

**FEMINIST DISCOURSE ANALYSIS IN FOUR SELECTED ZULU  
LITERARY TEXTS BEYOND ‘WOMAN AS A VICTIM’**

By

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## DECLARATION

I declare that **FEMINIST DISCOURSE ANALYSIS IN FOUR SELECTED ZULU LITERARY TEXTS BEYOND 'WOMAN AS A VICTIM'** is my own work and that all the sources I have cited, directly or indirectly, have been indicated and acknowledged by means of references.

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Date

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## **DEDICATION**

I would like to dedicate this work to my family for every support rendered. This has been a long and hard road for them given that I could not be with them while doing my studies. A million thanks for all the trouble you have had to tolerate.

## ABSTRACT

The study's hypothesis was that the condition of women in Zulu patriarchal society as reflected in the selected Zulu literary texts is still intolerable. Some female and male authors tend to echo social tendencies and trends, wanting to maintain the status quo of the system of patriarchy. The study surfaces the traditional patriarchal views on marriage, *ukungena* (taking over of the responsibilities of the late brother) and other gender inequities. The research qualitatively examines these traditional issues and approaches in the four selected literary texts from a literary feminist discourse perspective.

The study has managed to portray various situations in which women discover their potential by focusing on the various major problems they have to face in the patriarchal society. The four literary texts analyzed depict women characters as victims. For instance, the novels *Ifa Lenkululeko* and *Umshado* portray the widows' world as a hybrid space characterized by forces of tradition and modernity. Both novels show how widows are usually trodden upon and least protected by the society from patriarchal interpretations, and expectations of the tradition.

The plays, *Ngiyazisa Ngomtanami* and *Ngiwafunge AmaBomvu*, on the other hand, depict flaws and failures of the patriarchal system. Both plays expose these flaws and failures in a subtle manner that an inattentive reader may not be able to observe. They both reflect women's maturity in challenging the stereotypes of the patriarchal system. These literary texts display some transformed approaches in the portrayal of female characters.

The study calls for a change of mindsets from members of society who still endorse patriarchal stereotypes of women. It makes it clear that, only by affording full consideration to women's needs and contributions, can the civilization grow and mature.

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# FEMINIST DISCOURSE ANALYSIS IN FOUR SELECTED ZULU LITERARY TEXTS: BEYOND 'WOMAN AS A VICTIM'

## CHAPTER ONE

### 1. INTRODUCTORY PERSPECTIVE

#### 1.1 Preamble

The study discursively analyzes four selected Zulu literary texts using literary discourse analysis, as well as literary feminism as theoretical frameworks. The selected texts are *Ngiyazisa Ngomtanami* from *Amaseko* (Oh! my poor child) by C.T. Msimang (1990), *Ifa Lenkululeko* (Inheritance for freedom) by A. Shange (1992), *Ngiwafunge AmaBomvu* (I swear by AmaBomvu) by L. Molefe (1991), and *Umshado* (Marriage) by N. Zulu (2006). This chapter gives an introductory perspective of the research: the statement of the problem and rationale of the study, the aims and objectives as well as the structure of the study.

#### 1.2 Statement of the problem and rationale of the study

I hypothesize that there is a negative portrayal of female characters by both female and male authors in the selected Zulu literary texts. The objective of the study is to show whether it is true that a woman emerges as a victim, using the approaches from literary discourse analysis and literary feminism. I am convinced that these approaches will make readers fully understand the failures of the patriarchal system in the Zulu society. With the analytical frames synthesized, the outcome should be a transdisciplinary research which will speak to various disciplines.

The study explores discursive strategies used by the chosen authors to make women emerge as victims. A study of literary discourse reflecting power imbalances is relevant for it revolves around the persistent problem, which affects women - the problem which needs to be resolved. The study seeks to show the interplay between real life experiences, fiction and interpretation. Factual or real life experiences are sometimes defined as a pair of opposites, however, there is no consensus as to the rationale of this

opposition. There are three main definitions that many critics agree on regarding this. Firstly, the semantic definition, where factual narrative is referential whereas fictional narrative has no reference. Secondly, syntactic definition, where factual and fictional narratives can be distinguished by their logico-linguistic syntax; and thirdly, pragmatic definition, where factual narrative advances claims of truthfulness whereas in fictional narrative there are no truths. Genette, (1991:57) proposes another definition that, in factual narrative, the author and narrator are the same person, whereas in fictional narrative the narrator (who is part of the fictional world) differs from the author (who is part of the world we live in).

In real life situations, the distinction between factual and fictional narrative seems to be inevitable, since mistaking a fictional narrative for a factual one (or vice versa) can have dramatic consequences (Genette, 1995:62). But even if it may be true that fictional narrative as a socially recognized practice is not an intercultural universal fact, all human communities seem to distinguish between actions and discourses that are meant to be taken 'seriously' and those whose status is different (Goldman, 1988:40). This also holds true in the interpretation of a literary text by readers, whether the text is fictional or non-fictional.

Discourse analysis is closer to reality than fiction based on the author's imaginary world. The study therefore has used discourse analysis as one of the theories for its strength in unravelling discourse as a type of social portrait (Carvalho, 2008:162) through digging beyond the banality of linguistic expression. This enables data to be simultaneously analyzed both at literary and discourse levels. Discourse analysis is drawn from the meta-theory of critical realism (Barkho, 2007: 12) because it "incorporates and advocates social commitment and interventionism in research" (Barkho, 2007: 447). It deals with and responds to the problems of society such as discourse on patriarchal problems on women and how to redress them because it makes problems 'more visible and transparent' (Bloemmaert and Bulcaen, 2000: 448).

The interplay, interpretation and real life situations, is evident in the literary texts that are analyzed in this study. For instance, in patriarchal societies, widows are stigmatized because of their being widows as reflected in the two novels, *Ifa Lenkululeko* and *Umshado*. Daisy in *Ifa Lenkululeko* and Tholakele in *Umshado*, endure abuse,

discrimination and suffer just because they are widows, but such stigma is not meted out to widowers. Widowers in many patriarchal societies enjoy more freedom than their female counterparts.

The approach in this study is the identification of negative (and possibly positive) images in the portrayal of female characters within the chosen literary texts. Some African female literary critics have been attacked for dwelling on the ‘woman as victim’ image, and some male authors of African literary texts have been accused of locking women into postures of dependence, and for defining women only in terms of their association with men (Davies & Graves, 1986:45). For female authors, the ‘woman as victim’ character performs a political function, directly stimulating empathetic identification in the readers and in a sense, challenging to change.

A positive image of female characters is one that is in tune with African historical realities and does not stereotype or limit women to postures of dependence or submission. Instead, it searches for more accurate portrayals and ones which suggest the possibility of transcendence. Thus, African feminist critics seek to make authors conscious of unrelenting and undesirable stereotypes and other shortcomings in female portraiture. Included in these, is making visible the ‘invisible woman’, or ‘voiceless woman’, the woman who exists only as tangential to man and his problems (Ibid: 55). Mtuze (1990:39) comments that:

Women are by and large defined by their relations to men. They are not defined as persons in their own right but always in terms that they imply contingency on someone else either as “someone’s daughter, wife or mother”. Perhaps the most striking image conjured up by such women is that of shadowy figures who hover on fringes.

Male depictions of female characters are often from a fiercely male perspective, reflecting male conceptions or rather misconceptions of female sexuality. Some authors tend to overplay the sexuality of their female characters, creating the impression that women have no identity outside of their sexual roles. Their female characters are usually seen primarily in relation to male protagonists and in secondary roles. Female characters usually serve to enhance the images and egos of the male protagonists who occupy central positions in such literary texts. Furthermore, the images of Zulu women

tend to be idealized and romanticized rendering them as flat characters. Consequently, there is little or no psychological growth in such portrayals. Many Zulu literary texts usually conform to the above-stated hypothesis. Weston & Mednick (1970:23) argue that:

The Black woman indeed holds no favoured position. Moreover, she is caught in the bind of being scorned for the role she has to play for her survival and that of her family. She has been made to feel guilty and conflict-ridden for her limited achievements because of myths saying her progress was made at the expense of the progress of Black male.

A closer look at the various images of Zulu women provided in the literature reveals that, to a considerable extent, depictions of women in literature by Zulu authors differ from the characterization of their male counterparts. Due to their shared gender experiences, some female authors are more inclined to depict female characteristics in more realistic terms, with a great deal of insight and in meaningful interaction with their environment. Also, many female authors tend to create a woman's world in which female characters exist and act as not mere appendages to their male counterparts, although it is not true that all female authors give positive portrayal of women. There are exceptions, of course, but in the main, some female authors explore alternative possibilities for self-actualization outside of the sexual roles that are assigned to their female characters.

The above assertion assumes that some female and male authors have preconceived ideas and perceptions about women's roles and these are often times reflected in the fictional narratives. It may also be stated that many Zulu literary texts have, to some extent, failed to challenge the reader's critical thinking and perceptions by reproducing stereotypes of what a woman can and cannot do. Such texts tend to portray men as the dominant sex, and in so doing, they attempt to maintain the status quo of a patriarchal society. One of the functions of literature is to develop critical thinking, although readers of Zulu literary texts have often been thought of as the less significant elements in the author-text-reader axis (Rimmon-Kenan, 1983:54). The reader's role was to be a passive receiver of meaning, like a woman in the patriarchy-dominated society. As one is conscious that meaning is socially constructed, one should become aware of the way in which the author can manipulate meaning to construct an ideology. That is, if the

author is a male whose culture is traditionally patriarchal, one can imagine his female characters playing a passive, submissive and subservient role something which may be expected in a male-dominated society. In this regard, Lee (2009: 75) argues that:

The feminine protagonist throughout the African novel presents a certain homogeneity of character which can be attributed to a basic similarity in the man's view of the woman...Through the role of the changing woman, the writer may be re-examining man's role in his changing society. Consequently, the heroine often has a didactic function which deters her from psychological development. Furthermore, the feminine character often plays the secondary role in the novel, frequently being placed in the fixed context of the village where she illustrates traditional life. In the changing contemporary society, she seems to remain the constant factor because the social changes imposed upon traditional life by modern times are seen almost exclusively in the life drama of the male protagonist.

Female characters are sometimes portrayed as naive and foolish, as is shown in the case of Daisy, in *Ifa Lenkululeko*. Such character portrayal of female characters shows that an author still believes in women's subordination and does not wish to see women occupying better positions in life. The conclusion one arrives at is that many authors of Zulu literary texts do not wish to portray female characters as developing better positions in their roles. The author must first recognize and acknowledge the value and contribution of women if he or she is to develop good and positive images of female characters.

Scholars, such as Royeppen (1999), have argued that literature mirrors and moulds social attitudes, it recreates social, historical and economic realities. Literature becomes one of the channels through which negative attitudes and stereotypes of women are perpetuated or even created by authors who subscribe to the patriarchal system. Such authors do not offer any positive images of their female characters; instead, their female characters usually suffer or become victims because of their 'supposedly naivety and stupidity'.

The writing and studying of literature is significant because, by representing the past, literature offers guidelines for the present and the future. It may be argued that many authors merely reflect socio-cultural realities, but critical readers may recognize that the author has the power to create new realities; to represent male-female relationships in a different light where women are cast as victors instead of perpetual victims. From

a feminist point of view, such a positive image of women portrayed in literary texts can inspire other women to fight for freedom and independence in a male-dominated society.

Male and female authors tend to perpetuate certain stereotypes in the portrayal of female characters in their works. Young, attractive, and unattached women are looked upon as possible lovers, and their features and movements are described in glowing terms: they are graceful, beautiful, cheerful, loving, attractive, intelligent and a great deal more. Young women in their adolescence years are praised for their beauty and their ability to add to the family's name: good common sense, ability to work hard, industriousness and especially procreation, when these women are surrounded by children and have fulfilled their role for which they were married. But at this stage one may also begin to question what a woman really is: her ability to bring forth life (to bear children) is viewed with immense awe by a traditional society that upholds these gendered roles. On the other hand, what cannot easily be explained becomes part of magic and an object of fear. A woman is thus subsequently viewed as a possible sorceress, *umthakathi*, to be kept at arm's length.

Later in life, when the bearing of children has taken its toll and men have become used to both their virtues and their faults, women might be taken for granted and hardly noticed around the household. In patriarchal societies, the women's task is to work in the fields, to cook for their husbands and to rear the children. But by this time the fruit of the woman's natural and social functions begins to appear: her children are growing up, her sons are her pride and joy, her daughters are the continuation of herself, getting ready to carry her influence into new homes. Therefore, while the husband might become indifferent, and at times even thoughtless and cruel, her children are her crowning glory, attesting to her praises as not only a mother but also a wife.

Modern African literature too, because it has adopted many of the Western patriarchal modes of thought and expression, often conveys some of these biased attitudes that I have hinted at. Criticism of African literature is an assessment of the literary image of women therefore it must approach the already well-criticized authors from a critical posture which seeks to reveal and thereby correct some of these negative attitudes, and in so doing challenge authors to project a positive image of African women.

This trend of negative portrayal of women is reflected regardless of the genre of the text. The chosen texts are of mixed genres, i.e. two plays and two novels, because I wish to explore this topic across different literary genres. The topic often appears in the language used, in the dialogues, in various episodes which demonstrate that the authors, both male and female, clearly reflect the traditional system of patriarchy. This is what motivated me to engage in the study.

I purposefully selected works by these authors because they reflect the general trend in a society that has, for far too long, taken women for granted and has not paid much attention to their outstanding social contributions. The selection was deliberate in the sense that, although the texts are written at different periods of history, they share a similar theme regardless of the period when they were published. This is interesting because one would have thought that in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, attitudes apropos of the portrayal and status of women in Zulu literature would have changed accordingly. This is essentially the problem that I discovered when reading these texts.

The system I follow from the beginning is to critically scrutinize a number of Zulu narratives which are supposed to reflect social reality, in order to discover how authors have captured the winds of change and moods of the society. I wish to draw the attention of the authors to the record of prejudices prevalent in our society, prejudices that an external investigator may easily identify in the language used. These prejudices are seen in the author's choice of characters and choice of words used, which I believe the male readership, particularly from a patriarchal society, would probably accept without question.

Reading the chosen Zulu literary texts from a feminist perspective will reveal positive images in the portrayal of female characters that suggests sexism and bias. This bias, in some Zulu literary texts towards female characters, sometimes surfaces in a manner that shows images of women that are dichotomized and contradictory, for instance, beautiful and deceptive. I argue here that, when female characters strive to obtain their freedom and independence, they are portrayed as beautiful but deceptive, as in the case of Tholakele in *Umshado*. This treatment of women extends itself to male-female relationships. For instance, one gains the sense of a woman who is an indirect victor, yet causing the destruction of the male who wishes to marry her. The above assertion



proves to be true when one examines the novel *Umshado*. Bhekani loses his money and clothes because of Tholakele, who is described as beautiful, however, at the end of the narrative, her choices are shown to be deadly.

