existence just not highlighted.

Chapter Four: Representations of motherhood, conflict, and sexual Love

4.1 The portrayal of black motherhood

All human life on the planet is born of woman. The one unifying, incontrovertible experience shared by all women and men is that months-long period we spent unfolding inside a woman's body. - Adrienne Rich (1995:11)

Motherhood is a central theme in Dudu Busani-Dube's fiction, and it is a topic that she highlights in all three books, *Hlomu-the wife*, *Zandile- the resolute* and *Naledi-his love*. O'Reilly argues that "motherhood is a cultural construction that varies with time and place; there is no one essential or universal experience of motherhood" (2004:29). In her writing about motherhood, Busani-Dube portrays the different experiences of motherhood and how each protagonist relates to their mother and children. O'Reilly (2004) conceptualises a theory of motherhood from Toni Morrison's novels: *The Bluest Eye*, *Paradise*, *Sula*, *Song of Solomon*, *Tar Baby* and *Beloved* Toni. O'Reilly's (2004) theory of motherhood will be applied to Busani-Dube's fiction because both women, Morrison and Busani-Dube, focus on black motherhood and black female experiences. O'Reilly observes that Morrison develops a view of black motherhood "that is both maternal identity role and radically different than the motherhood practised and prescribed by the dominant culture" (O'Reilly, 2004:1). The stance of "defining and positioning maternal identity as a site of power for black women" is evident in Busani-Dube's black females (O'Reilly, 2004:17). In *Hlomu-the wife*, the protagonist is introduced without children of her own as she is still a virgin (Busani-Dube, 2015a:21). Her boyfriend, who will soon be her husband leaves her with three children that she does not know. She wakes up and "first in is a bug-eyed toddler, followed by a taller one and another toddler one, all carrying backpacks" (Busani-Dube, 2015a:54). No one has told her about the children, and she does not know what to do with three children the whole weekend (Busani-Dube, 2015a:55).

Moreover, she does not know whose children they are and chooses not to ask (Busani-Dube, 2015a:57). Hlomu does not have children of her own, but she immediately treats these children as hers. She observes that they do not have clothes that are in good condition, "how can kids from a family with no money problems have no proper clothes whatsoever? Jackets are either too small or too old" (Busani-Dube, 2015a:58). Her motherly instincts take over because she decides to buy these children clothes and takes them for a haircut (Busani-Dube, 2015a:56). Hlomu is mothering children that are not her own, and this is termed as 'othermothering' or

community mothering. Othermothering is defined “as acceptance of responsibility for a child not one’s own, in an arrangement that may or may not be formal” (O’Reilly, 2004:27). In the African continent, communal values are significant to the development of cultures and these values are rooted in the spirit of ubuntu. Defining ubuntu is both simple and sophisticated in a sense that, “ubu- and ntu- are ‘two aspects of be-ing as a one-ness and whole-ness’, with ubuntu best seen as a dynamic inter play between the verb and the noun rather than a static or dogmatic state of thinking” (McDonald, 2010:141). Desmond Tutu has described ubuntu as “embracing hospitality, caring about others, being willing to go the extra mile for the sake of others” (McDonald, 2010:141). Mothering is not a privatised occupation that is only reserved for biological mothers; most African children are brought up by their grandparents or other family members in the spirit of ubuntu. The practice of othermothering is common in African societies and communities as bell hooks comments:

Child care is a responsibility that is shared with other childrearsers, with people who do not live with children. This form of parenting is revolutionary in this society because it takes place in opposition to the idea that parents, especially mothers, should be the only childrearsers. Many people raised in black communities experienced this type of community-based child care. Black women who had to leave home and work to help provide for families could not afford to send children to daycare centres, and such centres did not always exist. They relied on people in their communities to help. Even in families where the mother stayed home, she could also rely on people in the community to help (1984:144).

Busani-Dube is also highlighting this aspect of black motherhood, sharing the responsibilities of children. In *Naledi-his love*, Qhawe tells Naledi that “you have nine children, ten including the one you are carrying and one grandchild” (Busani-Dube, 2015c:280). Black motherhood differs from the Eurocentric ideology of parenting, that “mothering occurs within the confines of a private, nuclear family household where the mother has almost total responsibility for child-rearing is less applicable to Black families” (O’Reilly, 2004:25). Parenting and mothering are an integral part of African traditions and cultures. Hlomu is thinking of her life and the plans she had, and she looks at how she has diverted from her plans “to raising children whose mothers she does not know” (Busani-Dube, 2015a:132).

Hlomu soon learns that the children’s father is Nkosana, the older brother of the family, but the children refer to all the brothers as father (Busani-Dube, 2015a). She takes the children to the zoo, which is exciting and adventurous for them and Spur too, and she notices that they have never been to either place (Busani-Dube, 2015a:). O’Reilly (2004:1) defines “motherwork as a political enterprise that assumes as its central aim the empowerment of children”. Hlomu

has exposed the children to a different world that they will grow to love and appreciate. The visit to the zoo will broaden their minds and thinking, which is the mother's responsibility. O'Reilly contends that the "physical and psychological wellbeing of children and its focus upon the empowerment of children, has cultural and political import, value, and prominence, and that motherhood, as a consequence, is a site of power for black women" (2004:4). The older child, Sbani, who is nine years old is warming up to her, as he tells her about school and "how nobody came when he got a trophy at school will she come?" (Busani-Dube, 2015a:57). Hlomu promises to attend the school prize giving if she is invited, and her response puts a smile on Sbani's face. Hlomu prioritises the children's education, and she starts taking the two little kids to creche, she announces, "the kids are starting school on Monday" (Busani-Dube, 2015a:70). Othermothers such as Hlomu, have positioned literacy as worthy and utilised education as a place for advocacy (O'Reilly, 2004:24). Scholars have concluded that social activism "empowers black women because motherhood operates as a symbol of power" (O'Reilly, 2004:24).

Hlomu has to go to work, but Mqhele who left her with the kids has not returned. She decides that she has no alternative except to take the children to work with her (Busani-Dube, 2015a:58). Black women's public and private lives are interconnected. O'Reilly (2004:42) believes that "motherhood and work are understood to be essential and integrated dimensions of black women's role and identity". They do not have to choose between work and motherhood. She explains that "it is not a question, it is not a conflict, you don't have to give up anything. You choose your responsibilities as a mother" (O'Reilly, 2004:23). In black women's history, bell hooks opines that "black women do not believe that motherhood prevented us from entering the world of paid work because we have always worked" (1984:133). Rhoda Asikia Ige adds that "African women in almost all communities that we know have always worked. They have worked within the home and outside the home" (2016:14). Hlomu takes the responsibility of protecting, nurturing these children even though they are not her own. It has only been a few days since she met the children, but her unconditional love for them is evident. She takes ownership of the children and commits to travelling with them everywhere (Busani-Dube, 2015a:59). She claims the children as her own, and she becomes a mother to them even though they are not blood related. As she continues with her life, she prides herself in her motherwork, she reflects, "I am doing great at work, despite having to juggle between three kids and a demanding career" (Busani-Dube, 2015a:78).

The role of othermothering is crucial to Hlomu. She feels strongly that she is responsible for them and should not be put into a position where she would fail the children by lying to them. She pleads with the mother, “Zandile, you have to understand, anyone and I mean anyone, in this world can disappoint these kids but not me. They trust me, they rely on me, and I cannot lie to them like that” (Busani-Dube, 2015a:374). She has provided a home for the children, and in her home, she restores their dignity by refusing to lie to them. A home is a place of resistance for black families. Hlomu is rejecting the influence of the external world. Female scholars have observed that “black women resisted by making homes where all black people could strive to be subjects, not objects, where one could be affirmed in our minds and hearts despite challenges” (O’Reilly, 2004:10). Hlomu decides to be honest with the children about their biological mother and informs them that “I don’t know where your mother is, I don’t know why she left, I’ve asked, nobody has given answers. I know she is alive though, because she sent me an email years ago” (Busani-Dube, 2015a:316). In the motherhood theory the limitations of a mother are acknowledged, “in a world beyond one’s control, to be humble is to have a profound sense of the limits of one’s actions and of the unpredictability of the consequences of one’s work” (O’Reilly, 2004:23). According to O’Reilly (2004), a mother can only meet specific tasks for her children; other tasks are beyond her control. Hlomu’s love for these children instils in them a high self-esteem, that enables them to defy and subvert being dehumanised. One of the children got shot and passed away at a very young age. An old friend asks Hlomu how she is doing because it cannot be easy losing a child. She responds, “sometimes, when I wake up in the morning, I think I am going to see him that he’ll come running and jump on me like he always did, even when he had grown up to be taller than me. He was such a great child. I remember, he was the first to call me ‘mami’, and it just felt so natural” (Busani-Dube, 2015a:359). Later when, Hlomu manages to fall pregnant with her children, she fears that “with twins, they rarely wait for nine months so I could go on labour anytime and I don’t wanna be on the road in the middle of nowhere when it happens” (Busani-Dube, 2015:200). Chinweizu believes that motherhood is the greatest power females possess, he asserts that “women control the nursery, and because they control the nursery, they can potentially modify any life style that threatens them” (1990:28). Female powers begin in the womb and develop in the nursery for women to nurture their babies to become men and women. Therefore, mothers have the responsibility to “develop strong and authentic identities for black people” (O’Reilly, 2004:29). Hlomu is a mother herself, but in her mothering, she reflects on her mother’s teachings timeously. She remembers that “nobody ever really taught me about

these things. My mother insisted on me going to school and having a career, not entertaining in-laws” (Busani-Dube, 2015a:51). Motherline is “ancient properties and ancestral memory that enables daughters to derive strength from their identities as women” (O’Reilly, 2004:35). O’Reilly explains motherline as transmitting the archaic properties of black female maturity and tribal memory through the traditional black culture (O’Reilly, 2004:35). Hlomu remembers her mother’s teachings that she should “be the woman that bows for no one but God” (Busani-Dube, 2015a:192). Most mothers’ challenge of mothering “lies in training a child to be the kind of person whom others accept and whom the mothers can actively appreciate” (O’Reilly, 2004:37).