I envisage that the discussion of various parts of Zulu tradition, culture and customs regarding the social status and role of women, will curb some of the stereotypes that are usually associated with women. I argue that traditional society could not have survived without the valid and intelligent support of women, the mothers of the family and the molders of future generations. Their status is not in fact as egregious as it is often portrayed in Zulu literary texts.

Literature, as the mirror of society, has the task of preparing the way for social rethinking and therefore for social change. It is in fact the product of supposedly the best thinkers amongst us, be they poets, novelists, or social commentators. While a text reflects the way people generally think, the responsive reader should be able to discover the goal to which the writer intends to lead us, that is, while we read about the past, a good author should also be able to open our vision to what the future holds or has in store for us.

Some Zulu literary texts have been retrogressive rather than progressive in championing for social change. For this reason, readers still find female characters having to endure abusive patriarchal oppression, as evidenced in some of the chosen texts that are being analyzed here. According to psychoanalytic feminist, such as Kolawole (1997) the common model of patriarchy entitles men to subjugate women. This universal system is pervasive in its social organization, durable over time and space, and triumphantly maintained in the face of occasional challenges. Some feminists acknowledge gender differences and gender inequality, but do not justify gender oppression. It is possible to be different and to have different roles, without being inferior (Freud, 1992: 43).

Many Zulu literary texts have been written by men over the past centuries, although the scenario has somewhat changed in recent years. Texts written in the late 20th century tended to focus mainly on social, historical and political issues rather than personal or domestic themes. Female characters in many male and female-authored Zulu literary texts tend to fall into specific categories: girlfriends, wives or male appendages. For

instance, *Uvalo Lwezinhlonzi*, (1956), '(Fear of Frowns)', by J.K. Ngubane, has female characters, KaMemunce who is Manamuza's wife, and Bajwayele, his (Manamuza's) daughter, who is Potolozzi's girlfriend. Also, *Inkinsela YaseMugungundlovu*, (1961), '(The Pietermaritzburg Tycoon)' by C.S.L. Nyembezi has female characters, MaNtuli, who is Mkhwanazi's wife, and Nomusa, Mkhwanazi's daughter. In both these novels, the above-mentioned female characters play a significant role, especially in the development of the plot. In *Uvalo Lwezinhlonzi*, '(Fear of Frowns)' for instance, Bajwayele is the main character. Female characters are sometimes portrayed as blood relatives of the central male characters, and have significance in these texts only in so far as they add to the development of those male characters. In the short story *Ngumbuthuma-ke Lowo*, '(That is Mbuthuma Indeed)!' taken from an anthology of short stories and essays, *Amawisa*, 1982, '(Knobkerries)', by D.B.Z. Ntuli and C.S.Z. Ntuli, Mbuthuma's character is developed by the presence of his wives. He is the main character in this short story and his physical abuse of his wives leads to the development of the plot as well. Literary critics argue that these discourses need to be deconstructed as there have been a growing number of emerging women novelists who depict female characters in a positive manner, such as fighting for their own destiny and freedom. I believe that authors of Zulu literary texts need to acknowledge the strides that have been made by women in the struggle against patriarchal domination. Their contribution and fight for freedom and independence from oppression must be reflected in the texts. The above argument is particularly true, especially in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, in which there have been many gains by women in the fight against male domination.

Feminist critics generally agree that the oppression of women is a fact and that gender leaves its traces in literary texts and in literary history. Feminist literary criticism plays an important part in the struggle to end oppression in the world of texts. Many feminists believe that all oppression (whether social, political or cultural) is a form of disease and the source of all divisions among mankind. Showalter (1977:269) states that:

The advent of female literature promises woman's view of life, woman's experience: in other words, a new element. The literature of women has fallen short of its functions owing to a very natural and very explicable weakness-it has been too much a literature limitation. To write as men write is the aim and besetting sin of women; to write as women write is the real risk they have to perform.

Davies & Graves (1986: 24) argue that, regardless of the forms of social organization, the dominant ideology in Zulu traditional society, was group presentation and well-being ensured by institutionalized checks and controls to reduce tension, especially between the sexes. In patrilineal societies, all men and women worked to preserve the lineage. Since production was primarily for use, it may be argued that the question of differential valuation between production and reproduction was not an issue. The production I refer to here relates to what was produced in the fields for consumption by the family, for instance, mealies, beans and so forth, and reproduction refers to the bearing and rearing of children. The basis for valuation of reproduction was more metaphysical and symbolic than purely materialistic. Thus, women's role in reproduction often received supreme symbolic value, since it strengthened the human group, ensured continuity of life and became equated with the life force itself (Graves & Davies, 1986:26). Such freedom and independence in women is largely ignored in Zulu literary texts, possibly because patriarchal domination has to be maintained and must therefore remain unquestioned. From a feminist approach, such achievements and contributions by women have not adequately, if at all, received recognition in many Zulu literary texts.

In certain male and female authored Zulu literary texts, there seems to be division of labour amongst characters according to their sex. Some tasks are considered to be for men while others are considered to be for women. When in actual fact there is no relationship between the task to be performed and the biological capabilities of an individual. In many patriarchal societies, like the Zulu society, women traditionally carry out home duties while everything else is man's work. Gilman (1972:132): points out that:

From her first struggles towards freedom and justice for women, to her present valiant efforts toward full economic and political equality, each step has been termed "unfeminine", and resented as an intrusion upon man's place and power. Woman's natural work as a female is that of the mother; man's natural work as a male is that of the father – but human work covers all our life outside of these specialties.

Zulu society has always been patriarchal. This system has always ensured male domination over their female counterparts. Under this system, women's subordination has always been regarded as the norm and tradition. Any individual member of society

who does not subscribe to this 'supposed norm' is regarded as rebellious. The patriarchal system has always proven to be very oppressive and discriminatory towards women. Men hold on to power under the guise of culture and tradition. I believe that patriarchy is the central impediment in the quest for gender equality and justice in the dismantling of patriarchal structures.

Johnson (1977:5) describes four principal aspects of patriarchy. Firstly, male domination in which the most prestigious and powerful roles are held by men. The second aspect is obsession and control, in which women are devalued and subjected to physical and psychological management. Violence or fear of violence is present in women's everyday lives because of the ideological need for men's control, supervision and protection. Thirdly, there is male identification in which most aspects of society that are highly valued and rewarded are associated with men and identified with male characteristics. Any other attributes that are less valued and poorly rewarded are associated with women. Lastly, there is male-centricity, in which public attention (e.g. media, public spaces) is often granted to men and women are placed in the background and on the margins.

From a feminist perspective, what is at issue in the above discussion is the superior social status associated with or attached to maleness. Patriarchy, is experienced in the smallest unit of society, the family, and extends outwards to the larger society. Patriarchal structures also hinder solidarity among women and are reinforced through an educational system in which boys and girls are taught gendered roles for acceptable behaviour. Johnson (1977:6) clarifies gender roles in these terms:

It is clear that educational rules have the following goals: for a boy to become a man endowed with three fundamental qualities; honesty, family values..., for girls to become obedient women, submissive, polite, respectful and self-effacing.

From the above quotation, one may infer that the patriarchal system has always been a burden for women from childhood. In patriarchal societies, male and female children at a young age are taught about and become familiar with their sexist roles and are expected to abide by them as they grow up.

Many feminists believe that the subordination of women in Zulu societies and in Zulu literature was their confinement to production within the domestic sphere, or ‘social production of exchange’ (Davies & Graves, 1986: 25). Therefore, according to many Zulu literary texts, a more appropriate conception was to create a dichotomy of two domains: one occupied by men and another by women – both of which provided personnel for domestic and extra-domestic (public) activities. hooks (1991:194) provides an explanation for this:

To me feminism is not simply a struggle to end male chauvinism or a movement to ensure that women will have equal rights with men, it is a commitment to eradicating the ideology of domination that permeates Western culture on various levels – sex, race and class to name a few.

Many feminists agree that female authors, in expressing their views and feelings, should not try to oppose the portrayal of women by men in men’s texts. For instance, Fuss (1989) in critiquing Kamufi’s “writing Like a Woman” believes that deconstructionist definition of women reading, as a woman, simply opens a space for male feminism while simultaneously foreclosing the question of real, material female readers. Fuss (1989: 27) states that:

To read as a woman in a patriarchal culture necessitates that the hypothesis of a woman reader be advanced by an actual woman reader: the female feminist critic.

Feminists such as Hernton (1990), for instance, argue that this notion of ‘writing like a woman’ creates a separate women’s literature that is reactive to men’s literature. Hernton (1990:5) emphasizes this point further:

The telling thing about the hostile attitude of Black women writers is that they interpret the new thrust of women as being “counter-productive” to the historical goal of the Black struggle. Revealing, while Black men have achieved outstanding recognition throughout the history of Black writing, Black women have not accused the men of collaborating with the enemy and setting back the progress of the race.

In many Zulu literary texts, readers are sometimes disturbed by the attitudes of traditional males towards women, as men try to hold on to the privileges afforded to them by the patriarchal system in order to ensure their domination over women. Readers

are also amused at the reaction of the female characters who, despite centuries of traditionally sanctioned domination, feel that the time has come for them to stand on their own, or at least to stand up for their rights as human beings and as women. The fictional works which I will discuss demonstrate the evolution and changes in women's thinking concerning their role in society, thus subverting many long-held notions about their inferior social status.

### **1.3 Aims and objectives of the study**

One of the researcher's objectives is to illustrate the negative portrayal of female characters in the selected texts. This takes place against the background of a tradition that, while glorifying exceptional women as heroines and leaders, and respecting ordinary women as mothers, wives, companions, and lovers, still treats women as social minors. The study illustrates this by extracting various contradictory aspects of the Zulu traditional society, as exemplified in the chosen narratives to highlight the understanding and the value of women's role in the present world.

Another objective, is to illustrate gender prejudice and patriarchal influence in the portrayal of female characters in the chosen texts. Finally, the researcher strives to devise a different methodology of reading literary texts, thereby uncovering their deepest levels of meaning, especially about what the authors say in relation to the gendered role of women. This involves viewing literary texts as multi-vocal and multi-layered productions, such as the narrative level, the deep structure level, from the author's point of view, from the readers' perspective and from the events narrated and the language used.

In the endeavour to achieve these objectives, I make use of techniques that are an integral part of formal literary analysis, such as plot, style, discourse used in patriarchal societies (registers), theme, and so on. Some of the key questions, which assisted in driving the research forward are: How is gender constructed in the chosen texts? How are patriarchal stereotypes manifested in the chosen texts? To what extent does the portrayal of characters reflect patriarchal stereotypes? What are gender relations between characters of different sexes in the chosen texts? To this end, with these questions, the main objective of the study is clearly to make the invisible visible.

#### **1.4 The structure of the study**

The study is organized into eight chapters. Chapter One is an introductory chapter that discusses the rationale and objectives of the study as well as the statement of the problem. Chapter Two offers the historical background and literature review. Chapter Three focuses on the theoretical framework and research methodology. Chapter Four presents the textual analysis of the play *Ngiyazisa Ngomtanami*. Chapter Five offers the textual analysis of the novel *Ifa lenkululeko*. Chapter Six discusses the textual analysis of the play *Ngiwafunge AmaBomvu*. Chapter Seven analyses the novel *Umshado* and Chapter Eight provides the findings and concluding remarks, and the recommendations of the research.

## CHAPTER TWO

### 2. LITERATURE REVIEW AND THE DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY

#### 2.1 Introduction

This chapter gives a general overview of what literature review entails and its significance in conducting research. The chapter presents authors of Zulu literary texts who critique the representation of women. It was deemed necessary to review relevant literature that seemed to point in the direction of my research, therefore the works of scholars that have written around issues of women in literature are examined and evaluated.

Literature review refers to an evaluative report of information found in literature related to the area of study. It gives a theoretical base for the research and help the author to determine the nature of his or her research (Bryman, 2012:54). It may include findings as well as theoretical methodological contributions to a particular topic. Literature review surveys books, scholarly articles and any other source relevant to a particular issue or area of research or theory, and by so doing, provides a description, summary and critical evaluation of these works in relation to the research problem being investigated (Neuman, 1997:20).

Literature review in a research study accomplishes many purposes: it shares with the reader the results of other studies that are closely related to the study being reported. It also relates a study to the larger ongoing dialogue and debates in the literature about a topic, filling in gaps and extending prior studies. It also provides a framework for establishing the importance of the study as well as a benchmark for comparing the results of a study with other findings (Gumede, 2002:31).

Literature review is vital in any research if the research results are to be reliable and valid. Polit & Hungler (2001) and Polit & Beck (2008) cited in Zwane (2011:10) argue that a “literature review is pivotal in any study as it provides a correlation between past and current research on a particular topic. It also reviews and reveals shortcomings and



makes proposals in the body of knowledge, thus providing the parameters for a new study”.

Given that there already exists a significant body of research in which women are portrayed negatively in Zulu literary texts written by both female and male authors, literature review is important in identifying gaps that require further exploration. When one looks at the way in which female characters are portrayed in many Zulu literary texts, one notices that many authors are influenced by patriarchy. Such authors want to maintain the status quo of male domination over females. Nussbaum & Glover (1995:101) point out that:

If we study the stereotypes of authors towards women, the sexism of male critics and the limited roles women literally play in history, we are not learning what women have lived and experienced, but what men have thought women should be.

Many Zulu authors, both male and female, have internalized socially pre-conceived ideas and perceptions of women’s roles and these are reflected in their texts. Many such authors portray men as the dominant gender and in so doing, maintain the status quo. Since meaning is socially constructed, one should be aware of how an author can manipulate meaning to construct an ideology. For example, if an author speaks from the context of patriarchal background, her or his female characters play passive roles in a text, as would be expected in a male dominated society. Nussbaum & Glover (1995:117) further maintain that:

Just as the reader participates in the production of the text’s meaning, so the text shapes the reader. On the one hand, it helps ‘selects’ its appropriate reader, projects the image of such a reader through its specific linguistic code and style.

In patriarchal societies, it is taken as a norm that women are less significant than men. This means that, in spite of the practical fact that women are the engines that move the social fabric forward, they cannot participate in or contribute in the development of our society, because men are the only ones who can act in public, while the women’s place is in the kitchen.

Many feminists believe that inequality between women and men results from the organization of society and not from any biological or personality differences. Rendell (2000:15) observes that:

Sex, male and female, exemplifies a biological difference between bodies, and gender, masculine and feminine, refers to the socially constructed set of differences between men and women. Sex differences are most commonly taken to be differences of a natural and pre-given order, whereas gender differences, although based on sex differences, are taken to be socially, culturally and historically produced differences, which change over time and place.