The connection of the motherline is deeply rooted in Hlomu’s mind as she suggests, “Let’s go sit there by the pool. I can’t risk my mother hearing us, she already thinks I am a whore with no self-respect” (Busani-Dube, 2015a:285). Chinweizu (1990:27) describes how a mother’s technique can be manipulative. Hlomu has a close relationship with her mother, and her mother is protective of her. However, her approach is to make the daughter feel anxious to please her, making Hlomu feel guilty. Hlomu’s mother has passed down her experiences as a black woman. Hlomu recalls:

I am pretty sure she is not a fan of marriage, especially marrying young because that’s what she did. She had us when she was 21, two years after marrying my father. She only went to nursing school after we were born, and she once told me that it was difficult to get in but she wasn’t going to give up (Busani-Dube, 2015a:81).

Hlomu is empowered to know that she comes from such a long line of strong black women; “I feel honoured that I am able to carry on the struggle you began a generation ago” (O’Reilly, 2004:13). The stories that passed down from generation to generation are to develop the livelihoods of black lives, “they teach children how to protect themselves” (O’Reilly, 2004:42). The theory of motherhood “seeks to dismantle, destabilise, and deconstruct these master narratives; so as to enable black women to write their own scripts of family, beauty, motherlove, and female fulfilment in accordance with ancient properties of the motherline” (O’Reilly, 2004:43).

Some circumstances cause a disconnection of the motherline. In *Zandile-the resolute* the protagonist has not had an ideal experience of a mother like Hlomu. Zandile killed her mother, which broke the motherline, and she is not ashamed. She reveals, “you know Hlomu, I could feel guilty about it but I don’t, because I really wanted to kill my mother. I had wanted to kill her since I was a child for allowing my father to sexually molest me” (Busani-Dube,

2015a:375). Zandile has no relationship with her mother because she killed her; her memories of her mother are repugnant. She observes in a family event that “I am the only one with no mother or relative here” (Busani-Dube, 2015b:188). She aspires to be different from her mother in every way. She recalls, “the kitchen is where my mother spent most of her time. She cooked here, ate here, cried here, got beaten here and prayed here” (Busani-Dube, 2015b:281). Chinweizu demonstrates the primary objective of motherpower is “to secure kitchen power and cradle power for girls” (1990:29). However, Zandile is not skilled in the kitchen, and her cousin tells her “you must stop cooking. Don’t even attempt to do it again. It’s not your strong point. I can’t even chew this egg” (Busani-Dube, 2015b:193). Zandile rejects her mother and her mother’s values. Audre Lorde argues, “that if we do not define ourselves for ourselves, we will be defined by others-for their use and to our detriment” (cited in O’Reilly 2004:3). The memory of her mother made her a rebellious woman so that she does not end up like her mother. Zandile describes her childhood memory:

My mom, she never wanted more, she wanted security and the perfect picture on the outside that was blurred and damaged on the inside. That was our home, our family, everybody thought we were perfect and happy but the truth was there were demons crawling all over our walls. My father was a beater, a sexual abuser, a controller who stood tall and preached morals to anyone who cared to listen. My mother wished herself death. I gave it to her in the end (Busani-Dube, 2015b:82-83).

Zandile’s mother was not nurturing or protective of her daughter. As a result, the “daughter shuns the teachings of the motherline and separates herself from it” (O’Reilly, 2004:48). Zandile desired to be a great mother to her children from the time they were in the womb. She discloses to her son that between her mother and him she chose him while he was still in the womb (Busani-Dube, 2015b:47). She did not raise her own children because she was arrested for killing her mother; her children were raised by Hlomu. The opportunity to empower her children was denied to her, and she has to live with the consequences of disconnecting from her motherline. O’Reilly (2004:4) reiterates that “it is recognised that mothers and mothering are what make possible the physical and psychological wellbeing and empowerment of children”. Zandile regretfully imagines what it would have been like to show affection to her children and experience motherhood (Busani-Dube, 2015b:29). She remembers the day she was arrested:

I begged them to let me hold him, to let me hold my two children for the last time before I started paying for my sins. And for seventeen years that was all I longed for, to hold the child I had to kill for. To watch the two of them grow and hold and protect them and tell them nobody was ever going to hurt them as long as I lived, not like my mother allowed people to hurt me (Busani-Dube, 2015b:173).

Zandile comprehends the role and responsibilities of a mother. O'Reilly (2004:9) claims that "black motherhood as a site where black women can develop a belief in their own empowerment. Black women can see motherhood as providing a base for self-actualisation, for acquiring status in the Black community and as a catalyst for social activism". Zandile's rejection of the motherline is a journey to herself, "she has gained female authority in many ways", and she becomes a different generation from her mother's (O'Reilly, 2004:12). She also discovers that her mother was damaged and broken because she was raped (Busani-Dube, 2015b:316). Zandile was a product of rape. As a result, her mother was reminded of the incident every time she saw her daughter. Her cousin discloses her mother's rape nightmare:

So, your father had been asking your mother out for years, but he knew she didn't like him and that she was never going to say yes to him. One day, when your mother was walking home from fetching water, he jumped out of a bush and...raped her (Busani-Dube, 2015b:316).

Adrienne Rich states that "the motherhood created by rape is not only degraded, the raped woman is turned into a criminal" (1995:35). The victim is left feeling shame, and a stigma attached to her. Busani-Dube portrays different types of motherhood, some women want children, and some are victimised into motherhood. To a certain degree, Zandile is similar to her mother; unfortunately, their relationship was a result of rape. Therefore, her motherline has nothing to pass down but bitterness and hatred, but Zandile refuses to be like her mother. She manages to grow with the knowledge that she is worthy of love and respect despite her disconnection to the motherline. Maya Angelou states that "you may not control all the events that happen to you, but you can decide not to be reduced by them" (2008: X).

Zandile's mother failed her as a child, and she failed her children by her absence, but given a second chance, she forges a relationship with her children. O'Reilly (2004:14) argues that "though daughters must forge an identity which is separate from the mothers, they frequently acknowledge that a part of themselves is truly their mothers' child". Busani-Dube highlights the complexities of motherhood in the black culture and community and how each protagonist overcomes the obstacles of motherhood. Busani-Dube depicts the terrible consequences faced by children who are rape products. Minna Salami maintains that "tradition and history are nurturing spirits for women of African descent. For without an understanding of where we have come from, we are less likely to be able to make sense of where we are going" (2019:593). Therefore, for Zandile to move into her future, understanding her past is vital.

In *Naledi-his love*, the protagonist was brought up by her father. She does not understand the tasks of motherhood because she does not have a mother. Her biological mother left her and her sisters at a young age with their father. Naledi feels “neither love or hate because she does not know her” (Busani-Dube, 2015c:461). Naledi was brought up by a man. As a result, the idea of pregnancy and motherhood is not familiar to her. She emphasises her fears, “I ‘ve never imagined myself being someone’s mother. How does it work? What do I do? I have no idea. How am I going to be a good mother to a child when I don’t know what it is exactly that mothers do?” (Busani-Dube, 2015c:271). Naledi may not know the roles of a mother, still Cherly Walker argues that “there are various dimensions of motherhood and how women who are mothers themselves feel and think about this role and relationship, all women are different. This self-image is personal and individualised” (1995:29). An image of a black mother is the strong woman who does everything, nurtures as well as provides for her children. These attributes are natural to Naledi even though she has no role model because she is already protecting her baby; she claims, “I think I do want him. Forget who his father is, I will raise him by myself and I will be the best mother and father ever” (Busani-Dube, 2015c:321). Naledi’s thoughts reveal the disconnected motherline, and also shows that single parents do manage to parent like her father raised three girls. In the black community, a single parent may appear to be alone, but the reality is he/she always has support when parenting gets difficult. Black parents are not alone in raising their children, it is a collective role and responsibility. Naledi’s father has a woman he wants to marry. This woman tells Naledi that “you may not know this, but I raised you. I wasn’t here physically but I was always here. Your father came to me for everything. When it got tough for him as a man trying to raise four women, he always came to me” (Busani-Dube, 2015c:363).

Thompson and Walker also argue that “mothering is a complex and contradictory experience: it is frustrating, irritating, and overwhelming, but also pleasing and fulfilling” (1989:861). Her father’s girlfriend was fulfilling the role of the othermother, as O’Reilly states in the motherhood theory. Busani-Dube is highlighting that mother work is not gendered, but it takes an individual who desires to empower the child, protect, nurture and love them unconditionally as Naledi’s father did. His girlfriend continues to tell Naledi that “sometimes I wanted to give up because I couldn’t stand not being able to love him openly but he begged me every time and I ended up staying. He would say let me finish my job as a father first. Let me make sure they can stand on their own first” (Busani-Dube, 2015c:363). Chimamanda Adichie states that “boys and girls are undeniably different biologically, but socialisation exaggerates the differences,

and then starts a self-fulfilling process” (2014:35). Men can raise children to be confident adults like Naledi, she may not have a mother, but she is assured of her father’s unconditional love and protection for her.

Naledi has to take a journey to reconnect with her motherline so that she can be empowered as a mother and black woman moving into the future. Her sisters and her agree that they want to see their mother, but Naledi voices her opinion that, “we don’t need her to mother us, we just want to get answers and move on” (Busani-Dube, 2015c:406). Naledi and her sisters need the healing of being unmothered because they are wounded, for them to move on they need to meet the woman who abandoned them. Busani-Dube illustrates that healing is crucial and O’Reilly’s (2004:47) reading of Morrison “affirms and confirms the importance of this task of cultural bearing by showing the suffering that occurs when cultural bearing does not take place and children do not acquire the ancestral memory and ancient properties that would empower them”. Qhawe, who is Naledi’s boyfriend, tells her “yes, I explained how this whole thing about your mother affected you and our relationship in the beginning. How you are quick to walk away from people and things because you expect them to disappoint you or leave you in the end” (Busani-Dube, 2015c:465). After reconnecting with her mother, Naledi decided to “let go of the anger she has held for so many years for a woman who doesn’t care about her” (Busani-Dube, 2015c:464). She understands her motherline, and she expresses herself, “all I know is I don’t want this woman in my son’s life. I don’t care that she gave birth to me, I don’t want her that’s it” (Busani-Dube, 2015c:462). Naledi is rejecting her motherline and makes a conscious decision that she wants to live life and be liberated (Busani-Dube, 2015c:464). Naledi’s meeting with her mother has healed her, and she declares, “I am a mother now, my priorities have changed, and so the number of battles I find worth fighting has dropped” (Busani-Dube, 2015c:458). Her father’s girlfriend assisted Naledi into motherhood; as a result, her perspective on life is different. Naledi asserts:

I talk to her a lot. We have become close since I had the baby. She was at my house for the first two weeks and I must say, I would have really struggled without her. Ever since that day I met my biological mother, whom I don’t plan on seeing again, and the birth of my son, my look at life is totally different. I don’t do petty any more. I don’t flinch at things that are less important. I’ve learned to listen and think before reacting and I’ve learned not to judge (Busani-Dube, 2015c:469).

One of Naledi’s friend loses her mother and Naledi thought, “I don’t know what it’s like to lose a mother because I have never had one but I know that I would probably end up in a coma if I received a phone call saying my father is dead. Just thinking about it makes me cringe”

(Busani-Dube, 2015c:421). It is evident that Naledi's father is the mother she never had; their relationship is strong like the one of mother and daughter. Thompson and Walker (1989:861) argue that when "parents share daily caregiving, the distinction fades and mothering and fathering seem much the same", and this is valid in Naledi's life, she only has one parent. Chimamanda Adichie suggests, "what if, in raising children, we focus on ability instead of gender? What if we focus on interest instead of gender?" (2014:36). Her father has focused on Naledi's abilities, not her gender, he states, "I am not getting any younger Naledi. When I die, someone will have to take my place. You've always been the one that goes for what she wants, no matter what anybody says" (Busani-Dube, 2015c:243). The writer is deconstructing the notion of gender as imperative in leadership instead of ability. Adichie continues to mention that "culture does not make people. People make culture" (2014:46). Therefore, people can transform cultures and traditions to have a fair society where people are recognised for who they are, not how they should be. Ige argues that the movement of African feminism "does not have a racial connotation but a humanist and a holistic approach to male-female relationship in society" (2016:11). The primary objectives of African feminism are treating both men and women fairly and liberating their full potential. Furthermore, African women should not neglect their biological roles in their pursuit for freedom and equality (Ige, 2016:15).

Busani-Dube makes motherhood a part of the women's lives, it is not depicted as a burden but instead a symbol of power. Ige continues to argue "that motherhood is ideal and claimed as strength by African women and seen as special manifestation in Africa" (2016:15). O'Reilly's analysis of Morrison's work, portrays black motherhood as a space where black people are recognised as subjects, loved and affirmed. Busani-Dube's portrayal of "motherhood, therefore, shifts African women from being framed as submissive to being resistant and further shifts their destiny from one of despair to hopefulness, particularly in their display of resistance to achieve justice in the social and political sphere" (Alemayehu, 2020:75). Black motherhood does not hinder a woman from achieving her goals and dreams. Instead, motherhood inspires her to be someone great for her children. The protagonists conquer their fears and confront their past so that they can become the best mothers to their children and other people's children, a mother is all giving and all powerful. The protagonists attempt to be the best versions of themselves and become role models for their children. Motherhood is a responsibility to allow your children to flourish from within themselves, not to prescribe who they should be but to support and guide their path in life. Audre Lorde once proposed:

The strongest lesson I can teach my son is the same lesson I teach my daughter: how to be who he wishes to be for himself. And the best way I can do this is to be who I am and hope that he will learn from this not how to be me, which is not possible, but how to be himself. Furthermore, this means how to move to that voice from within himself, rather than to those raucous, persuasive, or threatening voices from outside, pressuring him to be what the world wants him to be (1984:77).

Busani-Dube depicts black mothers that do not lose themselves, but instead, they work to achieve their dreams, and motherhood does not prevent them from doing activities for themselves. These women have agency and authority, motherhood is part of their lives, but it is not the purpose of their lives. They enjoy being mothers to their biological children and other people's children. Motherhood is celebrated for its positive aspects that it can empower black women, but the shortcomings are also recognised. Scholars concede that:

Anchored on the matrix of motherhood which is central to African metaphysics and has been the basis of the survival and unity of the black race through the ages. Whatever Africa's role may be in the global perspective, it could never be divorced from her quintessential position as the Mother Continent of humanity, nor is it coincidental that motherhood has remained the central focus of African art, African literature (especially women's writing), African culture, African psychology, oral traditions, and empirical philosophy (Kioko, Kagumire and Matandela, 2020:17).

Busani-Dube is commended for offering solutions for the shortcomings in motherhood. Astrid Henry observes that "feminism returns us to the past-a time which we have already moved beyond, a time our mothers already 'ran away from' and 'escaped'" (2004:66). It is significant for women's development to remember what their predecessors achieved and contributed in their shortcomings. Adeleye-Fayemi contends that "Africa has some of the oldest civilisations in the world, it has the oldest patriarchies, and therefore the oldest tradition of resistance to patriarchy" (2000:6). She also continues to maintain that "African women had strategies to fight against patriarchy in ancient times, they would use institutions such as motherhood" as a result, motherhood is a powerful institution and tool for women (2000:6). Chinweizu (1990:34) points out that a mother who has devoted her skills to the perpetuation of female power is indeed praiseworthy amongst other women. He continues to affirm that "mother is supreme. It has been so since the original division of labour by gender which took place at the beginning of human society; it remains so to this day" (Chinweizu, 1990:114). The institution of motherhood possesses the cultural and socialisation of all humanity.