This study is limited to four Zulu literary texts that have female characters, written by both male and female authors. These literary texts were selected mainly because they reflect the status and role of women, both in the past and in the present. Although the findings cannot be generalized, the study exemplifies that qualitative studies are not designed to be representative in terms of a statistical generalizability (Pope, 2000). High quality analysis of qualitative data depends on the skill, vision, and integrity of the researcher. The thinking surrounding qualitative methods may be considered lacking in accuracy and precision, instead, being overly impressionistic and subjective (Bryman, 2012: 405).

In order to present a systematic approach to the study, I have decided to incorporate samples from authors who have written on similar themes. These are unpublished works by authors who critique the representation of women in Zulu literary texts, but I have also reviewed the representation of women in Xitsonga literature, by Machaba (2011), as well as selected South African novels, written by Mandla Langa, Zakes Mda and Nadine Gordimer, critiqued by Ibinga (2007). The above texts were published when South Africa was evolving from the apartheid era to the democratic phase. By including the latter, (Xitsonga Literature and South African novels), I hope that they will offer a different perspective in my analysis as well as augment the body of knowledge under investigation.

## **2.2 Negative portrayal of female characters in Zulu literary works**

There are several authors who critique the negative portrayal of female characters in Zulu literary texts. Zuma (2009), for instance, in her study, “Feminist analysis of the

representation of female and male characters in selected plays in *Ishashalazi*”, investigates the analysis of female and male characters in two plays: *Kwakuhle kwethu* and *Umninimuzi*. The study investigates the role and images of women and men as presented in dramatized stories. It is worth noting that the book is written by male authors, Ntuli and Mbhele (1988).

The beliefs held by characters in these plays reflect the traditional lifestyle of the Zulu people. Zuma (2009:4) asserts that:

Many Zulu literary texts promote supremacy of men over women without being objective in questioning the legitimacy of the status quo in society.

Zuma’s (2009) study focuses on character portrayal, the use of language, gender roles assigned to characters, the attitudes that are constructed, and the influence culture has in power relations between genders. Zuma (2009) argues that some Zulu literary texts, consciously or unconsciously, focus largely on applauding men’s supremacy and promoting their position in society. She continues to say that women are of value to society across cultures in their relationships which contribute to their subordination. In most cases, women are not aware of this subordination as it comes under the guise of culture and it then bolsters a form of patriarchy within different families in society (2009:10). Affirming the above discussion, Boshego (2007:1) points out that:

It is well known that literary conventions are established by virtue of customs, values and traditions of a society. The manner in which an author handles the characters is entwined with those precepts; the points of view imputed arise from them and only in exceptional cases do they differ from them.

Boshego (2007:19) believes that authors can manipulate readers in a manner in which they construct characters and in the process play a significant role in upholding certain cultural principles with regard to what and how women and men should enact their roles. Boshego (2007:22) continues to argue that the author plays a significant role in formulating readers’ knowledge and understanding about values bestowed upon female and male characters. Authors have power over language as they use it to promote particular social and cultural beliefs and suppress others. Through the use of language, Sihra (2007:42) points out that language constructs the world and reality by naming it, categorizing it and representing it, it is through language use that one relays a message.

Zuma (2009:34) maintains that culture does not allow women an opportunity to have a say in things that affect their lives, as is reflected in the selected plays. She argues that patriarchy is mostly pronounced in most societies and women subordination means that women have to succumb to male oppressive rule. Such a perception promotes male supremacy whilst causing much suffering to women's lives. It is under the pretext of culture that women get suppressed and abused and as such, fall victims of patriarchal system.

Humm (1990:42) stresses the point that literature read with a feminist eye should show, firstly, that since women's social reality, like men's social reality, is shaped by gender; the representation of female experience in literary form is gendered. Secondly, representations of women in literature, while not depicting innate characteristics of actual women, might disrupt the social order or language system of patriarchy. While considering openness of literary form as being gendered, Humm (1990:44) expresses the view that women do not receive their true representation in texts.

Zuma (2009:151) concludes that the portrayal of female and male characters in the chosen plays implies that the author subscribes to cultural principles or values that hold a low impression of women and demean the characters of women. Zuma's (2009) conclusion is that the representation of male characters is generally in line with the patriarchal attitudes and reflect women's oppression. Male characters are positively represented in these plays and reflect triumph, intelligence and strength and these forms of representation affirm the traditionally held beliefs about men as rulers and heads of families.

Mzoneli-Makhwaza (2016), in her study, "African male voices: Representation of women images in selected IsiZulu literary texts: Reality or Realism", focuses on the representation of women images in selected Zulu literary texts written by male authors. The literary texts analysed in her study were written when South Africa was in the transitional phase, that is, moving from the apartheid era towards democracy. The researcher employed the feminist theoretical analysis to prove whether the depiction of women in these texts is real or idealized. The findings and observations by the researcher are that there is still gender inequality in the portrayal of female characters in her selected Zulu literary texts. Ruthven (1984:72) argues that:

Hypothetically, of course, there is no reason why research into images of women in literature should not facilitate our understanding of literary practices by supplementing earlier studies of those reductionist traditions which streamline human beings into types (or stereotypes) capable of being manipulated for a great variety of literary effects ranging from absurd to the tragic.

Mzoneli-Makhwaza's (2016) study is conducted when South Africa was evolving into a democratic state. The new dispensation brought a lot of promises in many aspects of life, including better economic conditions, equal rights for all South Africans, especially the equality between women and men. Mzoneli-Makhwaza (2016) critically analyses the portrayal of female characters which emulate how women were perceived in the transitional period in the selected Zulu literary texts. The study explores the effects and or consequences of perceptions about women within a changing and transforming society in Africa in general, and particularly, South Africa with specific reference to IsiZulu literary texts, which emulate the reality that despite socio-political transformation, the effects of apartheid and patriarchy have not totally disappeared from South African fiction (2016:16).

The researcher investigates the extent to which a shift away from the ideological determinisms of the past entails the redefinition of other socially influential concepts such as notions of gender, in general, and images of women, in particular (2016:17). The study investigates if there are any changing trends in the representation of women in fiction. It further examines the extent of persistence and or transition of cultural mind-sets and gender stereotypes in the portrayal of female characters. Ruthven (1984:70) states that:

To study the images of women in a patriarchal society is to engage unavoidably in a paradoxical purpose. On the one hand, there is the desire to expose the oppressive nature of stereotypical representations which, transformed into role-models, offer an alarming limited view of what a woman can expect of life. On the other hand, there is the hope that by providing opportunities for thinking about women, and by comparing how they have been represented with how they ought to be, women's self-awareness will be elevated by the process known as consciousness-rising.

Mzoneli-Makhwaza (2016:182) concludes that female characters are portrayed as inferior, helpless, voiceless and foolish and this is found in all the literary texts that

were investigated. Gender inequalities are a reality that is found in all the selected narratives. Female characters are portrayed as helpless victims who cannot break away from the shackles of male domination (2016:183). Bryson (1999:166) maintains that:

In all known societies, relationships between the sexes have been based on power, and therefore political. This power takes the form of male domination over women in all areas of life; sexual domination is so universal, so ubiquitous and so complete that it appears 'natural' and hence becomes invisible, so that it is 'perhaps' the most pervasive ideology of our culture and provides its most fundamental concept of power.

Zondi (2013) is one of the feminist critics who challenge male domination in Zulu literary works. In her article, "The position of women in Zulu and Shona societies: The case of *Uvalo Lwezinhlonzi* (Fear of frowns), by J.K. Ngubane, (1956), and *Nervous Conditions* by Tsitsi Dangaremba, (1988)". Zondi (2013) challenges issues of gender discrimination and patriarchal stereotypes in the portrayal of female characters in these two novels. She critiques issues that still affect most women within the African continent even in the twenty first century. The article explores oppressive practices commonly found in Zulu and Shona cultures taking into account the voice of female and male authorship. It critically analyses key issues such as gender, power and language usage as reflected in the selected two novels, especially the inferiority status that is afforded to female characters in these literary texts is also challenged.

The article critically challenges the status of women within the patriarchal societies which seem to be determined by the class which women hold in society and which categorises them into lower ranks than men. In the analysis of *Uvalo Lwezinhlonzi*, for instance, Zondi notes that Bajwayele's mother, KaMemunce, refers to the fact that the world is ruled by men, which seems to suggest that women are powerless to make their minds about which decisions to take. Bajwayele's feelings and choice who to marry do not come into the equation because she is a minor and also because of the greed of his father. Bajwayele is subjected to all forms of servitude and abuse, from her husband, Zulumacansi, and her father, Manamuza.

Female characters in this novel are not considered as equals of men and their voice and opinions are never listened to. For instance, Zulumacansi's sister is a crucial character

for him to finalise his *ilobolo* negotiations, yet she is not allowed to voice her feelings. Nobody cares about the possible consequences thereafter. Zondi (2013:180) believes that:

Patriarchy seems to have had a similar effect the world over; that of the subjugation of women where male and female are seen as evaluative categories, even though there is no factual or inherent reason why the male should be valued more than the female. In both these novels, the inferiority of women, their subjugation and the authority of males over women's lives run through almost all the chapters of the novels.

Machaba (2011) in her study, "The portrayal of women in Xitsonga literature with special reference to novels, poems and proverbs, examines the image of women in Xitsonga literature", investigating whether there is a link in the expected cultural roles of Vhatsonga women and their roles as characters in Xitsonga literature, and whether there is a shift in the way women characters are portrayed in reality. The study employs feminist literary criticism as its theoretical framework to unpack some of the issues.

In the Xitsonga literary genres analyzed, the researcher's findings are that male authors are biased in the portrayal of their female characters. The researcher further argues that, in Xitsonga tradition, gender differentiation begins when the child is born. For instance, if a male child is born, the husband is told that: he has begotten a spear, but when a female child is born: he is told that he has begotten a grain basket (Machaba, 2011:150). The spear symbolizes war; in other words, it means that the husband has somebody who will fight alongside him and protect him, whereas the grain basket symbolizes the tilling of the fields and harvesting, which illustrates the industriousness of a woman. The boy is associated with masculine activities of hunting and protecting the community, while on the other hand, a girl is defined in terms of feminine domestic activities, such as tilling the fields and fetching water from the river (Machaba, 2011:164).

The analysis reveals the stereotypes in depicting female characters as gold-diggers, untrustworthy, greedy, submissive, dependent and betrayers in the selected novels by female as well as male authors. The examples that were drawn from the chosen Xitsonga literary texts by the researcher contribute towards the perpetuation of stereotypes that characterize women as housewives, dependent, and murderers, weak-minded and not capable of making their own decisions (Machaba, 2011:165). The

researcher concludes that the image of women in Xitsonga literature is in accordance with the expected roles of women in Vhatsonga. For example, women are not allowed to attend the meeting place where issues concerning the running of the homestead and the community are discussed.

Machaba (2011:167) argues that the depiction of female characters in the chosen Xitsonga literary texts is problematic in the sense that there is a lack of realization that society has evolved over time and that there is a lot of influential women. She continues to say that Vhatsonga women have grown to transcend the traditional norms of submissiveness to total independence (2011:168). There are a lot of influential women in Vhatsonga society who are professionals and occupy even the traditionally male-dominated professions.

Ibinga (2007) in his study: *The representation of women in the works of three South African novelists of the transition*, observes a common trend that runs through the characterisation of women in most South African literary texts. Ibinga's (2007) study explores literary representation of female characters in selected novels by South African authors, Mandla Langa, Zakes Mda and Nadine Gordimer, in the transitional phase of South African history. The study investigates how the representation of female characters in these texts reflects on the sector of South African society that forms the social setting of each text. It explores the portrayal of female characters in selected fictional works by examining the ways in which these novelists, Mandla Langa, Zakes Mda (both black male writers) and Nadine Gordimer (a white female writer) characterize women in novels depicting this adapting society. The study analyses literary representations of women in order to evaluate the effects of social and cultural transformation in post-apartheid South Africa. This is done by analyzing the author's portrayal of women's circumstances both in the private and in the public spheres.

The researcher describes these novels as works of transition, partly because they were published during the time of political and social transformation, but more importantly, because they exemplify the shift from domination of the national imaginary by racial ideology to the implementation of democratic values (Ibinga, 2007:2). The shift away from the ideological determinisms of the past entails redefinition of other socially influential concepts such as notions of gender and images of women in particular



(Ibinga, 2007:4). The researcher argues that these particular narratives attempt to illustrate aspects of the transition by providing different images of women reflecting both social transformation and a novel form of writing appropriate to a post-apartheid literature. Ibinga's (2007) objective was to investigate what is commonly perceived as an exclusively 'female' field of study in order to show that women's social issues should not be the preserve of female critics and writers only. It was the researcher's wish that male writers and critics should also play their part in changing the perception of women in society along with women, since men are often the advocates of patriarchy.

Robins (2000) points out that artistic portrayal of women can effectively contribute to cultural change with regard to the assertion of women's social worth. Robins (2000:51) further adds that:

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 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 politicized analysis of that reality, through the means of representation.

Robins (2000) maintains that representation might not be the same 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 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 (Robins, 2000:60). Robins (2000) wants to give recognition to the political role art plays in society by promoting the idea of change in people's attitudes. According to Robins (2000), the depiction of women can be the starting point to evaluate the need for social and cultural transformation.

Some of the texts analyzed by the researcher (Ibinga, "The representation of women in the works of three South African novelists of the transition", 2007) idealize female characters while others are more realistically oriented towards the delineation of the constraints affecting the lives of actual women. The researcher concludes that the dominant features or trend in the portrayal of women in South African novels (including

Zulu literature) have often been the idealization of women in their traditionally domestic roles, such as motherhood or wifedom and the display of women's political or public passivity as they are often represented as resigned victims of social oppression. Similarly, in many male-authored South African narratives, female protagonists seem to occupy secondary or subservient roles and the delineation of their active participation in social dynamics shows their total dependence on men's direction of their lives (2007:245). Depicting women from this perspective denies female characters autonomous leadership roles in their involvement in social and political action. Persistent depictions of female characters in passive roles can exacerbate or contribute to the denial or blocking of female agency.

Conversely, Ibinga (2007:251) argues that the three novels analyzed diverge from the overriding tendency of depicting women either in the idealized image of motherhood or archetypal role of the victimized female figure in order to display women's actions and the ways in which they are challenging prevalent assumptions about gender in the transitional phase of South African society. Women are increasingly being depicted as active agents and in the forefront of social transformation. Through political resistance, women have shifted from the status of victims to responsible entities of their own lives. Therefore, some women are now shown to play leadership roles in social and economic activities and are depicted acting independent of male characters' assistance.

In choosing this topic, I hope to identify gaps in the scholarly works that have been conducted around this topic and fill in both theoretical and methodological gaps. Identifying gaps required reading and researching extensively specifically around the topics that are related to my study. The scholarly works included: dissertations, journal articles, unpublished works, as well as other sources available for public consumption. It was crucial to identify gaps in these works, in order to avoid repeating what has already been researched. I wished to investigate whether any of these works dealt specifically with women's issues, especially in the four Zulu literary texts that have been chosen for this study.