4.2 Different types of conflict and management styles

Tharoke (2013:7) opines that “conflict may be defined as a struggle or contest between people with opposing needs, ideas, beliefs, values, or goals”. The female characters in *Hlomu-the wife*, *Zandile-the resolute* and *Naledi-his love* experience conflict in many different forms. They face intrapersonal, interpersonal and supernatural conflict in their journey. Hlomu’s character battles with intrapersonal conflict as she has to make tough decisions in her life. Hlomu conflicts with herself because of her behaviour towards physical abuse. She understands what she needs to do but yet fails to execute it. Her thoughts are “I hope it doesn’t happen again because I’ll leave if it does” (Busani-Dube, 2015a:71). She reveals, “I’ve seen beautiful, smart and strong girls like me turning into bitter ticking time-bombs, not because of the hate they have for the men who beat them, but the hate they have for themselves for allowing it to happen” (Busani-Dube, 2015a:38). Tharoke describes intrapersonal conflict as “internal to the individual and it is the most difficult form of conflict to analyse and manage” (2013:9). The battle that Hlomu has is the belief that she is responsible for her husband’s abuse. She recalls the signs that depicted this man’s abusive tendencies. She reminisces that “there were signs; yes, there were a lot of signs. They were all over, the way he kept coming back even after I was clear that I wasn’t interested, the way he reacted on my first night at his house, that time I found that bag full of money...maybe I should call the police” (Busani-Dube, 2015a:38). She is struggling to decide because she loves the man, but she does not want to be abused or become his victim. Hlomu battles between reason and passion, Jones and Fabian state that “we all are familiar with being caught on the horns of a dilemma-wanting to make a phone call, and simultaneously not wanting to make a call” (2006:8). The two scholars continue to add that “at first sight, the idea that we can be at war with ourselves appears paradoxical” (Jones and Fabian, 2006:8). Hlomu as a black woman seems to hold “attitudes that are both highly masculine and highly feminine, thus, in a given relationship, one may find a Black woman who feels and behaves in ways that are both assertive and passive, dominant and subordinate, decisive and indecisive, and so on” (Franklin, 1984:144). Hlomu finds herself often in this type of conflict throughout the narrative, more so than the other female protagonists in *Zandile-the resolute* and *Naledi-his love*.

Her strategy in dealing with her intrapersonal conflict is going home in KwaZulu-Natal to her family. As the bus is leaving, she observes the Johannesburg city, she thinks “I see the Joburg city lights behind me fade. I get this feeling of relief, like I’m leaving all my troubles behind,

like I have an option of going and never coming back” (Busani-Dube, 2015a:41). Hlomu’s first instincts during intrapersonal conflict are to walk away and change the environment that she finds herself in, probably to seek peace and guidance regarding her internal struggles. She also tries to find a logical explanation for her inner conflict. She questions Mqhele, “you really hurt me, do you know that? Why would you hit me Mqhele? Like I am nothing! Am I nothing to you?” (Busani-Dube, 2015a:44). To deal with her internalised conflict, she appreciates her family as she discloses, “I am looking at them with a smile on my face. I wouldn’t trade them for anything” (Busani-Dube, 2015a:42).

Hlomu and her husband do not have little fights, they hardly fight, but when they do it is catastrophic (Busani-Dube, 2015b:277). Hlomu is confrontational when it comes to interpersonal conflict. Various sources cause conflict in relationships. The primary source of conflict in Hlomu’s marriage is Mqhele’s behaviour; this type of conflict is called role conflict “it is conflict arising from sets of prescribed behaviour” (Tharoke, 2013:10). Mqhele’s masculinity is dominant, and he thinks his behaviour is acceptable, or he can apologise his way through his marriage. Franklin II opines that black men understand their masculinity as “to become a man means that you must become dominant, aggressive, decisive, responsible, and, in some instances, violent in social encounters with other” (1984:146-147). Hlomu fought with her husband, and he left their home for a few days without returning or telling her his whereabouts. When he finally returns home, she is waiting to confront him for his behaviour. Hlomu challenges her husband:

Get away? From what? Me? You needed to get away from me? I didn’t know we had an option of getting away Mqhele. I thought we were committed to each other. So, what happens when you get mad again? Are you going to get away for a week while I wait for you and make sure you have a warm meal when you come back? (Busani-Dube, 2015a:144).

The above confrontation depicts an individual who “desires to maximise joint results. An individual who uses this style tends to see conflict as natural, helpful, and leading to a more creative solution if handled properly” (Tharoke, 2013:13). It is evident that Hlomu is concerned about their relationship and she wants to resolve their argument so it does not escalate further. She acknowledges that “human conflict is inevitable not because it is part of social life, but for it is a biological fact lying within us all” (Tharoke, 2013:10). Hlomu is showing her husband that she values their marriage. Adeleye-Fayemi validates Hlomu’s conflict management styles:

African patterns of feminism can be seen as having developed within a context that views human life from a total, rather than a dichotomous and exclusive perspective. For

women, the male is not the 'other' but part of the human. Each gender constitutes a critical half that makes a whole. Neither sex is complete in itself to constitute a unit by itself. Each has needs and a complement, despite the possession of unique features of its own (2000:15).

Hlomu is aware that she is resisting the patriarchal system not demonising her husband as an individual. African feminism promotes gender reciprocal and compassionate human relationships. Thus, interpersonal conflict should not be divisive but be a learning opportunity to understand one's spouse.

In *Zandile-the resolute* the protagonist is different from Hlomu because she has more interpersonal conflict than intrapersonal. Zandile is the type of character who does not tolerate insolent people, and she is forceful. She and Hlomu were in a restaurant having lunch when a man insulted them. Zandile responds to the man, "I'm sorry, you were saying? Did you say the word bitch? Were you referring to us? I'm not going to be insulted by some fool, not me Zandile Ngcobo! Never!" (Busani-Dube, 2015b:56-57). She reiterates her sentiments to Hlomu about impertinent individuals, "You tolerate crap like this from people? You just walk away? No, not me, never! I will never let anyone talk shit like that to me; I know how to fight for myself" (Busani-Dube, 2015b:27). Franklin II concludes that black women have been socialised early to believe that "it is imperative that you learn to take care of yourself" (1984:144). The primary source of interpersonal conflict in Zandile's life is her personal preference on how other people treat her. She forcefully demands dignity, particularly because of her prison experience. She looks at Hlomu and contemplates that "she's never been in jail; she has no idea how it is there" (Busani-Dube, 2015b:59). In contrast to Hlomu, she is decisive and executes her thoughts. She often fights with her husband, Nkosana, for various reasons. On one occasion they had a fight, and she decided to leave him and she recalls that:

As soon as he left, I packed my things and left. I didn't know if I was doing the right thing, but I knew I couldn't stay with a man who thought he could do as he pleased with me, not me Zandile Ngcobo! He was the one who treated me like a princess and made me believe I was gold, he made it like that from the beginning and showed me how it felt to be loved and cherished, and now he thinks he could just change things and treat me differently, no! (Busani-Dube, 2015b:102).

Her self-worth is always echoed in her interpersonal conflict as she repeats her name and surname, to reaffirm her identity as a black woman. Her strategy of dealing with conflict is forceful. Tharoke describes this conflict management style as "a situation in which one person or group attempts to acquire complete dominance. Individuals do not hesitate to use aggressive behaviour to resolve conflict" (2013:13). During conflicts, Zandile maintains her perspective,

and she does not compromise. She will use violence to prove her point, she felt unsettled by one of her interpersonal conflicts, and she reflects, “they are telling me that this will blow off but I’m not sure. The one thing I know is that suddenly I don’t feel ashamed of my past. I am worried but I don’t feel ashamed, it’s not like I can go back and change it. In fact, I fully believe I did what I had to do” (Busani-Dube, 2015b:159). According to Tharoke (2013:13), a forceful management style makes an “individual assume that conflict is settled by one person winning and one person losing and they want to be the winner and creating a win-lose situation”.

Zandile also experiences supernatural conflict in her narrative. Edward Drown explains possible meanings of the term supernatural, and he defines the supernatural as “that which is above the created order of things. It may mean the spiritual as distinct from the physical. It may mean the miraculous, considered as an event outside the course of nature, produced by divine act” (1913:144). The family was visiting Mbuba, KwaZulu-Natal for Christmas. Nkosana’s dead father does not want Zandile in his home. This is a supernatural conflict because Zandile is in a fight with a dead man who is communicating with her through a young boy named Sisekelo. Zandile is in her bedroom cleaning when she is horrified at what she sees; she screams, “there’s a snake in my room!” (Busani-Dube, 2015b:198). She runs out of the bedroom, and the men run to the bedroom carrying sticks to hit it, it raised its head and almost all its upper body the moment Zandile stepped in, and she runs away again (Busani-Dube, 2015b:195). The snake disappears quickly out the window, and no one can find it. A child in the family calls the snake ‘mkhulu’ and walks away, which makes everyone perplexed (Busani-Dube, 2015b:195).

Mzimela, a family friend and elder, seems to think that Sisekelo has a special connection with his dead grandfather, he thinks the grandfather is communicating with the family through the child (Busani-Dube, 2015b:231). This event depicts how African people perceive the “natural realm and believe that the supernatural is real and not imaginary” (Deme, 2009:405). Zandile makes traditional beer, but it does not brew, which is a sign that the ancestors are not pleased. The rondavel burns and Sisekelo informs the adults that ‘mkhulu’ is angry (Busani-Dube, 2015b:255). No one seems to know what started the fire, “the hosepipe is not helping; the fire is getting more and more dangerous” (Busani-Dube, 2015b:254).