The works cited below touch on a wide range of women's issues; however, none of them investigates the women's issues in the four selected Zulu literary texts (for this study). This is the gap I identified in these scholarly works, hence the topic.

There have been several related studies conducted on gender-related issues, particularly using the feminist approach. Most of these research studies question the existing order marked by social attitudes and social practice of gender.

Many authors have long committed themselves to writing about the injustices brought by patriarchy which lead to women abuse and oppression. Some of these authors expose these injustices where some authors of Zulu literary texts use them under the guise of tradition and culture. It is encouraging to see that many scholars have long acknowledged that women oppression and subordination is a scourge and needs to be wiped out from society. These authors have to vociferously fight this disease if the Zulu society is to realize the full potential of women's contribution. Such contributions need to be reflected in the portrayal of their female characters in Zulu literary texts. Authors like the ones below are just some of the few who have made strides in tackling this problem.

Maonyane (1990), in her Honours' thesis, writes about "The elements of feminism in Kekana's *Nonyana ya Tokologo*". In her analysis, Maonyane shows that Kekana's work is charged with cultural dissatisfaction that she strives to address in her literary work. Kekana wishes to expose the cultural constraints that are imposed on women in the Northern Sotho society. Maonyane discovered that Kekana attests that cultural norms and values in her society distance females from being involved actively in the political and economic structure of society. Maonyane's critique of Kekana's work is based mainly on the Northern Sotho society where she looks at the imbalance in the treatment of women who are barred from participating in cultural activities. As the title of my study suggests, my work critiques four Zulu literary texts using feminist discourse analysis. Maonyane's view is that such portrayal of female character's needs, as a reflection of the Sotho society needs to change and reflect the strides towards women emancipation in South Africa, in general.

Mtuzi (1990), in his Master's dissertation: *A feminist critique of the image of women in the prose works of selected Xhosa writers (1909-1980)*, examines the stereotypes and other symbolic images of women. His study focuses on the plight of Xhosa women as a result of the oppressive male-authored social norms and discriminatory practices. He compares stereotypes used by male authors on the one hand, and female stereotypes

used by female writers, on the other. Mtuze's observation is that stereotyping is a universal phenomenon and is prevalent in all race groups, affecting women in all parts of the world. He also discovered that, in the first twenty years of written prose fiction, female characters play a subservient role and are strongly stereotyped by male authors. Strangely, some female writers confirm popular female stereotypes instead of questioning them, as one would have expected.

Masuku (1995), in her Honours' article: *The role of women in folklore with special reference to Zulu folktales*, attempts to analyze the stereotypical images attached to women in Zulu folktales. Using the feminist approach, Masuku discovered that women in folktales are expected to be married and bear children; women who are beautiful are regarded as dangerous, and they may cause a man's downfall. Women should be able to bear children; if they fail to do so, they are shunned and regarded as unnatural. Masuku's work is interesting as it challenges some of the myths about women in folktales. It critiques the role of Zulu folktales in the portrayal of their female characters, especially when it comes to behaviour. The similarity between this article and my work is the issue of the portrayal of female characters, and the difference being that hers only focuses on Zulu folktales.

Mawela (1996), in her Master's dissertation, writes about the portrayal of women in novels by Venda authors. The dissertation is entitled: *The depiction of women in Venda novels*. Mawela analyses various roles assigned to women in the Venda society. In her introductory remarks, Mawela states that she will employ the feminist theory. Her message is, however, not explicit, although a closer look at her analysis implies that women in Venda society are not content with the roles assigned to them by society. Mawela (1996) concludes that, since all the authors of the selected novels are men, their general viewpoint is that female characters should be submissive to male characters. It is clear that in all the novels that those female characters who are somewhat reluctant to subordinate themselves to their male counterparts are portrayed as 'bad mother'. There are a number of women who challenge the status quo, but unfortunately, their actions are not welcomed by the Venda society.

Masuku (1997), in her Master's dissertation entitled: *Images of women in some Zulu literary works: A feminist critique*: examines the portrayal of women in Zulu drama.

Her study focuses on the depiction of women characters by both male and female dramatists. Masuku avers that some male authors depict women harshly in their literary works, and that some female writers do the same with female characters. This anomaly may be ascribed to the fact that men have been raised to believe that women are the inferior sex, while women writers, for their works to be accepted, have had to subscribe to the same writing formula as men, so that they could be published since male authors dominate Zulu literature. Masuku's dissertation is closely related to my study as it deals with the image of women in some selected Zulu drama works, written by both female and male authors, her primary sources differ from mine as well as the multi-dimensional approach that I apply in the analysis of these texts.

Nkumane (1999) in: "*Themes of forced and forbidden love: Cross-cultural trends in language literatures with special reference to Zulu novels*", investigates the themes of forced and forbidden love. She employs three approaches to her research: womanism, literary onomastics, and psychoanalysis. Womanism proves to be an important aspect in her analysis and reveals how the culture of forced and forbidden love has affected women's lives. Nkumane (1999) investigates social stereotypes in these novels, revealing how African names determine sex roles, resulting in the marginalization of women in society.

Mathye (2003), in her PhD thesis, investigates the portrayal of women in literature in Xitsonga novels. Her thesis entitled: *The image of women in selected Xitsonga novels* reflects a viewpoint similar to that of Masuku. Mathye, like Masuku, concentrates on the depiction of women characters as reflected by both male and female authors in novels. She also employs the feminist approach in her analysis. Her research investigates the portrayal of Tsonga women by Tsonga male writers, to discover whether such portraiture fully represents the nature of women in Tsonga community. Secondly, she strives to establish the way in which the substantial changing role of women in different decades is fully captured by Tsonga authors, male and female, determining whether these depictions are true or not. The novels analyzed were selected from the years 1930-1939, the first Tsonga novel having been written in 1930. Mathye (2003) concludes that male authors reflect bias in favour of patriarchy by depicting female characters who cling to traditionalism, consequently, women remain suffering.

Muthuki's (2004) MA dissertation is entitled: *Exploring changing gender roles: A case study of married Zulu-speaking academic staff of the University of KwaZulu-Natal*. In her thesis, Muthuki explores the changes in gender roles of Zulu-speaking men and women academics. The aim of the research was to investigate and understand ways in which married UKZN academics are living out and reconciling their traditional gender roles with their new-found modernity. The research used a case study in order to obtain a better understanding of the changing roles, their consequences, perspectives, and meanings drawn from participants. Muthuki's research findings are that the migration for women presents them with the challenge of balancing between exercising their autonomy occasioned by their educational attainments as espoused in liberal feminism on the one hand, and the quite often religio-cultural requirement to submit to male domination on the other (2004:93).

Masuku (2005), in her PhD thesis: *Perceived oppression of women in Zulu folklore: a feminist critique, challenges the role and presentation of women in Zulu traditional literature*. She investigates whether the perceived oppression of women is reflected in such Zulu folklore. The thesis proceeds from the premise that, on the one hand, the traditional Zulu society or culture contains certain stereotypical images which project them as witches, unfaithful people, and partners who are not yet ready for marriage; or, on the other hand, as brave care-givers, loving mothers, and upright members of society. The researcher uses feminism as the theoretical approach in investigating whether these projections were oppressive to Zulu women. The common feature between Masuku's work and this study is that they both use the feminist theory as their theoretical framework. Masuku's, (2005) study, however, focuses on Zulu folklore.

Zondi (2008): *Bahlabelelani? Why do they sing? Gender and power in contemporary women's songs* investigates the nature of women's contemporary songs as exemplified by a specific rural community of Zwelibomvu, near Pinetown, KwaZulu-Natal. The thesis examines the reasons for contemporary women's songs, hence the question: *Bahlabelelani?* The study involves a variety of discourses on gender and power asymmetries as presented through Zwelibomvu's women's songs. Zondi's findings are that women are oppressed by both men and women. Through songs which women sing and from the interviews that were conducted, the study reveals ways in which women are oppressed by men and how these songs serve as a vehicle of self-expression,

discontent and protest. The results of the research clearly show the suffering of women, especially in the hands of men.

Mpungose (2010) addresses: *Perceived Gender inequality as reflected in Zulu proverbs: A feminist approach*. Mpungose's research investigates the subject of gender inequalities as reflected in Zulu proverbs. The research investigates the use of language in proverbs that helps to shape the behaviour of women from childhood until the time they assume the responsibilities of a bride. The study tries to gain more insight and understanding into reasons for Zulu women being expected to play a submissive role in society, unlike their male counterparts. It also investigates the way in which proverbs help to construct a woman's identity in Zulu society. The examples in this research are drawn from proverbs that comment on the role and position of Zulu men in society, on women's behaviour, on marriage and on the morality of the Zulu society. Mpungose's dissertation offers an interesting scenario which prevails in Zulu proverbs about women. This area has hardly been researched by scholars from a feminist perspective and his dissertation challenges the imbalance between proverbs about males and those about females.

The study employs a multi-dimensional theoretical approach in the analysis of the texts, instead of using a single theoretical framework. I have borrowed ideas from a number of feminist writers, who have written extensively on the subject of feminism. Although I borrowed some of the ideas, I use them to re-examine their interpretations so that they do not contradict the aims and objectives of the research. The nuances found in the literary analysis of these texts reveal the subjugation of women from being mothers, widows, forced into arranged marriages etc. The response of these female characters vary depending on the situations they find themselves in. Davies & Graves (1986:48) advise that:

First of all, we cannot speak of women's oppression by men. In capitalist systems, women tend to be exploited by the very nature of society, particularly the working and peasant women, just as men are exploited. The difference is that women are hit particularly hard. Then you have forms of abuse that cut across class lines: sexual abuse, wife-beating and the fact that men take advantage of the woman's role as child-bearer.

Based on the above discussion, it is apparent that my theoretical bases are bound to be eclectic, drawing from both European and African critics. It is hoped that the results of the research will yield a broader and nuanced understanding of the problems faced by women in South African societies, the Zulu society in particular, and cultivate an appreciation of Zulu literary works that present positive images of women characters. Although my selection of texts is limited, I hope my research will shed some light on a number of issues that are often dealt with from an anthropological point of view, but seldom touched upon in literary studies.

### **2.3 Summary of the chapter**

This chapter has presented an overview of literature review regarding the topic under investigation. It presented two different types of authors of Zulu literary texts, for example, those who portray their female characters negatively and those who consciously interrogate the wrongs inflicted on women and willingness by the characters to challenge the status quo and transform. The chapter looked at similarities and or differences among the theoretical approaches and research approaches offering justification why there was a need to conduct the research.



## CHAPTER THREE

### 3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 Introduction

The aim of this chapter is to give an overview of the different approaches employed in the analysis of literary texts in this study. These approaches are literary theory, discourse analysis and feminism, compressed as literary discourse analysis and literary feminism. The research theories were specifically chosen because they deal with many aspects of literary texts which are analyzed in this study. In addition, they also give different dimensions and perspectives in the analysis of literary texts. The chapter also critiques the concepts of patriarchy, womanism and gender.

#### 3.2 Key concepts or theories to be engaged

##### 3.2.1 Literary analysis

Literary theory refers to the philosophy of interpretation of literature (literary criticism). It is an approach that purports that meaning is autonomous. While it dismisses the authorial intent or voice, it argues that the meaning contained in the text is derived from the text itself. Literary theory is concerned with the analysis and understanding of literary works (Maringueneau, 2010: 148). It seeks a static unchanging universal truth within the text, everything outside the text becomes irrelevant because it is not static. This theory is relevant for this study since the study is about the analysis of literary texts.

##### 3.2.2 Literary discourse analysis

Discourse analysis is the study of the ways in which language is used in texts and context, observing everything from audio and written compositions. It refers to a number of approaches which can be used to analyze written vocal or sign language use or any significant semiotic event. It is a method analyzing the structure of texts or utterances longer than one sentence. Stubbs (1983:1) defines discourse analysis as (a)

concerned with language beyond the boundaries of a sentence/utterance. (b) concerned with the interrelationships between language and society and (c) as concerned with the interactive or dialogic properties of everyday communication. Discourse analysts set out to answer a variety of questions about language, about writers and speakers and about socio-cultural processes that surround and give rise to discourse, but all approach their tasks by paying close attention to particular texts and their contexts. Discourse analysts not only study language use ‘beyond the sentence boundary’, but also prefer to analyze ‘naturally occurring’ language use and not invented examples (Johnstone, 2002:50).

Literary discourse analysis – viewed as a branch of discourse analysis – is a new approach to literature. By its very nature, literary discourse analysis exceeds the boundaries of the usual distinction between text and context. Literary criticism has traditionally been dominated by a focus on interpretation carried out within one of two main traditions: either a hermeneutic approach centred on the text or contextual approach that appeals to major cultural formations thought to impose certain requirements on literary production and reception (Miall, 2002:30). Empirical research has shown that in literary discourse analysis, readers form specific anticipations while reading, that the interpretive frame may modify or transform while reading a literary text, and that more personal memories may be evoked during reading (Miall, 2002:45).

Literary discourse analysis helps to analyze literary texts and also to understand the functioning of literary discourse as part of the discursive practices of a given society. In short, discourse and literature integrate the analysis of literature and non-literary genres in an innovative embracing study of discourse. Many tools used in critical discourse analysis look at the way literary texts create meaning and poetic effects.

### **3.2.3 Literary feminism**

It is important to briefly define literary feminism as this study is about the analysis of literary texts from a feminist perspective. Literary feminism refers to feminist criticism used in textual analysis to expose sexist assumptions. In literary feminism, great emphasis is placed on textual analysis, with the focus on sexist ideology. Cuddon (1991:338) defines literary feminism as:

Feminist criticism is an attempt to describe and interpret (and re-interpret women's experience as depicted in various kinds of literature – especially the novels, and to a lesser extent, poetry and drama.

Literary feminism provides documentation that the traditional definitions do not cover, for example, that women suffer injustices because of their sex. Literary feminism does not deal with feminists themselves or provide a strategy for the reform of society: it silently extricates the feminist views found in fiction (Brown & Olson, 1992:82).

Pratt in Brown & Olson (1992:280) comments that feminism in fiction suggests a distinction between feminist fiction “narrowly defined as words in which the author's explicit intention is to expose some aspects of sexism” as stated in the preceding paragraph, and novels which are ‘unintentionally’ feminist and of concern because of their place in the literature of women. The latter constitutes a fiction that includes careful exploration of women's existential situation within a carefully orchestrated treatment of other and broader human conflicts and relationships.

Literary feminist critics suggest that there is no difference between texts authored by women and those authored by men. They evaluate fiction according to its political rather than its artistic standards. The best fictions are those that reflect liberationist concerns. Literary feminist critics believe that the implicit privileges of a voice or speech writing occur when a text expresses the authentic presence of the human subject. Krouse in Brown & Olson (1992:287) believes that feminism in fiction does not have an absolute relationship to the author's sex. Similar elements may appear in the work of both men and women. She identifies five distinctive elements of literary feminism: point of view, characterization, departure from stereotype, examination of social causes for unpleasant characters and attention to the details of the lives of women.

Cixous, as cited by Moi (1987:108) warns against the danger of confusing the ‘sex’ of the author with the ‘sex’ of the writing he or she produces. Cixous (1990) argues that it is not the empirical sex of the author that matters, but the kind of writing that is at stake. Kaplan, as cited by Rogers (1991:7), disagrees with Cixous (1990), when she describes ‘feminine consciousness’ as a literary device: a method of characterization of females in fiction, which focuses on ways in which authors develop uniquely feminine consciousness for their own characters. Ama Ata Aidoo, as cited by Ogunyemi (1985:

64) dismisses the notion that all materials dealing with women are necessarily feminist.

She retorts that:

I am not a feminist because I write about women. Are male authors chauvinist pigs just because they write about men? Or is a writer an African nationalist just by writing about Africans...? Obviously not...no writer, female or male, is a feminist just by writing about women. Unless a particular writer commits his or her energies actively to exposing the sexist tragedy of women's history; protesting the on-going degradation of women; celebrating their physical and intellectual capabilities and above all, unfolding a revolutionary vision of the role [of women], he or she cannot be pronounced a feminist.

It is clear from the above quotation that both female and male authors are feminists only when they use literature as a place where they can voice their political ideas; ask different questions about female socialization; present their autobiographies in 'feminine' modes; subvert literary boundaries to represent women in positive ways and, crucially, attack social and economic discrimination against women (Humm, 1990:26).

Ogunyemi (1985:64-65) contends that, for literature to be identified as feminist, it must deal not only with women's issues, but it should also posit some aspects of feminist ideology in which a reader may expect to find a combination of literary themes such as critical perception to the inequalities of sexism, a change leading to female victory in a feminist world, or a failure to eliminate sexism, and finally a style characterized by acrimony of feminist discourse.

Literature with characteristics of feminism have either one female protagonist or several female characters significant to the theme or the central action. If the male character is the protagonist, the women either do not emerge clearly as individual characters in their own right, or if they do, the kind of serious attention given to the existential anguish of the main character is not accorded them. In some instances, feminism may be observed even in a female character who appears to be fully developed, by examining the author's viewpoint and emphasis in revealing the extent to which the character's life and fate are treated. An example of such type of a character can be found in the literary texts that are analyzed in this study. Daisy in *Ifa Lenkululeko* and Tholakele in *Umshado* represent such characters. Besides the inclusion of female characters whose lives and fate are treated seriously, feminism in characterization may be distinguished by the author's avoidance of stereotypes and in-animate characters.

Krouse in Brown & Olson (1992:284) cites that there are two methods of departing from stereotypes in literary texts. The first one is specificity and complexity that saves a character from being stereotypical. The second one that helps in avoiding the stereotypes, is multiplicity. The danger of multiplicity is assigning a stereotypical characteristic of one sex to another. This appears to be a forced way out which may lead to more androgynous literature.

On rare occasions, unpleasant female characters may be used to make a feminist point. This is characterized by the portrayal of significant female characters who are not subordinate to a male point of view. Derivation from stereotypes and sensitivity to the question of whether women are inherently vicious or rather, victims of society, resembles feminism in literature. Feminism is also evident in the attention given to the details of the lives of women, especially the attention given to the areas ignored or sentimentalized, such as the unusual influence of a mother on sons, instead of the usual development of a relationship between a mother and daughters (Brown & Olson, 1992: 285-286).

### ***Feminism***

Feminism, etymologically, comes from the Latin word *femina* meaning “woman”. It may be defined as an ideology of women and any social philosophy involving them. This definition of feminism gives enough scope to encompass various types of feminisms: right-wing; left-wing, centrist, left of centre, right of centre, reformist, separatist, liberal, socialist/Marxist, non-aligned, Islamic, indigenous, etc. Ongundipe-Leslie (1994:222) contends that there are many questions that arise when one discusses feminism:

What is feminism for you? What is your feminism? Do you in fact have an ideology of women in society and life? Is your feminism about the rights of women in society? What is the total conception of women as agents in human society – her conditions, roles and status – her recognition and acknowledgement? Feminism generally must always have a political and activist spine to its form. If we take feminism to imply all these, is the African woman on the African continent, in an African context without problems in all these areas?

Feminism is a dynamic theory that advocates for the rights of women and equality of the sexes from a feminist perspective. The above definition shows that feminism has many different perspectives. One may therefore argue that, from a general point of view, feminism seeks to liberate women because, from all perspectives, there is a general belief that women suffer injustices because of their sex. Hawxhust and Marrow, cited by Tuttle (1986:107), make a point apropos of the various definitions of feminism:

Feminism has no one working definition since it is a dynamic, constantly changing ideology with many aspects, including the personal, the political and the philosophical... Feminism is a call to action. It can never be simply a belief system. Without action, feminism is merely empty rhetoric which cancels itself out.

The above definition implies that feminism must insist on the specific character of gender relations and the oppression of women by men. With regard to feminism in literature, Kenyon (1988:9) offers this insight:

Feminism offers a re-evaluation of half the human race through the 'images of women' approach, the re-appraisal of women's novels, and theories of gender difference in reading, writing and literature interpretation.

Defining feminism may be challenging; however, broadly speaking, it includes women and men who act, speak and write about women's issues, rights and social injustice. Feminists are concerned with issues such as gender differences and equality for women. Feminists share one common goal: the liberation of all women from oppression and discrimination. It is generally accepted that feminism equates to the concept of equal rights for women, but it is also so much more than that. It also focuses on all aspects of womanhood in an attempt to identify oppressive elements that need altering (Scholtz, 2009).

Klein (2002) asserts that feminism developed as a social, political, philosophical, sexual and literary artistic movement. To most women inside the feminist movement, the term became more and more unsatisfactory because of its ever-changing and unstructured nature. The many different schools of thought within feminism each with varying views, have led to much criticism about the feminist movement as a whole (Arneil, 1997). De Solenni (2002), on the other hand, asserts that:

A woman is created in the image of God. Like man, she is created for the purpose of knowing, ultimately knowing God. True feminism, therefore, respects a woman's essential identity as an image of God. Where she differs from man, a true feminist understands that these differences are constructive and complementary. True feminism concerns itself more with how a woman exists, rather than the jobs she can do. Whatever she does, she does as a woman, not as a genderless creature. The same is obviously true for man.

De Solenni's (2002) argument seems to view feminism from a theological perspective. This statement moves from the premise of sameness and equality between the two sexes as created by God. Whatever man judges as unequal between the two sexes is untrue in the eyes of God, who is their creator. This argument makes it clear that this unequal treatment between men and women serves the interests and the purpose of the dominant class – men, especially in a patriarchal society, who wish to hold on to power regardless of the feelings of the other sex – women. Maron, as cited by Mathye (2003:7), maintains that feminism may be defined in many different ways:

Feminism has no one working definition since it is a dynamic, constantly changing ideology with many aspects including the personal, the political and philosophical...Feminism is a call to action. It can never be simply a belief system...without action; feminism is merely empty rhetoric which cancels itself out.

Many feminists divide feminism into various types as they transpired during the second wave of feminism. These types are divided according to the period of their occurrence, and they are liberal feminism, socialist feminism, radical feminism and cultural feminism.

Liberal feminism places emphasis on the civil rights of women, their right to privacy, and the right of women to independently control their sexual and reproductive health. It seeks full equality for women on all levels of society, including economic and political equalities. Liberal feminism is concerned with securing the rights and equality of all persons. The women's struggle for full equality is expressed in various ways, such as legislation to ensure access to equal pay for women and men, equal access for women to leadership and the individual woman's right to make decisions about her own body and her sexual and reproductive health. This approach also focuses on women's access to education, paid employment and general treatment of women by men and vice versa.

Liberal feminists argue that patriarchy has historically denied women the ability to express and practice reasoning because patriarchy denies that women actually have the capacity for moral reasoning and agency. This has resulted in a sexist division of labour. Women were confined to the private arena of the household, with no voice in the public sphere. Even when women were allowed into the public arena, they were still held responsible for the household duties and for child-bearing. Liberal feminists argue that marriage is not advantageous to women and nor does it support the struggle for women's equality. They also argue for the establishment of sexual division of labour in both the public and the private spheres of life (Ritzer, 1988).

Socialist feminists' premise is that patriarchy is a problem; and they seek to end economic dependence for women. Social feminists focus on social reformation, the ending of class division and the provision of equal employment for women and men. They also believe that men should be equally involved in parenting. Their strong focus on economic class struggles causes socialist feminists to take action against male domination in the economic class struggle of capitalist societies. In their view, male domination results in the division of labour according to sex, race, as well in devaluation of women's work. Socialist feminist theory is in agreement with Marx and Engels that the working class is exploited; extending this theory not only to class but also to gender. Inequality may include class, gender, race, ethnicity and age, as not all women experience oppression in the same way.

Radical feminists believe that women are a uniquely useful means of satisfying male sexual desires. They also argue that women may also become ornamental signs of male status and power. As carefully controlled companions to both the child and the adult male, they act as pleasant partners and sources of emotional support. They may also be useful foils who reinforce, over and over again, the male's sense of his own significance. These useful functions mean that men everywhere seek to keep women compliant. This type of feminism challenges a number of aspects in the subordination of women that must be rectified so that no sex group dominates the other. This type of feminism examines the holistic approach in solving the problem of women's subordination in society.



Radical feminism considers the sexist male-controlled capitalist hierarchy as the defining feature of women's oppression. The radical feminists' belief is that male-driven authority and power structures are responsible for oppression and inequality. As long as this system and its values are in control, society cannot be reformed in any significant way and radical feminists, such as Daly (1986) and Echols (1989) agree that the only alternative to this problem is the total uprooting and reconstruction of society in order to achieve women's goals. Radical feminists assert that the cause of gender inequality arises from men as a group controlling women as a group. This form of patriarchy is seen as an independent social construct that oppresses women in any way that benefits men's needs and desires. Some radical feminists have gone as far as arguing that modern reproductive technologies (i.e. birth control and fertility drugs) are, far from liberating women, a way for men to control women's sexuality and reproduction. Radical feminists argue that patriarchal societies oppress women and that, as physical violence is the basis of patriarchy, it can only be defeated when women realize their own inner strength and values.

In Africa, feminist politics cannot be separated from the problems of poverty, disease, under-education, militarism, violence, and conflict. These are necessarily the concerns of many radical feminists in Africa. Radical feminists are therefore committed to resisting this order, and to critiquing and providing alternatives to development paradigms handed down to Africa by the West, especially those that co-opt the language of "gender" for conservative patriarchal ends (Dosekun, 2007). Thus in Africa, and indeed in other post-colonial contexts, a committed feminist is inextricably linked with anti-imperialist, anti-elitist and anti-racist politics. It strives for peace, justice, and freedom. Terborg-Penn (2001:170) articulates that:

Before applying the African feminist theory to Black women's past, it is important to look at the term Black, because not all women of African descent identify with this term. She feels that "Black" symbolizes a cultural milieu, more than does colour. To her, it indicates a preference for the term African feminism over Black feminism.

Cultural feminism highlights the female nature and the under-estimation of women's attributes. Although cultural feminists emphasize the differences between men and women, they contend that these differences are not biological but psychological

(Alcoff, 1988). The roots of cultural feminism may be traced to the cult of womanhood which postulates the moral superiority of women because of their material roles, and the need to recognise women's roles in society as well as affording them deserved value. De Beauvoir (1949) raises the problem of the social conditions people live in, especially women. De Beauvoir (1949:29) comments that:

Now what peculiarly signalizes the situation of women is that she – a free and autonomous being like all human creatures – nevertheless finds herself living in a world where men compel her to assume the status of the OTHER. They propose to stabilize her as object and to doom her to immanence...

De Beauvoir (1949) rejects the economic theory of Marx and Engels that private property is the root of woman's social and economic oppression. Oppression, according to her, lies in the innate desires of human beings to dominate. De Beauvoir (1949:295) states that:

One is not born a woman, but becomes a woman. No biological, psychological or economic fate determines the figure that the human female presents to society; it is civilization as a whole that produces this creature, intermediate between male and eunuch, which is described as feminine.

Social scientists use two terms to differentiate the roles of men and women. These are instrumental and expressive roles. Instrumental character traits are associated with masculinity and enable one to accomplish difficult tasks or goals. Instrumental traits, such as competitiveness, self-confidence, logic and non-emotionality, are supposedly natural to men and help them to provide for their families successfully. A relative absence of instrumental traits has traditionally been thought to characterize women. This argument may hold true when one considers an author who shows patriarchal influences in the description of his or her characters. In the play *Ngizyazisa Ngomtanami*, for instance, Nguzunga accuses his brother Jakobe of making his (Nguzunga's) son cook, which he deems undesirable for a boy. Nguzunga argues that cooking will make his son become a 'sissy', thereby making him weak and woman-like.

## *Gender*

The analysis of the concept of gender is important as gender forms part of the study. Gender is defined as a difference between a male and a female. When one examines gender in relation to literary texts, one does not only consider a male or a female person. One views, for instance, functions related to gender, whether both genders (male and female) use the same language in their speeches, and ways in which each gender is treated in society, at work, and at home. Another analysis looks at whether there is any superior or dominant gender between males and females, as perceived by our societies. Tripp (2000:4) argues that:

Gender is primarily culturally determined; that is learned postnatal. This cultural process springs from one's society. In this way, from the late 1960's onwards, it began to be possible to use the term 'gender' to signify all those culturally produced assumptions, expectations, conventions and stereotypes concerning 'appropriate' demeanor' and 'normal' behaviour' for women and men.

The above quotation implies that gender is divided according to culture. How gender is perceived depends on the individual's culture and society. This means that a boy in the Zulu society may not perceive gender in the same way as the other races do. The societal or behavioural expectations from a Zulu male person and a Zulu female person will not be the same as those of other males and females around the world. For instance, what may be viewed as a disgrace in Zulu society may not necessarily be viewed in the same light in other races or cultures. Tripp (2000:11) maintains that:

In patriarchal organized societies, masculine values become the ideological structure of the society as a whole. Masculinity thus becomes 'innately' valuable and femininity serves as a contrapuntal function to delineate and magnify the hierarchical dominance of the masculine. In this manner it could be argued that masculinity takes up a great deal more space than femininity.

The inference of the above quotation is that there are many factors that contribute to the various gender perceptions. These include the culture of a society, the language used in that society, its customs, and also the way people live in that society.