After all these incomprehensible incidents Zandile accepts that “it’s clear we are going to have a dark Christmas, and it’s clear I’m responsible. I am not wanted here; his father does not want me” (Busani-Dube, 2015b:258). Nkosana’s father, who died a long time ago does not recognise

Zandile as a wife, she has to get married traditionally, have her lobola paid, only then the ancestors will accept her. This whole process will require Zandile to return home, the home that she left when she killed her mother. She cannot force her way to a resolution and as a result; she feels like she has been cursed, she declares “everything I have done wrong will catch up with me, it always does. Just when I think I have come out, I find myself back in again, deep in” (Busani-Dube, 2015b:264). Welsh-Asante as cited in Deme describes how black people’s lives are intertwined with the spiritual world; she explains that:

The process of perception in an African centred worldview combines the sacred and profane, mind and body, the natural and the supernatural as organic dynamic entities, able to manifest themselves in all sorts of combinations and disciplines (2009:403).

Zandile succumbs to the supernatural conflict because she cannot defeat it, she has to compromise if she wants happiness. However, she is fighting this battle with her husband as he encourages her, “ours was never going to be an easy life, you know that. But we are still here; we’ve beaten everything, all of it. I just want to beat this one last thing and maybe after that we can find our happiness” (Busani-Dube, 2015b:263). Busani-Dube portrays that there are different types of conflict including supernatural conflicts that black women have to deal with, Deme’s interests are in understanding “the relationship between humans and the supernatural and how that relationship manifests itself in people’s collective consciousness” (2009:404).

The protagonist in *Naledi-his love* has intrapersonal and interpersonal conflict in her narrative. Naledi struggles with the idea that her boyfriend still loves another woman very much even though she passed away, even though he is in a relationship with her. She expresses her feelings to her sister, “but I can’t get the picture of that woman out of my mind. He stills loves her; I know he does. What scares me the most is not knowing whether he’ll ever be able to love me more than he loved her. It worries me. Imagine being second best to a ghost” (Busani-Dube, 2015c:61). Naledi deals with her intrapersonal conflict through positive thinking, “I comfort myself with the fact that we look totally different, so I wasn’t her replacement I think” (Busani-Dube, 2015c:62). Kardas, et al. (2019:83) explain that “optimism basically means being in positive expectations about the future and it is considered in relation with emotion, perseverance, problem-solving and many more”. Naledi makes a conscious decision to conquer her inner battles through positive thinking.

Naledi is opinionated, which leads to a few interpersonal conflicts with her sisters and boyfriend. She argues with one of her sisters, and she is shouting, “Omphi! I’ve had it with

you. I am not going to sit here and listen to you blame me for your problems. You've always been mean and cold and trouble so you can't go around blaming people for not being there for you" (Busani-Dube, 2015c:154). When Omphi responds, "what? You're judging me? So now that you're sleeping with some rich idiot you think you're better than me? He's going to fuck you and leave you like every other man...". Naledi slaps her very hard on her face (Busani-Dube, 2015c:155). Scholars have described conflict as "a process that begins where one party perceives that another party has negatively affected, or is about to negatively affect something that the first party cares about" (Tharoke, 2013:7). Naledi felt the urge to slap her sister for insulting her boyfriend. Furthermore, Marxian cited in Tharoke "views conflict not only as built into the social system but also as the primary stimulus for social change" (2013:7). Naledi's romantic relationship changes after this argument, Qhawe tells her that:

You have a problem with everything about me! You can't even do one thing for me! Just one thing Naledi as simple as moving to Gauteng. That, you can't even compromise on and you tell me you want to be a wife? My wife? Do you even know what that word means? (Busani-Dube, 2015c:334).

In Naledi's life, social change is evident after the conflict with her boyfriend. She manages to do some introspection after her boyfriend expresses himself, which leads to her behavioural change. Her conflict management style is forceful, but she does compromise after reflecting on her actions and behaviour which brings change. Conflict is believed to be essential in human life and relationships. The protagonists in *Hlomu-the wife*, *Zandile-the resolute* and *Naledi-his love* manage to resolve their conflicts and focus on the future.

Hlomu tends to walk away or avoid conflict if possible, in the public spaces. In the restaurant when she and Zandile were insulted by two men she chose to walk away. Zandile observes that "Hlomu takes my handbag and pulls me by my arm all the way to the door. She's walking fast and quietly all the way to the parking lot" (Busani-Dube, 2015a:56). However, during interpersonal conflict with her husband; she goes home to Durban and returns after a few days to confront him. After the confrontation she will be angry for a while, and discloses "I am going to be at a place where I don't try at all, where I don't worry about the future and where I don't blame myself for everything. I am going to be like this as long as its lasts" (Busani-Dube, 2015a:314). Despite their argument Hlomu continues to cook dinner and breakfast for her husband (Busani-Dube, 2015a:314). Hlomu does compromise and forgives quickly, during the conflict. Hence, Mqhele asserts that "we made it" because he understands that his wife is accommodating in resolving conflict (Busani-Dube, 2015a:401). Fincham, Beach and Davila (2007:542) concur that "forgiving the partner for the transgression is a potential means of

providing closure with regard to a painful or disturbing relationship event”. Zandile is not compromising like Hlomu during conflict. She seems to think that her reactions are justified as she asks, “doesn’t he see that I reacted after being provoked?” (Busani-Dube, 2015b:59). During a conflict Zandile and her husband will have sex while expressing their feelings. She describes one argument as “the most important conversation we’ve ever had” (Busani-Dube, 2015b:81). Zandile’s style of resolution during conflict is competitive because she has to get her way no matter what. She proudly states, “anyway, this is the last week of being a housewife. I finally accepted the Professor’s offer after swimming through a tsunami and walking on fire and jumping over a volcano called Nkosana” (Busani-Dube, 2015b:355). Nkosana was never going to win the argument because Zandile’s strategy is a win-lose, and she always wins. Naledi during conflict is violent even her thoughts are also violent. During an argument with Qhawe she thought, “if I stay here, I swear I’m going to strangle him!” (Busani-Dube, 2015c:281). Naledi seeks relationship advice from her father’s girlfriend, who tells that “you don’t end a relationship because you don’t agree on things” (Busani-Dube, 2015c:360). She learns that she has to compromise and conflict is not the end, it is an integral part of a relationship.

4.3 Sexual love in Hlomu-the wife, Zandile-the resolute and Naledi-his love

There are many different types of loves in society. There is affectionate love, enduring love, family love, playful love, self-love, self-less love and romantic love. Milligan states “some of these loves have their specialised terminology of philia, agape, eros and caritas, a terminology that has been passed on to us from antiquity” (2014:9). The primary focus in this chapter will be sexual love because the writer has highlighted this type of love throughout the three narratives. Cowburn’s definition of sexual love is:

Is for two single people to meet suddenly, to find each other both physically attractive and, as persons, delightful, to experience strong feelings which either render them speechless or make them surprisingly fluent, to make a leap of faith to the certainty that this is the man or woman for me, or in a word to fall in love (2003:173).

The protagonists in *Hlomu-the wife*, *Zandile-the resolute* and *Naledi-his love* have all experienced sexual love. Hlomu falls in love with her boyfriend who later becomes her husband, even though she tries really hard to dissuade him in his pursuit. She clarifies that “yes, he isn’t bug-eye, or idiot or stalker or taxi driver anymore, his name is Mqhele Zulu” (Busani-Dube, 2015a:12). The recognition of his name and surname validates her feelings for him. The two individuals are represented as loving each other deeply, Mqhele declares to Hlomu:

I love that you're you. I love your intelligence, that you are persistent and won't stop until you get what you want, that, even in your craziest and angriest moments, your eyes never lie to me, they tell you love me even in situations where I should be doubting it (Busani-Dube, 2015a:171).

Love can be several marvellous things, a source of joy and happiness, but it can also be a source of doubt. Mqhele's emotional state is affirmed by scholars who argue that "any one of us may come to believe that we have good reasons for doubting another's declared love for us. But at the same time, we may remain sensitive to the possibility that, in spite of our doubts, the love in question may still be genuine" (Milligan, 2014:12). People need love because it is deeply rooted in their humanity, and the best love is the reciprocated one, and it comes in different forms. The love that Hlomu has for her husband is the kind of love that always defeats her, it is a leap of blind faith that words cannot describe. Busani-Dube presents love that has flaws and shortcomings but it is unconditional. Hlomu questions her husband:

Leave you? Leave you Mqhele? You beat me like I was some dog, I stayed. You turn me into a trash bin where you release and throw your pain in, and I let you, I let you hurt and violate my body, but I am still here. You go around killing people, but I am still here, with you. And you're going to sit here and tell me you thought I was going to leave you? Does it look like I'd leave you for anything? (Busani-Dube, 2015a:189).

Hlomu loves Mqhele as he is and for what he is, she regards him as a unique human being. Sexual love is complex and complicated because it excludes other people in the relationship. However, the writer gives Hlomu a choice to love her husband every day, regardless of the circumstances. She has reasons to leave him, but she chooses to fight for their love. Some challenges make Hlomu wonder how her life would be like if she did not get in his car. It is apparent that their love did not turn out as she imagined it would, and that casts doubts in her mind. Cowburn states that "love can carry within itself a memory of falling in love" (2003:181). There are times when she feels unease, fruitless longing and regret because she reflects that she shouldn't have entered his car which resulted in a sexual relationship. (Busani-Dube, 2015a:37). Hlomu depicts traits of tenacity in her sexual relationship. She expresses her love for her husband through her actions; she also verbally expresses herself. She makes a definitive decision to love Mqhele and commit to him and their relationship.

Zandile is a protagonist that did not experience parental love, as a result, sexual love has given her warmth, joy and value. Zandile was a product of rape which resulted in her mother neglecting her. Cowburn argues that "if someone becomes a parent against his or her will and, when the child is born, maintains this attitude and, looking at the child, says, 'I wish that this thing did not exist'" (2003:55). Zandile has learnt that love transcends physical space and

bodies. Her husband tells her that just because they could not be together physically, it does not mean they could not be together at all (Busani-Dube, 2015b:11). Love is teaching her to look towards something transcendent that has a spiritual connection as well as physical. Zandile is continuously learning the depths of her husband's love as she expresses herself "I am angry. I am angry at him for loving me so much that he is prepared to lay his dignity down, but more than anything I am angry at myself for being such a burden to his life" (Busani-Dube, 2015b:264). Nkosana has decided to overlook her shortcomings and focus on their love. Zandile's relationship is admired by many as Hlomu declares, "these two Nkosana and Zandile, they are the true definition of love, soul-mates and living proof that you can only ever truly love one person in your life" (Busani-Dube, 2015b:401). Zandile believes in forgiveness and giving people another opportunity to redeem themselves because she appreciates her second chance of freedom, love and family unity. She states that "I got more than I bargained for, it seems, I've moved from being a jailbird murderer to being an inspirational survivor, to some people at least" (Busani-Dube, 2015:218). She loves and is loved, but she does not want to love at the expense of losing her individuality and self.

Scepticism about being loved as we want to be loved is normal in sexual relationships (Milligan, 2014:13). Naledi has met a man who loves her dearly; but she has to remind herself that it is real because she was in an abusive relationship. She points out, "now I have to choose between my dad's love and his love, it looks like I can have only one. My dad has always been and will always love me, no matter how bad I turn out. Also, I've never been loved by a man as much as Qhawe has loved me in one month" (Busani-Dube, 2015c:97). She attempts to compare the two different loves she experiences, parental love and sexual love. Naledi acknowledges "the yearning to be loved is an ordinary human desire" that all humans need in their lives (Milligan, 2014:14). Cowburn explains that "when people decide to have a relationship of sexual love, society expects (or at any rate expected) them to exchange vows in the presence of a registered celebrant and official witnesses, that is, to 'get married,' and their marriage is recorded in a register and in government files" (2003:196). Naledi and Qhawe decided to get married, and Naledi's vows highlight her commitment:

If I said I loved you, I'd be lying. What I feel for you is more than just love, it cannot be described in words or measured by how many times I tell you or how much I try to show you. My life has changed the moment I stopped fighting it and admitted to myself that I was not complete without you (Busani-Dube, 2015c:473)

She did try to reject and walk away from his love, but all her attempts failed. She has succumbed to sexual love and to exclusively love and be loved by Qhawe. Adeleye-Fayemi

affirms that “African feminism stands on the pivot of African philosophy of life with its emphasis on marriage as a social institution” (2000:11). It is a beautiful union of two individuals committing to each other. Cunningham points out that “false love is divisive and encourages competition” whereas, true love unites and is compassionate (2004:37). Busani-Dube, as a female writer, highlights the concept of true love when one commits to sexual love. She also makes her characters fallible individuals who only desire to be exclusively loved by their partners. She also depicts the repercussions of infidelity in relationships, but also that forgiveness is possible. All three protagonists have experienced disappointments and doubts in their sexual relationships but decided to rise above all the pessimism and negativity.

Busani-Dube has focused on topics that affect women, but in her themes, she has made her female protagonists’ active agents of their lives. She has rejected the common label of victimisation amongst black women. Furthermore, her female characters accept motherhood as a beautiful institution, and it does not hinder them from achieving their dreams. Hlomu, Zandile and Naledi are not afraid to fight and express their thoughts. She has not made them into subservient wives or girlfriends. These women do not give up on the beauty of love, and motherhood is crucial in their development. The representation of the black females by Busani-Dube deconstructs the stereotypes of black women who are unlovable, depressed, objects and victims of institutional and cultural structures. Robbins draws our attention to the portrayal of women “experiences and fictional representation ought to map onto each other; and that the purpose of literature for [woman] reader is to find her own experience replicated in the fictional world-she should be able to ‘identify’ with the characters in the books she reads” (2000:65). The representation of black women in literature echoes these sentiments made by Robbins. Black women desire the same recognition in literature as the collective group of women. Nfah-Abbenyi (1997:13) “insists that African women owe it to themselves, they have a specific mandate to write, to draw up and review the African woman question”. An African woman armed with a pen is armed with knowledge that can disrupt norms and traditions. Borotheo (2019:384) opines that “the world has succeeded in distorting our view of self”, therefore, the female writer’s responsibility to restore the black woman’s position of respect and dignity. Other people socially constructed the narrative of black women; as a result, it can be reconstructed by black women to reflect themselves. Fictional representation has the power to condition people’s mind, it can influence behaviour, policies and also inspire the readers. Busani-Dube’s representation inspires the black females, it even promotes the reading culture amongst black people because they can identify with the characters.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

5.1 Secondary texts

Anatomy of Female Power by Chinweizu is a book that explores the different powers that women have. The book analyses the different female relationships from being a single woman, bride, wife and mother and the overall institution of patriarchy. It depicts women's strategies in overpowering men, and his examination is applied throughout the research study because it is aligned with the research's objectives and aim.

Black diamond is a novel about black people post-apartheid and their lifestyles and challenges. The novel has the potential to highlight women's strength and capabilities but the writer denies his female characters that power. Mda portrays glimpses of what women can do in solidarity, and how fearless they are. The women who are the Visagie friends gather to protest Stevo's arrest and their leader believed in mass action similar to that which released Nelson Mandela (Mda, 2009:4). The event depicts how Mda chooses not to focus on women's ideas and power, he limits the female characters. His female characters portray stereotypical beautiful women with objectified bodies, he gives them autonomy, however, it is diminished by the need of a male saviour. Black male writers need to contribute to the positive representation of black women in literature. African feminism views men as partners who can work together with women to resist gender inequalities. But it is encouraging to have scholars such as Nkosinathi Sithole joining women in fighting female victimisation.

Hunger eats a man is a narrative that is reshaping black women's representation in literature. Sithole is an emerging male writer who is focusing on issues that affect black people such as poverty, hence the title of the novel. His narrative echoes the challenges that are faced by black women. He highlights the atrocious act of rape; he condemns it through his characters and he empowers his female characters to resist victimisation. Nomsa's character questions the women "don't you see that we should do something to protect ourselves from these men?" (Sithole, 2015:77). The women have agency and they are working together to dismantle the institution of patriarchy, which dehumanises and objectifies them through rape. They respond with violence to the perpetrators because they believe that men understand the language of violence. Gqola asserts that communities and society need to "reflect on how to shift public behaviour in today's adults, and even less on how we can individually-and collectively-

sabotage rapists and hold them accountable” (2015:6). Sithole allows his female characters to collectively cripple the tool that men use to violate women’s bodies. Therefore, these women are holding men accountable for their actions, they are utilising their power. The women in *Hunger eats a man*, are admirable because they reject the victimisation label associated with black female characters. This narrative links with what Busani-Dube is doing with her black female characters. Busani-Dube portrays her women with agency, independence, education, self-awareness and support for one another.

Unbecoming to become by Ayanda Borotho is a memoir that takes a journey of reclaiming her power as a black woman. Borotho reflects on her experiences as a black woman. How as a girl child, she was conditioned to think and behave in a particular manner, the stereotypes that black woman face and the cultural expectations that oppress them. She narrates that as a black woman she was not born a victim or failure but society has given her that narrative, which she rejects and encourages other black women to challenge. She explains that black women are powerful individuals, queens that need to return to their thrones. The ultimate goal of her memoir was to encourage a state of self-actualisation for black women, through accepting who they are, loving themselves and embracing the power that lies within. It is about restoring the power to self which is aligned with the objectives of the research study. She highlights historical African queens who understood their worth and power as they led nations. Her narrative is empowering to black females and it focuses on how great black women are which is a similar narrative as Dudu Busani-Dube.