In Zulu culture, there is a misconception about the division of labour according to gender. There are duties or functions that may be performed by men only, and there are those that may only be performed by women. The misconception arises when a man performs a 'supposedly' woman's job, losing his dignity and belittling himself. Cora & Glover (2009:20) elucidate that:

The gender roles which an individual adopts 'manly' or 'womanly' according to the standards of his or her culture is oddly enough almost wholly learned, and little if at all built in, in fact the gender role learned by the age of two years is for most individuals almost irreversible, even if it turns counter to the physical of the subject.

The above quotation implies that there is no distinction between a male and a female when it comes to gender. The only difference is in the way in which each person (either male or female) was socialized at a younger age. His or her socialization at a younger age will inevitably make him or her believe that certain duties or functions are either meant for males or for females, i.e., a particular gender cannot perform functions designed or meant for the other gender. Cora & Glover (2009:24) continue to expound that:

Men and women are of course, different. But they are not as different as day and night, earth and sky, life and death. In fact, from the standpoint of nature, men and women are closer to each other than either is to anything else, for instance, mountains, kangaroos, coconut palms etc. The idea that men and women are more different from one another than either is from anything else must come from somewhere other than nature...far from being an expression of natural differences, exclusive gender identity is the expression of natural similarities. It requires repression; in men, of whatever is the local version of 'feminine' traits in women of the local definition of the 'masculine' traits. The division of the sexes has the effect of repressing some of the personality characteristics of virtually everyone, men and women.

Cora & Glover (2009) rationalize that nature has never separated the sexes, rather, it is the societies from where people come that make them see themselves as different. Their indigenous societies invest them with different and unequal powers. The conception is that nature made men and women equal, but culture made men to always be dominant over women. This may be the reason that, in most Black communities, women are oppressed and sometimes abused, as they do not have a right to voice issues that negatively affect them. Connell (1987:42) states that:

Women's liberation depends on the class struggle because capitalism is the root cause of all social inequalities and class struggle against capitalists. Capitalists get higher profits because women workers get lower wages, sexism divides the working class; women's oppression maintains the family, which in turn maintains capitalism. The subordination of women started long before capitalism, occurs in all classes under capitalism and has continued in countries that have to be capitalists.

Connell (1987) argues that women were not allowed to seek employment out of the house during apartheid. This was done so that they remained in the kitchen. Their function was to bear and rear children. While talking about feminist approaches, it is also important to discuss the three gender theories, as they are interlinked to patriarchy. According to Ritzer (1988), there are three groups of gender, i.e., gender difference, gender inequality, and gender oppression. Firstly, from a gender-difference perspective, feminist theorists attempt to answer the question of 'what about women', and 'how women's location in, and experience of, social situations differs from that of men'. The central theme in gender-difference theory is that women's inner psychic life is different from that of men. Gender-difference feminists seek to explain gender through biological and institutional differences. For example, they examine the values of womanhood as the reason that men and women experience the social world differently; and they focus on the marginalization of women, and why it is that women are being defined as the 'other' in patriarchal societies.

Secondly, gender inequality theories identify that, not only are women's location and experience of social structures different from those of men, but they are also unequal to men. Characteristics of gender inequality theories are that men and women are differently and unequally situated in society and inequality is a result of the organization of society and not as a result of biological or personality differences between the sexes. Gender inequality feminists claim that women are less empowered than men to realize the need they share with men for self-actualization (Ritzer, 1988).

Thirdly, power in gender oppression is the key variable. Gender-oppression theorists argue that women are not equal to men and that women are actively oppressed, subordinated and abused by men (Ritzer, 1988: 76). Psychoanalytical feminists attempt to re-formulate Freud's theories of the subconscious and the unconscious, human

emotions and childhood development, to prove that fear is the driving force behind men's oppression of women.

Marxist feminists view gender inequality as a product of capitalism. Class relations are emphasized as the primary cause of gender relations. Women are dominated by men as a result of economic exploitation which forces women to remain in the household as unpaid labourers. Marxist feminists believe that women have become a useful labour force. While both radical and Marxist feminists analyze women's oppression as deep-rooted in social structure, according to Marxists, liberal feminism accounts for all the practical inequalities women encounter. Marxist feminists further argue that all ideological systems are products of the real social and economic existence, and ultimately reflect the ideals of the dominant class, men in this case. They contend that culture, an ideological system, cannot be separated from the historical conditions in which human beings create their material existence.

Some sociological theorists, for example interactionists, claim that the social and cultural conditioning of gender roles is primarily responsible for patriarchy; and that this is the result of sociological constructions passed down from generation to generation. Sociologists argue that the construction of gender is more evident in societies in which a traditional culture with less economic development exists. Flax (1992:268) defines gender as:

... a historically variable and internally differentiated relation of domination. Gender connotes and reflects the persistence of asymmetric power relations rather than natural.

Scott (2007:24) outlines three goals of gender theory. Firstly, she argues that gender theory seeks to replace biological determinism with the examination of social constructs when focusing on sexual difference. Secondly, gender theory advances comparative studies of women and men in specific disciplinary fields; and thirdly, it introduces gender as an analytical category. Feminists, as well as post-modernists, seek paradigms of social criticism which can expose patriarchy's contingent, partial and historical truths. The feminist theory has to account for the diverse forms which gender and sexism have assumed in different cultures.

In patriarchal societies, there is a common assumption that the traditional gender role for males is always demanding. The belief is that a man must be successful, strong, self-assured, clever and never afraid. Men can live up to these various expectations in various ways. They can be successful in their careers, accumulating such symbols of their competitive achievement as wealth, fame or positions of leadership. Whatever their occupational success, many men command authority and respect because they are the principal family breadwinners (David & Brannon, 1976).

### *Patriarchy*

Patriarchy is a concept that is relevant when one discusses women issues. This is so because feminism and patriarchy are somewhat intertwined and interrelated. Patriarchy has been used by feminists to analyze the oppression of women and has been developed alongside feminist writings. Feminists have extensively drawn on historical evidence to prove that women were, and still are, living in a misogynistic and androcentric world. Women continue on their quest of liberating themselves from the state of patriarchy.

The concept of patriarchy derives from the Greek word that literally means the rule of the father in a male-dominated family (Bhasin, 1993). Patriarchy is seen as a system in which women experience discrimination, subordination, violence, exploitation, and oppression by men. In a patriarchal society, women are treated as inferior in all aspects of their lives; men control women's reproductive power, their sexuality, their mobility, and even their economic resources. Ray (2001) defines patriarchy as a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress, and exploit women.

Patriarchy, as an oppressive force, has a long history that stretches across national and cultural boundaries, and is a system that regulates women by means of male domination (Maseno & Kilonzo, 2011). In popular discussions, patriarchy is referred to as the 'rule of men over women', however, more broadly, it refers to the web of economic, political, social and religious regulations that have enforced the domination of women by men throughout the ages (Jones, 2007). Laurien (2004) defines patriarchy in its narrowest sense as a social system controlled by men, and as an inheritance which is passed on from father to son. Family members are dependent on, and submissive to, the male head of the household. In its broader sense, patriarchy is a system in which men dominate,

oppress and exploit women and which extends beyond the household to society in general. Millet (1986:33) asserts that:

Traditionally, patriarchy granted the father nearly total ownership over wife or wives and children, including powers of physical abuse and often even those of murder and sale.

Flax (1992) says that patriarchy is linked to procreation in a manner that misconstrues and exaggerates the role of the father and regulates women's reproductive roles. Johnson, (2005), on the other hand, argues that patriarchy becomes male-centred when the focus is placed on men and their actions, and when women are historically excluded from state, church, university and from highly respected professions.

In examining and assessing various theoretical approaches to patriarchy, Walby (1990) offers a perspective on theorizing patriarchy in a manner that articulates two distinct forms of patriarchy, which she labels as private patriarchy and public patriarchy: these are evident in a number of societal structures. Private patriarchy is the oppression of women by limiting them to unpaid household labour and keeping them from the public sphere. This type of patriarchy excludes women from the realm of social life in which a patriarch appropriates the services of the individual woman in the private sphere of the home.

On the other hand, public patriarchy subordinates women in all areas of social life, and the appropriation of women is more collective than individual. It gives women access to both private and public domain, however, this access is inferior compared with that of their male counterparts, and women remain subordinated by social constructions. (Walby, 1990) sees patriarchy as a phenomenon that reaches beyond the family into the public sphere. hooks (1991) rejects the idea of a common victimization as a shared basis for resistance to the rubric of patriarchy. hooks (1991:30) but believes that:

Women who are exploited and oppressed daily cannot afford to relinquish the belief that they exercise some measure of control, however relative, over their lives. They cannot afford to see themselves solely as 'victims', because their survival depends on continued exercise of whatever personal powers they possess.



The above quote illustrates that hooks' (1991) is convinced that women are not mere victims but have the capacity to flourish by challenging the system of patriarchy. She also points out what she sees as a constituting irony, namely, that women who are often most privileged adopt the role of victim. This, she feels, is a façade used by women to avoid the responsibility of confronting their internalized sexist, classist and racial attitudes towards women who do not resemble themselves. To do this is to construct men as an enemy, thus avoiding an examination of the enemy within. Sisterhood then embodies a shelter against unpleasant reality, when it should empower women by respecting, protecting, encouraging and loving themselves (hooks, 1991).

There are several feminists and sociological critics who differ with Mill (1970), especially on the issues of women. Although social movements shattered the consensus sociology of the 1950's (Burawoy, 2008), it took a while longer for the voices of women and gendered critics of social structures to become integrated within the discipline. Mill's (1970) reflections on elitism and class structures contributed to a new type of knowledge to sociological enquiry, however, his depiction of women in, 'White Collar and the American Middle Classes' (1951), for example, has received criticism for its derogatory representation of female research participants.

The patriarchal system is one which abuses and subordinates women. In the pre-19<sup>th</sup> century traditional Zulu setting, a woman was forced to marry her father's choice, whether he was single or a polygamist, an old man or a young 'buck', an ugly pretender with financial means or the son of a rich family. The father would make this decision because of his 'assumed' status as the head of the household – patriarchy. The father would arrange his daughter's marriage even if it was against his daughter's wish. An example of this arrangement may be found in *Uvalo Lwezinhlonzi* in which Manamuza chooses the husband for his daughter, Bajwayele. Manamuza does this against his daughter's will as she already has a boyfriend. Manamuza forces Bajwayele to commit herself to the highest bidder, Zulumacansi, who will rebuild her father's fortunes in cattle and social status. Manamuza is prepared even to use physical means to force her to marry his chosen man (Gumede, 2002:31). This is violation of his daughter's right to choose whom to marry. This practice undermines the young woman's freedom to advance in economic and educational spheres. Women had no freedom to plan and choose her future, not even the freedom to choose whether or not to have children. The

above illustrates one of the many examples of patriarchal abuse prevalent in Zulu societies.

Gender differences, as has been said earlier, are at the core of much oppression, especially through the patriarchal system. Through patriarchy, men have learnt how to hold other human beings in contempt, to see them as non-human, and to control them. This is what happens in the Zulu literary texts that are being investigated here. Within patriarchy, men see, and women learn the model of subordination. Patriarchy creates guilt and repression, sadism, manipulation, and deception, all of which drive men and women to other forms of tyranny.

Many Southern African societies have, in one way or the other, experienced the abuse of the patriarchal system. This practice has ensured the establishment of a remarkable male leadership, from the Zulu kings to some contemporary politicians, scholars and religious leaders. Patriarchy has lent itself to severe abuse by some individuals. Some unjust practices have permeated the entire social fabric to the point of being unquestionably accepted as 'our customs' in many African societies.

### ***Womanism***

The study has employed womanism since it is one of the sub-categories of feminism that acknowledges women's contribution to society. 'Womanism', is a term coined by Alice Walker and refers to the women of color or Black women. While feminists argue that men are enemies in their fight for equality and freedom, womanists believe that men are part of the solution if women are to achieve freedom and independence.

Womanism is relevant for this study as it acknowledges the abilities and contributions of Black women in particular, since the literary texts analyzed here deal with Black women, and more specifically, Zulu women. Womanism is committed to the wholeness and well-being of all humanity, male and female. It identifies and critically analyses sexism, anti-black racism and intersection. Its purpose is not to replace men with women, nor even merely to include more women in a man's world. Its purpose, rather, is to transform the very structure of our societies which produce and perpetuate gender inequalities. Feminists may seek to enact this transformation primarily by focusing on

women's situations, and by advocating on their behalf, but this does not mean that this is only about women, or only about women and men. Rather, it is concerned with radically re-imagining and re-shaping all power relations, in which case, it concerns human relations in general. It advocates for mutuality and respect in the place of hierarchy, abuse, oppression, and exploitation.

Womanism is a form of feminism that acknowledges women's natural contribution to society. Many feminists, especially Black feminists, define womanism as the belief that women are full human beings capable of participation and leadership in the full range of human activities – intellectual, political, social, sexual, spiritual and economic. It is a form of feminism that focuses especially on the conditions and concerns of Black women. Womanism is basically about the belief in the abilities of Black women and their talents.

Many feminists prefer to separate experiences of women in the West and women in Africa when they talk about feminist issues. Their argument is that some feminists prefer the term 'African' women instead of 'Black' women from Africa. Mohanty, Russons & Torres (1991:51) state that:

Any discussion of the intellectual and political construction of the 'third world feminism' must address itself to two simultaneous projects: the internal critique of hegemonic 'Western' feminism', and the formulation of autonomous, geographically, historically and culturally grounded feminist concerns and strategies. The first project is one of deconstruction and dismantling; the second, one of building and constructing. While these projects appear to be contradictory, the one working negatively, and the other positively, unless these two tasks are addressed simultaneously, 'third world feminism' runs the risk of marginalization or ghettoization from both mainstream (right and left) and Western feminist discourses.

According to Hudson-Weems (1998), 'African' womanism is significantly different from the mainstream feminism, especially regarding the perception of and approach to issues in society. This is understandable because African women and White women come from different segments of society and thus, feminism as an ideology, is not equally applicable to both. Familusi (2012:300) has this to say about culture and gender:

...the cultural and gender problem, which African women have been facing, dates back to their birth as in many homes the birth of a baby girl does not receive the kind of enthusiastic reception that is usually given to that of a baby boy. Thus if somebody is treated with inferiority right from birth, it may be difficult for such a person not to be perpetually caught in the web of such a treatment.

Hudson-Weems (1998) proposes that there should be a different movement that focuses on African women's issues and their identity. She argues that some White women acknowledge that the feminist movement was not designed with the African woman in mind. They argue that feminism primarily appealed to educated, middle-class-White women, rather than both Black and White working-class women. Ntiri (2001:165) concurs with the above argument when he says:

Various schools of thought, perspectives and ideological proclivities have influenced the study of feminism. Few students have dealt with the issue of racism, since the dominant voice of the feminist movement has been that of the White female. The issue of racism can become threatening, for it identifies White feminists as possible participants in the oppression of Blacks.

Feminism in the African context is defined as a movement that confronts racial, sexual, class, and cultural oppression. Women must be viewed first and foremost as human beings, rather than as sexual beings. The accent should be seen in a context in which, in patriarchal societies, women undergo some of the worst forms of human suffering. It may be argued that, in the African context, feminism has the potential of emphasizing the totality of human experience, portraying the strength and resilience of the human spirit and resounding with optimism for the total liberation of humanity. Feminism in the African context is, in short, humanistic feminism as it seeks total liberation. It is intrinsically a moral and political statement for human survival and well-being. Hudson-Weems (1998:430) defines the term African womanism as:

Either an outright or an addendum to feminism, Africana womanism is not Black feminism, African feminism, or Walker's womanism that some African women have come to embrace. African womanism is an ideology created and designed for all women of African descent. It is grounded in African culture and therefore it necessarily focuses on the unique experiences, struggles, needs and desires of African women. It critically addresses the dynamics of the conflict between the mainstream feminist, the Black feminist, the African feminist and the Africana womanism. The conclusion is that Africana womanism and its agenda are unique and separate from both White feminism and Black feminism;

moreover, to the extent of naming in particular, Africana womanism differs from African feminism.

Many literature analysts believe that there are different types of (African) feminist literature that deserve attention. These types are classified according to the varied beliefs of feminists in tackling the issue of their struggle against male domination. Firstly, there is transformative (African) feminist literature, in which men are more in the spotlight of criticism. In these texts, men are assumed to be capable of changing their conservative patriarchal attitude. It is believed that men, during the course of the plot, can realize their mistakes and negative attitudes, amending their thinking and behaviour. The demands on men are more fundamental and extensive than those made in the reformist literature. Men are described as accomplices, but also as products of patriarchal patterns of thought.

Secondly, there is reformist (African) feminist literature, in which attitudes, norms, and conventions, both old and modern, which discriminate against women and hinder their self-realization, are censured. This approach of feminist literature accepts the socialization of men as an obvious fact in a patriarchal society, but believes that men can gradually change their outlook towards women. They accept that this is a gradual process. This approach offers alternatives for men to change their outlook and behaviour. hooks (1991:194) expresses that:

To me feminism is not simply a struggle to end male chauvinism or a movement to ensure that women will have equal rights with men, it is a commitment to eradicating the ideology of domination that permeates western culture on various levels-sex, race and class to name a few.

There is a general misconception that African men and African women do not necessarily associate themselves with feminism. This perception goes further in that many African men and women believe that the feminist movement, by and large, is a White woman's movement (Masuku, 2005:50). An African woman does not see the man as her primary enemy as does the White feminist who feels that she has been subjugated by men. Mathonsi & Rapeane-Mathonsi (2013) debunk this myth in their analysis of the role played by both men and women in the novel *Uvalo Lwezinhlonzi* '(Fear of Frowns)', by J.K. Ngubane, (1961). Mathonsi and Rapeane-Mathonsi (2013:90) argue:

There are no misogynist images in this book. The reader is confronted with positive statements about women who challenge the violation of human rights. Ngubane's feminist writing gives women a sense that their existence is meaningful and their views are valid, and this should raise self-esteem to lend authority to their political demands.

The above quotation shows a significant positive contribution by Ngubane (1961) in the fight for women's voice and role in society and in literary texts. Such a contribution should be appearing more in other authors of Zulu literary texts who subscribe to women emancipation and freedom.

There are always misconceptions and different perspectives regarding culture in relation to the roles of women in many patriarchal societies. Some men oppress their women counterparts under the guise of culture; and this can also be witnessed in the way authors portray their female characters. The Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa, (OSISA), (2017) disapproves of such perspective when it says that:

There is a tendency of many people to plead 'culture' when they want to dismiss arguments and behaviours that challenge the status quo. There are negative and positive aspects of culture that have an impact on the lives of women which inevitably show an interplay between culture and feminism – both of which are broad and multi-faceted phenomena. Such discourses also paint a picture of cultures that are constantly evolving but that do not necessarily change the underlying way that women are treated and perceived. These are some of the discourses that are challenged and deconstructed in this study as some of the rituals are 'supposedly' culturally connected.

Many African women have spoken out in favour of the emerging concept of womanism as a valid African ideology. Kolawole (1997:34) offers some insight to what a womanist is:

Womanist does not require compartmentalization, and one does not need to identify radical, liberal, psycho-analytic and other categories of womanist. Any woman who has the consciousness to situate the struggle within African cultural realities by working for a total and robust self-retrieval of the African woman is an African or African womanist. Like identity, the boundaries of human consciousness are fluid and its expression can reveal multiple levels of perception. For any conceptual framework to be valid to African women, woman's cultural identity, self-perception and yearning within an integrative collective consciousness needs to be foregrounded.

The above quotation assumes that womanism needs to seek genuine liberation of the African woman involving probing African cultures, values and tradition and understanding the real location of women. It should emphasize dynamic wholeness and self-healing as well as the unity of all Black people across gender lines. Kolawole (1997) argues that women who have made a name for themselves in history have done so alongside traditional institutions set up by societies. Kolawole (1997) continues to express that, since the start of the pre-colonial period, African women have mobilized to fight for their rights and those of the whole nation. Modern African women who are actively speaking for other women do not necessarily take their cue from the Western countries. For example, most of the early African writers admit that they were motivated by traditional oral literature and historically powerful women. Their literary works make them gender mouthpieces because most of them were motivated by silence in the early African literature that was largely patriarchal.

Arndt (2000:212) states that:

The conviction that the gender question can be dealt with only in the context of other issues that are relevant for African women, an African womanist will recognize that, along with consciousness of sexual issues, she must incorporate racial, cultural, national, economic and political considerations to her philosophy. Moreover, an African womanist must deal with, among other things, inter-ethnic skirmishes and cleansing, religious fundamentalism, the language issue, gerontocracy and in-laws.

Kolawole (1997:19) believes that 'womanist' ideology is an ideal theory for women in Africa because it is culturally valid. According to her, this theory addresses issues relevant to African women. She also believes that feminism is uncompromising and does not fully comprehend the peculiarities of the African culture. She cites a number of reasons why many African women do not wish to be associated with feminism: one reason being that Western women fight for their rights in different ways and for different reasons. She emphasizes that many women do not subscribe to feminism as a way of sharing their rejection of the imperialistic attempt to force them to accept a foreign 'ism' that is different from the needs of the majority of African women. She continues to say that African women refuse to subscribe to a theory they cannot defend. According to Kolawole (1997:21):

Feminism is the political theory that struggles to free all women, women of colour, working class women, poor, disabled, lesbians, old women as well as White women, economically privileged and heterosexual women.

However, many African literary critics argue that feminism is a struggle to change the status of women in African societies. Achifusi (1987:40) concurs with this idea:

Feminism is a politic directed at changing existing power relations between women and men in society. The power relations and structure of all areas of life, the family, education and welfare, the worlds of works and politics, culture and leisure. They determine who does what and for whom, what we are and what we might become.

From the above quotation it becomes clear that feminism purports to change power relations between men and women. Sometimes trying to define these power relations can be problematic. Such attitudes give the impression that both African men and women lack a thorough understanding of the main objectives of feminism, especially in the African context. Ongundipe-Leslie (1994:64) postulates that:

The successful intimidation of African women by men over the issues of women's liberation, male ridicule, aggression and backlash have resulted in making women apologetic and have given the term feminism a bad name.

If feminism is not relevant to Africa, does this imply that an African woman is happy with her situation and therefore does not need an ideology that addresses her reality? If feminism is foreign, where is the data to support the idea that African women or cultures did not have ideologies that propounded for women's oppositions and resistance to injustices within their societies? This dilemma seems to suggest that there were indigenous patterns within the traditional African societies for addressing the oppression and injustices of women. Thus feminism challenges, with justification, the secondary status of women in all societies. Some of these challenges in African literature may be deemed subjective.

### **3.3 Research methodology**

Research methodology refers to the structure, the approach and the paradigm the research is going to take. According to Mouton (2001), the research methodology is a



blueprint of the way in which one intends to conduct research, and the direction the researcher will take. It therefore includes, amongst other things, the population group, sampling, data collection and its methods, for example, the qualitative research method, and the tools that will be employed in the collection of data and, lastly, the data analysis.

### **3.3.1 The population group and sampling**

A research population is generally a large collection of individuals or objects that are the main focus of a scientific enquiry. In this study, the population group is Zulu literary texts that represent a wider population of texts with a common theme around women's issues. There is a common theme on women issues in the chosen samples as well as in the larger population. Since it is usually not possible to reach all the members of the target population, I had to identify that proportion of the accessible books. The selected proportion of the books under study called a sample represented the whole. For this sample to be useful, it had to reflect the similarities found in the total population group.

The main objective of drawing a sample is to make inferences about the larger population from the smaller sample (May, 2001). I had to read a number of Zulu literary texts to be able to select these samples (texts). The selection of the samples was purposive in that I chose samples which share similar characteristics and themes with the wider population group that they represent. Purposive qualitative sampling aims at selecting appropriate source information from which to explore discursive meanings.

Purposive sampling differs from random sampling and other types of sampling. The purposively chosen samples share common trends in women's issues in this study, while in random sampling, a researcher may not particularly acquire the necessary information as the samples are chosen randomly, and that is, selection is based on probability. The benefit of using purposive sampling is that it achieves more controlled and accurate results.

### **3.3.2 Data collection**

Data collection refers to the gathering of information or data needed for the study. Extracts were drawn from four literary works chosen because of their suitability for

reflecting women as victims. Baker (2006: 123) argues that the most frequently used words crucial for analysis are identified for their ability to illuminate a variety of phenomena such as a sociological profile of a world.

This study used mainly the qualitative approach located in the interpretative paradigm. According to Seale (2004) interpretivists tend to favour qualitative rather than quantitative methods. This is because, on the whole, researchers find that people's words provide greater access to their subjective meaning than do statistical trends.

Qualitative research is aimed at gaining a deeper understanding of an organization or event, rather than a surface description of a large sample of a population. It aims at obtaining a better understanding through first-hand experience and observation, quotations and extracts from the chosen samples. The benefits of qualitative research are that the information is richer than in quantitative research, and the researcher gains a deeper insight into the phenomenon under study. These are just some of the advantages of qualitative research. Neuman (1997:44) notes that:

The qualitative approach has the potential of obtaining information about community's actions, perceptions, attitudes, constraints and experiences. It is interested on how people make sense of the world and how they experience events. The major interest is meaning which is how people make sense of their experiences and structures in the society.

According to Ulin (2002), there are three methods that form the bedrock of qualitative data collection: participant observation, in-depth interview and focus-group discussions. The observation method formed the basis of this study. The main strength of the observation method is that it provides direct access to the phenomena being studied. By using the observation method of data collection, I amassed a great deal of insight into information from the samples that have been chosen. Instead of relying on some kind of self-report, such as asking people what they would do in certain situations, I observed and extracted any worthwhile information I felt was relevant to the study.

### **3.3.3 Data analysis**

The study employs the feminist literary analysis and literary discourse analysis. In the analysis, the analytical frames are juxtaposed in order to enable a detailed and holistic

investigation of various features of discourse. This creates a better understanding of language in both social and literary contexts.

Here I present data information which portrays women characters as agents, victims and subjects through terms frequently used. The terms portray women as victims from the discourse analysis in the implementation of the patriarchal system (policy). Women are always on the receiving end and they are always reminded of their place through the use of certain terms, that is, what each can or cannot do. The discourse analysis reveals that the terms used reflect a sense of helplessness and hopelessness.

The qualitative method is employed in data analysis of this study. Under the qualitative method, events are described and observed as one comes across them in the reading of selected samples (literary texts, in this case). These events are interpreted and explained to show their relevance to the theme under investigation. The information obtained during the textual analysis and this helps me to draw conclusions about the research topic.

Qualitative research analysis involves a reflection on aspects of the way of life, the customs and the attitudes one witnesses around oneself so as to be able to compare them with the parallel manifestations in the literature being investigated (Neuman, 1997). This means that a given state of affairs is therefore described as fully and as carefully as possible. Thus, the general behaviour of men towards women, men and women's actions and roles in modern society are examined, in order to make a comparison with the role and status of women as found in the texts which are being investigated.

The secondary source materials, which are used as supporting evidence, include, amongst others, books on feminist issues, journals, articles, manuscripts, MA and PhD theses. As the issues of women are a highly contentious issue, especially in the new dispensation, the secondary source material from the library has been useful and has given me diverse views on the construction of feminism and the subversive efforts to counter discursive constructions.

### **3.4 Summary of the chapter**

This chapter has discussed the approaches which work as framework in guiding the research. The chapter has looked at the theories of literary discourse and literary feminism as well as the concepts of patriarchy, womanism and gender perceptions about male and female roles and how these impact on the portrayal of female characters in the selected literary texts. It has discussed how patriarchal stereotype has manifested itself in many Zulu literary texts written by both men and women. The next chapter deals with the textual analysis of the play *Ngiyazisa Ngomtanami*.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### 4. WOMEN'S ROLES IN A CHANGING SOCIETY IN THE PLAY *NGIYAZISA NGOMTANAMI*, (1990), 'Oh! My poor child', by C.T. Msimang

#### 4.1 Introduction

This chapter critiques the differences between urban and rural lifestyles as depicted in *Ngiyazisa Ngomtanami*. The differences are exemplified by the conflicts that arise between the lifestyles of a sophisticated urban woman and a simple rural woman. The chapter challenges the misconception and patriarchal ideology that a man's word is final and cannot be challenged. It also challenges the patriarchal stereotype of the 'supposedly' weak husband who realises his mistake of not listening to his wife.

#### 4.2 Synopsis of the play, *Ngiyazisa Ngomtanami*

The setting of this play is the rural area of Ndwedwe. The story begins with the disappearance of Bhekuzalo, son of MaZondi and Nguzunga, following Bhekuzalo's visit to Jakobe, Nguzunga's younger brother, who lives in Umlazi.

Nguzunga accuses his brother Jakobe of being responsible for the disappearance of his son, Bhekuzalo, alleging that Jakobe may have killed Bhekuzalo for *muti* purposes (*ukuthwala*) in order to strengthen his business. Against the advice of his wife, Nguzunga consults a traditional healer to verify this, before travelling to Umlazi to attack Jakobe. Bhekuzalo's disappearance has meanwhile been reported to the police, who arrive at Jakobe's house to announce that they have found the boy. The police discover Nguzunga brandishing a spear in Jakobe's house as the two (Jakobe and Nguzunga) argue about the boy, and the police arrest Nguzunga for attempting to murder his brother.