5.2 Overview

The objective of this research study was to critically examine the power of black females in Busani-Dube’s novels *Hlomu-the wife*, *Zandile-the resolute* and *Naledi-his love*. After analysing Busani-Dube’s narratives it is evident that many powerful female voices exist in black communities. Busani-Dube’s characters are not pure fiction but agents of change in the representations of black females in literature. They are active participants that exhibit hope for many generations of contemporary South African literature. The study analysed the selected texts from an African feminist perspective with the view to highlight female autonomy. The study also examined how black male writers represent females in their fiction. *Black diamond* by Zakes Mda and *Hunger eats man* by Nkosinathi Sithole are the two novels which were compared and contrasted to Busani-Dube’s writing. It was highlighted throughout the study

that African feminism does not condemn men as a group but condemns the structures of patriarchy that benefit men. The research is centred on African feminism because this framework promotes the livelihoods and empowerment of women in Africa. It also highlighted that women can be complementary partners in the development of society. The black female characters are strong-willed women who can eradicate the representation of black women as victims. In the earlier chapters, the author uses sisterhood amongst the female characters, beautiful alternative body-types and narration of their own stories as modes and strategies in her fictional work to demonstrate women's power. Her protagonists are educated, self-aware, confident and supportive of each other's dreams, and they are victorious in their challenges.

Chapter one provided background information on South African women's resistance to their rights in 1956. This chapter highlighted the predecessors' struggle but most importantly their victories. This chapter also looked at the famous black woman Sarah Baartman, how she was a global victim and how the books written about her victimised her further. It also outlined that not many narratives are told of her defiant character. The study utilises Baartman's narrative to depict that black women have been victims for a long time. Therefore, her story will be transformed by contemporary black female writers so that her identity is detached from black victimhood. The study humanises her in this chapter and draws on texts that represent her positively. The methodology of the study was textual analysis which focuses on the written texts to gain more understanding of the author's stance and message. Textual analysis is a close reading of the texts and examining the details.

Chapter two analysed two acclaimed South African black male writers. Zakes Mda is an internationally known writer, his work that was examined in the study was *Black diamond*. The storyline of the novel is about black lives and black people in South Africa post-apartheid; hence it was relevant for the study. The other black male writer is Nkosingithi Sithole, his novel is *Hunger eats a man* which is also about black people in South Africa post-apartheid, it looks at the challenges faced by women and black communities as a whole. The close examinations of these two novels illustrated that male writers can be intentional about how they represent their black female characters. *Black diamond* portrays the stereotypes of black women, the focus is on their bodies, appearance, and the competition against each other. The author had the power to give the female characters agency but he chose not to. Whilst, in *Hunger eats a man* the author was intentional in deconstructing the stereotypes associated with black women and in giving women the agency to be the change in society. Sithole offers women solutions to

their challenges. Sithole's fiction is aligned with the research study's objective of depicting the power of black women.

Chapter three analyses the power of black women in each novel; it was supported by Chinweizu's *Anatomy of female power*. The female power of bridehood, and wifehood was highlighted in this chapter. This chapter focused on the different characteristics of the female protagonists that were positive and portrayed strength. Hlomu, Zandile and Naledi are all black women but they have different personalities and different strengths. They were individually examined, and attention was drawn to their personalities. The strategy of influence amongst women which was highlighted in the narratives was female solidarity or sisterhood. In Busani-Dube's text, female bodies are not idealised and sexualized but the women are active participants in their sexual pleasure. *Unbecoming to become* by Ayanda Borotho was also used to support the theme of this chapter. In this chapter, the stereotypes of black women were deconstructed. The main objective was to demonstrate their victories, dreams, voice and their successes.

Chapter four examined motherhood, conflict and sexual love in the three narratives. The theory of motherhood by Andrea O'Reilly was applied to investigate Busani-Dube's portrayal of motherhood. Motherhood is essential in all the narratives and it is portrayed as a fulfilling institution. The study depicted the different types of motherhood in the black communities. The relationships the black protagonists had with their mothers were analysed and their feelings towards motherhood. The different ways each character handles conflict was also examined, along with the existence and causes of different types of conflict. The chapter also focused on sexual love and the romantic relationships of the protagonists in each novel. This chapter is centred on the positive characteristics of each theme and how the black women are not victims.

In summary, this research study argued that early male writers portrayed more of men's achievements and contributions in literature. At the same time, the images of women were either neglected or presented in stereotypical roles of subservient wives and victimised women. Novels such as *Stronger than the storm* by Lutz van Dijk, *Welcome to our Hillbrow* by Phaswane Mphe, *Cry, the beloved country* by Alan Paton and *Things fall apart* by Chinua Achebe, these few were chosen for the research study but there are many more examples of negative representation of black women in literature. However, the study demonstrates that women can empower themselves by taking initiatives and devising innovative strategies such as entrepreneurial skills, educating themselves, supporting each other's dreams and living lives

that fulfil their individual purposes. Hlomu starts her own restaurant which is a great achievement for her, Zandile gets a job and continues to study, Xolie wants to start a magazine that tells real black women's stories and Naledi wants to start a medical practice to empower the rural people. Each of the texts examined in this study represents a variation of female autonomy and constitutes an important contribution to the African feminism framework. The African female writer has rigorous work to challenge the representation of black females in literature. Nfah-Abbenyi (1997:1) draws attention to the role of a female writer. She argues "the black/women/feminists sought to speak out and bring their own [her] stories to the forefront, to express their points of view on [black] women's culture, on [black] women's silence". Busani-Dube made the female characters the subject of her stories rather than objects. *Hlomu-wife*, *Zandile-the resolute* and *Naledi-his love* depict how the titles of each narrative are named after each woman, who is narrating her own story. As a female writer Busani-Dube has demonstrated the supremacy of women in communities. She has categorised women as valuable subjects in society. Susan Arndt's view on African women also acknowledges their contributions as she asserts that:

Indeed, many African women are notable for their strong personality and dominant character. They are the heart of the family, and seem to hold many reins of family and communal life. (2002:22)

Busani-Dube's narrative elevates black women's status and imbues their life with new meaning. Therefore, a positive representation of black women is imperative so that past injustices can be redressed. Black women need characters with which they can identify in literature, characters that are not victims. Nfah-Abbenyi (1997:151) states that the role of an African female writer is to portray "female characters that are not in stereotypical subservient, unchanging roles, or in roles that are deliberately limiting. Instead, they come alive as speaking subjects and agents of change". The female characters by Busani-Dube all have a voice, dreams, autonomy and most significantly choices. More writings by African females need to challenge the historical oppression and victimisation because black women have been activists against unjust structures and institutions in the past. Black women have fought for their rights in South Africa and Africa as a continent, therefore contemporary writers must continue the activism. Makhosazana Xaba a South African writer and poet is actively reclaiming black woman's identity and value through her writing. Xaba's words echo the sentiments of this research study when she writes a poem that declares:

I wish to write an epic poem about Sarah Baartman,
one that will be silent on her capturers, torturers and demolishers.

It will say nothing of the experiments, the laboratories and the displays or even the diplomatic dabbles that brought her remains home, eventually.

This poem will sing of the Gamtoos Valley holding imprints of her baby steps.

It will contain rhymes about the games she played as a child, stanzas will have names of her friends, her family, her community.

It will borrow from every single poem ever written about her, conjuring up her wholeness: her voice, dreams, emotions and thoughts. (2020:1-11)

The poem humanises Sarah Baartman as a subject, not the object that she was made to be. It acknowledges the memories of her being while she was in South Africa. The word epic in the first line is associated with heroic deeds of the past; the perspective of the poem is African. The poem will silence everything that dehumanised her as a black woman; it means the poem liberates her from her subjugation. It expresses that she was loved, she had a voice, thoughts, dreams, emotions and a home that appreciated her existence. The poem rejects the ‘Hottentot’ woman that was victimised; instead, it celebrates the spirit of a black woman that once lived. Xaba forces the reader into a position of imagining Sarah Baartman as a human being that a reader can identify with. Baartman no longer becomes an elusive figure but a woman like any other. Ferrus (2019) humanises Sarah Baartman in her poem as she proclaims:

I have come to soothe your heavy heart,
I offer my bosom to your weary soul.
I will cover your face with the palms of my hands,
Run my lips over the lines of your neck,
Feast my eyes on the beauty of you
And I will sing for you
For I have come to bring you peace (III.16-22)

As Baartman was in foreign lands, it is understandable that she missed home, her loved ones. As a result, her heart was sombre. Ferrus expresses love when she writes that she will lay her on the chest to comfort her, and support her emotionally because her soul is not at peace. In black African culture, when a person has passed away the loved ones close their eyes and caress their face with their hands as a parting last touch. It is common to also hold onto the dead and talk to them as a final conversation while their flesh is present. The beauty that Baartman possessed is the one that Ramose as cited in Mothoagae (2016:73) affirms when he states “that blackness has a beauty that surpasses the splendour of the enigmatic beauty of Leonard da Vinci’s Mona Lisa”. He further argues that the conqueror failed to resist the beauty of a black woman. Hence, she was captured under the circumstances of slavery (Mothoagae, 2016:73). Amongst black African people singing and dancing is interconnected with culture, it is an expression of emotions whether celebrating or mourning. As a result, the singing for Sarah

Baartman is an expression of love, parting and closure that she is gone. The dead body is very significant in the black African culture that it is buried at home, close to her loved ones, the belief is that her spirit will also be at peace because she is home. Therefore, Ferrus's poem of returning Sarah Baartman contributes to respecting her dignity, human right and the broader African culture. The return of Sarah Baartman validates the black female body, it returns her to being a subject that can produce knowledge and her own narrative. Significantly, her return gives her peace, her family, South Africa and the whole African continent because it symbolises a new beginning for black females.

5.3 Power

The study examined power in Busani-Dube's black female characters. Hlomu, Zandile and Naledi's characters were analysed individually to highlight their strength and power. Hlomu has power over everyone in the family and the other characters are aware of it. Chinweizu describes this power as the wifhood power that manages the husband and his affairs. Gardiner writes that "many recent women's novels portray the growth of women's self-awareness in the characters' minds and also work to create that awareness", such sentiments echo with Hlomu's character and other female protagonists (1981:358). Zandile's character depicts strength by reclaiming and reshaping her narrative. She transforms her story from prisoner to motivational speaker. She is passionate about education and defining herself and rejecting society's label. She refuses to be a victim of her circumstances, or be controlled by her husband. She makes her own decisions and achieves her dreams. Naledi comprehends her intelligence and beauty, she rejects the victim label after being in an abusive relationship. Naledi has the bride power that Chinweizu describes as the "love that makes men lame and tame" (1990:41). Busani-Dube makes her characters choose joy, and not be defined by their challenges. The women's collective struggles and individual struggles were examined as well as the strategies, they employed to overcome them. The study illustrated the power that black women exhibit.

5.4 Motherhood

Motherhood was a theme that was analysed in the narratives because the writer highlighted motherhood in all three books. The theory of black motherhood was applied because the context is similar to South African black mothers. In South Africa, many black children are brought up by their grandmothers or extended family members. O'Reilly describes this type of motherhood as othermothering. The responsibility of raising a child is a communal one in

African societies. Hlomu had her own children but she was also raising other people's children. Zandile and Naledi were mothers too in their narratives. Mothers are significant in children's lives; they condition and socialize children to be decent adults. O'Reilly describes motherhood as an institution that plays a significant role in the community. It is part of black women's lives; they cannot be separated from this institution. The focus in the theory of motherhood is that the maternal spirit is crucial and indelible in black communities. Akosua Busia's elegiac poem title "Mama" in *Daughters of Africa* (2019: XIX) shares the sentiments of black motherhood in O'Reilly's theory:

She is the centre of my earth
The fire from which I warm my soul
The spark that kindles my heart. (1.1-3)

Therefore, motherhood is an institution where women can execute their powers and influence. Chinweizu concurs with O'Reilly that motherhood is powerful. Mothers have the ability to condition their babies into men and women they want them to become.

5.5 Conflict in relationships

Conflict is inevitable amongst people but what is significant is how it is managed. The female characters faced different types of conflicts. Hlomu had intrapersonal due to the decisions she had to make or was making. She also had an interpersonal conflict with her husband, but she voiced her thoughts and emotions even kicked him once. Zandile had interpersonal conflict even with strangers because she would not allow anyone to disrespect her. She also rejected being a victim during conflict, and she understood her worth. She was also faced with supernatural conflict, and incomprehensible incidents occurred in her life. Naledi had an interpersonal conflict with her boyfriend Qhawe, and her sisters. Despite all the conflicts the women mostly had a positive ending, they all had conflict management skills that suited their individual characters.

5.6 Sexual love

The titles of two novels have a sexual love connotation. *Hlomu-the wife* and *Naledi-his love* depict an element of sexual love. Therefore, sexual love was a theme that was analysed in each woman's relationship. The women understood their commitment to their partners, through challenges and trials, they did not give up on love. Gaylin maintains that "love does not happen; it must be patiently constructed" (Cowburn, 2003:181). The statement means that the two

parties must work together in their relationship to fulfil their love. Hlomu chooses to love her husband Mqhele, no matter what happens in their relationship. Zandile and Nkosana are still madly in love with each other after seventeen years of separation. They aspire for joy and peace in their relationship even though they have always had problems beyond their control. Naledi trusts and loves Qhawe, they get married to each other, committing to love one another until the end. Busani-Dube has portrayed their sexual love relationships in a positive perspective because they remain committed to each other despite challenges. African feminism is the theoretical framework that was used to examine the themes mentioned above.

Scholars concur with the “assertion that the concern of African wo/men to transform existing gender relationships can best be described as African-feminist” (Arndt, 2002:17). The main objectives of African feminism are for gender equality and women empowerment in the African continent. The aim is for men and women to work together to eradicate the inequalities that devalue women. Some feminists argue that “despite its noble goals, feminism is often misunderstood. In some people’s minds, feminism conjures up visions of aggressive women who try to be like men, dress carelessly and abandon essential feminine attributes” (Arndt, 2002:21). However, African feminism depicts that women can be feminine and mothers while making political and influential decisions in society. African women are not competing against men, they desire a fair and equal treatment that is afforded to men. African feminism is concerned about African women’s challenges that are cultural, social, racial and economic. African women are fighting many structures and institutions that are oppressive to them even after many policies have been written. Chimamanda suggests that “it is very important that we live in a world that gives women room to be full people rather than having them being defined solely on very narrow domestic terms” (Amanpour, 2017:06:45) African women’s autonomy and economic liberation lies in education for women. Busani-Dube’s female characters value education and they have unlimited roles that diminish the stereotypes of black women.

5.7 Further research and conclusion

The research study concludes that black females need better representation in literature. It is possible to have black female characters who are victors, educated and agents of social change. The female writer must commit to reject the black female stereotypes intentionally; representations in literature must evolve with the centuries. Contemporary black women have

challenges but they are overcomers, they make political decisions and have influence in public spaces. Scholars note that female writers and male writers' narratives are very different in that:

Women writers express the experience of their own identity in what and how they write, often with a sense of urgency and excitement in the communication of truths just understood. Often, they communicate a consciousness of their identity through paradoxes of sameness and difference-from other women, especially their mothers; from men; and from social injunctions for what women should be, including those inscribed in the literary canon (Gardiner, 1981:354).

Busani-Dube as a female, writer has indeed portrayed a different perspective of black women's lives and relationships. She has challenged the literary canon for its one-dimensional representation of black women. As Morrison contends that "the reclamation of the history of black people in this country is paramount in its importance because while you can't really blame the conqueror for writing history his own way, you can certainly debate it" (Davis and Morrison, 1988:142). Busani-Dube is contesting the representation of black women, by creating characters that are autonomous, educated and subjects. Her protagonists are thinkers which is a trait that has been associated with men for a long time; they are decision-makers and activists in their own lives. George Elliot cited in Robbins suggests what women can achieve in writing fiction; she emphasises that:

Fiction is a department of literature in which women can, *after their kind*, fully equal men. A cluster of great names...rush to our memories in evidence that women can produce novels not only fine, but among the very finest...No educational restrictions can shut women out from the materials of fiction, and there is no species of art which is so free from rigid requirements (2000:73).

Elliot's view regarding fiction and women is congruent to the research study's focus on black women's power. Busani-Dube has portrayed how female writers can produce fine novels, and liberate their female characters with agency and influence. Women can be equals to men in fiction, and in fiction female writers can challenge the status quo, and deconstruct misrepresentation of black female characters. Busani-Dube corrects the negative images and representations of black women that are in literature, hence, her protagonists are narrators of their stories and truths.

Further research can be conducted on the representation of black women in other countries. More black female writers need to challenge the representation of themselves. Ohale (2010:14) suggests that "female writers should be prepared to play dual roles in society as writers and as women". Contemporary achievements of African women need to be chronicled in literature so that the next generations can reference the heroines, as the ancient queens and princesses are

being acknowledged. More research can be done in children's literature to examine the representation of a black girl child. The reshaping of female characters is not limited to black females but further research can be done to empower global women regardless of their race, class, culture and nationality. The new knowledge contributed by this research study is highlighting and focusing on the positive representation of black women.

In conclusion, it appears that people's biases, stereotypes and discriminations towards black women should be challenged in reality and literature. Times have changed and as a result, the representation of black women should also evolve. Morrison argues that "an artist, for me, a black artist for me, is not a solitary person who has no responsibility to the community", therefore black female writers have a responsibility to the greater community of black women (Davis and Morrison, 1988:148). The black women that are in positions of influence, such as artists and authors must reshape and redefine a black female character in a novel. There are many outstanding characteristics and talents of black women that need scholarly engagement. It is evident that the female writer has the influence to challenge the status quo of male domination as she "offers self-images, self-analysis and insights of the female experiences" (Nfah-Abbenyi 1997:6). The research study concludes that it is possible to positively represent black women because the black females in *Hlomu-the wife*, *Zandile-the resolute* and *Naledi-his love* are powerful individuals who direct the course of their lives for the benefit and the upliftment of all people.

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