### 4.3 Tradition and modernity in *Ngiyazisa Ngomtanami*

Today issues of gender equality and women empowerment are becoming more complex and contentious. This results from the massive movements that have sprung up which claim to represent the voices of women fighting against patriarchy and mechanisms of power within the household and workplace. Ghali (1996), cited in Bryson (1999:2), contends that:

The movement for gender equality the world over has been one of the defining movements of our time. If we study the stereotypes of authors towards women, the sexism of male critics and the limited roles women literally play in history we are not learning what women have lived and experienced, but what men have thought women should be.

The conflicting stereotypes of the ‘sophisticated’ city girl and the rural woman are a frequent theme in novels, used to dramatize the clash between modernity and traditionalism. Okot (1966: 1) states that:

African literature, as all literature, is linked to the daily experience of its people. Writers have as main pre-occupation from linguistic and literature perspective to depict social ills.

Okot (1966) believes that songs help African people to express their good or bad feelings. Accordingly, Okot, (1966:3), through “Song of Lawino and Song of Ocol”, addresses the issues facing liberated Africa, the poem poses the following questions: What kind of liberation should Africa take on? Or should Africa honour its tradition, or should it adopt the European values that were already set in place during colonization?

The above critique applies in *Ngiyazisa Ngomtanami* in which MaZondi is a rural wife and MaThango represents an urban woman. MaZondi tries to advise his husband about the ‘fake’ traditional healers in Ndwedwe. She says:

*Angisenambuzo, Ndima, into nje ngingombono, Akusekho sanusi esibhula into ezwakalayo lapha eNdwedwe.... (p. 62).*

‘I do not have any more questions, Ndima, but I have an opinion. There are no more traditional healers in Ndwedwe who truly prophesize...’

Nguzunga and MaZondi’s house is in Ndwedwe, which is a deep rural place situated on the northern part of Durban. Most people in this area still believe in the traditional way of doing things, hence MaZondi’s advice. MaZondi does not appear to have had

any contact with city life, whilst on the other hand, MaThango has lived all her life in Umlazi (a township on the south of Durban) where she was born. This setting provides a sharp contrast in their character portrayal in the play.

The sophisticated woman is portrayed as completely divorced from life in the country or from relatives and friends who are not living in the city. Counterpoised to this 'city girl' is the rural woman – usually called 'the pot of culture' – who desires the old ways of life and remains unchanged as history passes her by. In critiques of Zulu literary texts, it is often argued that it is male authors who are guilty of this kind of underestimating rural women, however, it will be seen that rural women also desire change and innovation. The myth of the unchanging, conservative, naïve rural woman seems to coincide with the actual male social practice of discouraging change and innovation in women's lives. Davies & Graves (1986:72) conclude that:

Even though the world is changing all about women, it seems that women's own attempts to cope with the new situations they find themselves in are regarded as a 'problem' by men, and a betrayal of traditions which are often confused with women's roles. Women must act as mediators between the past and present, while men see themselves as mediators between the present and the future. The forces of urbanization and international influences have imposed rapid changes, yet men expect women to be politically conservative and non-innovative. Socially, women are accused of 'going too far' when they adopt new practices usually emanating ultimately from the capitals of the metropolitan countries.

Masuku, 1997 & Zondi, 2008 argue that one of the commitments of a female author should be to correct false images of Zulu women. To accomplish this, the author herself must know the reality of the Zulu women – must know the truth about Zulu women and womanhood – because the concept of a woman is a complex one which relates to more than gender roles alone, as is the case with Mkabayi and the old women in the Zulu household.

Neethling (1990:68) points out two kinds of protests made by women in relation to the patriarchal system:

- (a) A strong feminist protest against subordination and sexual abuse of women by men in society.
- (b) A protest against the lack of power and status of individuals (females) in society.

Neethling (1990) also gives an outline of female protest literature as shown in a Xhosa folktale. A girl arrives at a dog's house. She is humiliated and degraded to the extent of cooking for the dog, and, worst of all, having sexual intercourse with the dog. Neethling (1990) maintains that the dog in this folktale symbolizes male domination and sexual abuse of women by men. Mtuze (1990), on the other hand, offers women the more encouraging point of view that, although some feminist critics may discern male chauvinistic tendencies in this disparaging treatment, it has its advantages in that it equips young girls to face trials of life with equanimity, and to appreciate that one has to stoop to conquer.

The language used in *Ngizazisa Ngomtanami* reflects male domination over females. MaZondi is trying to advise her husband, Nguzunga, that traditional healers cannot be trusted these days. She argues that it is better for him to go to the faith-healers. Nguzunga responds with an angry outburst:

*Awungiyeke wena ngezayoni mfazi ndini. Kwaba yini ukuba indoda ibeka uzuka umfazi abeke usheleni, Mfazi, musa ukungixabanisa nabalele (p. 62).*

'Woman, stop pestering me about Zionists. Whatever for must a woman have the last word? Don't put me at loggerheads with my ancestors'.

Junod (1962) argues that he fails to understand the purpose and the significance of *ilobolo* custom which, in some cases when it is used negatively, suppresses the rights of women. Junod (1962:280-281) states the following as the negative consequences of *ilobolo*:

The woman is undoubtedly reduced to an inferior position by the fact that she has been bought by *ilobolo*. As regards her children, whatever may be her love for them, she does not in fact possess them. They belong to the father. If a divorce takes place and that *ilobolo* is not returned to the husband, he keeps them and the mother will be separated from them forever. In the same way, a widow to be inherited is in the hands of her deceased husband's family. If she bears children thereafter, they belong to the husband's family.

The language used ('mfazi ndini') by Nguzunga shows a chauvinistic attitude on his part. Had MaZondi used such language, she would have been scorned or punished. Her crime would have been that she showed disrespect to her husband, but because it is Nguzunga who utters these words, no disrespect is noted. According to Nguzunga, his wife must listen to him and never question him nor offer any ideas or advice. The



picture being painted here is that men do not believe that women can make a meaningful contribution to a discussion.

Through the negative turmoil created by modernization, the balance of women's traditional identities has been upset. Each character in the literature is forced to search for a way of regaining the emotional, social and moral equilibrium originally provided by traditional roles. Some characters respond to this challenge with despair, resigned to their inability to reconcile their traditional identities to the modern world. Others attempt to balance elements of traditional and modern lifestyles. In trying to balance the traditional and the modern lifestyles, MaThango resorts to unconventional means by lying to her husband, Jakobe that he does not have a child. If she had told him about the child, the possibility is that he would not have married her. MaThango says:

*Cha, Thembi! Akulula kanjalo. Umntanami yintombazane, kanti oNdima laba yiloZulu wakuqala. Bakhonze kabi ukuthi ifa lidliwe wumuntu wesilisa...Ngeke nje uSiphiwe wami aphuthelwa ngamafutha ngikhona. Kanti ngabe ngingiganelani? (p. 69).*

'No, Thembi! It's not that easy. My child is a girl, and people like Ndima are Zulu traditionalists. They are keen on the inheritance being taken by a male person... Why did I get married then, if I were to allow my Siphiwe to lose on the inheritance while I am here?'

Jakobe wishes to have a son but his wife cannot bear him one, and that is why he tries to register his brother's son, Bhekuzalo, in his will. This becomes the source of conflict between him and his wife because his wife feels that her daughter, Siphiwe, who is unbeknown to her husband, should be the one who benefits from the will. To stop this, MaThango tries to kill Bhekuzalo but unfortunately Bhekuzalo survives and MaThango ends up in jail.

It is useful at this point to point out that some Zulu literary texts adopt a far less sophisticated view of women's lives than they deserve. Such texts reflect women as secondary figures in the environment of males. In the dialogue, when MaZondi tries to give advice to Nguzunga, Nguzunga bursts out that the issue of Bhekuzalo's disappearance is beyond her reasoning power because she is a woman. Nguzunga says:

*Yilokho-ke obekwenza ngithi lolu daba lungaphezulu kwezindlebe zakho. Phoke ngoba awuboniswa.... (p. 63).*

‘That is why I said that this issue is beyond your reasoning power, and so because you do not take advice...’

This shows a patriarchal stereotype in the portrayal of female characters. MaZondi, in this play, is depicted as such because, in a patriarchal society women are less significant than men. Feminists argue that women, as characterized in literary texts written by both men and women, are polarized as either, the prime cause of disruption of the times or as the source of its redemption. Viewing women as unidimensional, as ‘either ... or’, is characteristic of many Zulu literary texts. Davies & Graves (1986:61) go on to say that:

The new woman represents a theory of personhood where the individual exists as an independent entity rather than her kinship relations, where she has a responsibility to realize her potential for happiness rather than to accept her role, where she has indefinable value rather than quantitative financial worth, and where she must reason about her own values rather than fit into a stereotyped tradition.

In reference to the above quotation, this means that the ‘modern women’ in Zulu society nowadays often wavers helplessly between her allegiance and her culture – her identity and her aspiration for freedom and self-fulfillment. In Zulu literary texts some authors who still follow the patriarchal system, delineate their female characters caught between Western and African values. This trend may be observed in the novel *Umshado* which is analyzed later in this study.

In Zulu society, women, both young and old, represent motherhood that is characterized by tenderness, love and care. This means that, generally speaking, they are represented as good. However, there are those who are evil, and this deviation from the norm is reflected clearly in some Zulu folktales and modern Zulu literature. Canonici (1990:30) points out that:

Not even parents are, in their relationship with their children, fixed characters in oral tradition. Some are good, or very good, while, some may be extremely evil.

The evidence of the above quotation is found in *Ngizazisa Ngomtanami* when Jakobe’s wife tries to kill Bhekuzalo so that he (Bhekuzalo) cannot inherit the family’s wealth. When Bhekuzalo is found in hospital having been beaten, the truth comes out that MaThango, Jakobe’s wife, was trying to kill him. She does this because of jealousy that she did not bear the son (for her husband) who would inherit his wealth. She had

deceived her husband that she did not have a child, so that her husband could marry her. She had hoped that by killing Bhekuzalo, her daughter, Siphiwe, would be able to inherit her husband's wealth.

Within the household, women have to strive for their survival and for the rights of their children using any means at their disposal. In this struggle, some women are very successful, some act in a destructive and evil manner, and others fail and become victims of their own short-sightedness. Ochieng (1975: IV) supports this:

The young women who are today shouting for 'liberation' are using wrong arguments and are causing unnecessary breakups of marriages and murders in a country where there are no discriminations between sexes. Again, our educated women, as usual, are aping arguments and activities of some ugly, ugly, lonely and derailed American and English women. I can remember that there used to be a time when African women were very real women and their menfolk were proud of them.

Conversely, MaThango's short-sightedness is clearly evident in this play. This is observed when she attempts to kill Bhekuzalo. MaThango becomes the victim of her own myopia, as she lands in jail. Nyembezi (1990:164) invokes a Zulu saying that goes:

*Ubogawula ubheka.*  
"Look as you chop a tree down".

Elaborating on this, Nyembezi (1990) comments that, when cutting down a tree, one has to watch on which side the tree is going to fall, because it may fall on oneself. This proverb sounds the warning that people must always keep their eyes open lest something unpleasant happen, especially if the undertaking is dangerous. MaThango should have known that what she was doing would land her in jail. Her actions of trying to kill Bhekuzalo do land her in jail and is not expected to cry foul because she is responsible for her actions. When the police arrest MaThango for assaulting Bhekuzalo, she confesses that:

*Ngaze ngazigwaza ngowami, nkosi yami. Ngaze ngayona into ebengithi ngiyayilungisa* (p. 76).  
'Oh my God! I have messed up. I have messed up something I was trying to build'.

In patriarchal societies, women are regarded as merely helpless and disadvantaged. This is reflected in the often-quoted remark: *Yini yona umfazi?* ('What is a woman after all?')

Such misogynous remarks lead men to overlook the real and important role played by women in life. However, one finds that, despite men's reluctance to grant women full equality in the Zulu society, women have successfully left footprints of their strides along various walks of life.

Rowbotham (1997) comments that almost all the early forms of feminist political thinking were based firmly on the assumptions of liberal individualism and materialism. Broadly speaking, liberal individualism implies that the individual person, usually designated as male, is valued in his own right and has certain rights (legal, social, economic, political, familial and rights of property) attached to his personhood. This individual is supposed to be understood as unique, and yet he is also part of a community of like-minded men who share most of the same views, privileges and rights. Nguzunga presents an example of such men in this play, but his individualistic thinking and behaviour proves him wrong at the end of the play. Mtuze (1990:69) notes that:

Story-tellers drive the point home that whereas males often depend on brutal force to achieve the more difficult objective, females use tact and self-sacrifice. In so doing they attain the same goals at no personal risk of life, honour and integrity. This, especially, in the eyes of young listeners, should be construed as putting women on a par with men, if not on a plane slightly higher.

A play is a very powerful medium of literary expression that has the potential to reach thousands of people because texts may be translated into action. The text has the potential to go beyond the borders of the literate world into the largely untapped world of illiterate people. Plays may also be used as an effective tool of socio-political expression. Many Zulu literary texts, both past and present, seek to relegate women to the lowest rungs of the socio-political ladder. There may be a number of reasons for this. In the past, and even today, Zulu culture largely denies women any form of ownership of land, property or livestock because of its patriarchal nature. Institutions of power, wealth and authority were, and still are, chiefly the province of men, and as a result, women have found themselves playing a role subservient to that of men.

#### **4.3.1 Man's role versus woman's role in a traditional Zulu household**

In the play, stage directions set the scene as follows:

*Kusendlini engulawondi. Phakathi nendawo kuneziko kanti ngenhlana kwalo kunetafulana lamapulangwe nezitulo zakhona. Esininini sabesilisa kuhlezi uNguzunga esigqikini. Esininini sabesifazane kuhlezi uMaZondi (p. 57).*

‘It is in a round hut. A fireplace is in the middle and a small wooden table with chairs stands just above it. Seated on a small carved wooden block on the men’s side of the room is Nguzunga and MaZondi on the ladies’ section’.

The setting of the first act is a traditional hut in which space is demarcated in terms of sex. This kind of differentiation was, and is still, practiced in many other spheres of social activity. A woman found sitting on the men’s side in a traditional hut was, and is still, scolded and regarded as uncultured and disrespectful. This makes things difficult for a young *umakoti* especially, because she risks being sent back home to be taught respect and how to behave with good manners regarding her new home, or be subjected to punishment. Such judgements did not, however, apply to a husband sitting in the women’s side of the hut. This would not be given much attention because the hut is ‘his house’. Such demarcation in the hut according to sex clearly establishes the patriarchal nature of the Zulu social system.

In some rural areas, this practice is still common, although there is some flexibility with regard to certain cultural stereotypes. But this demarcation of space according to sex was, and is not possible in urban areas, since there are no huts or traditional rondavels. Hence, it is not possible to observe such a demarcation in the modern house that has many bedrooms.

The distinction would even apply to Nguzunga’s bench, on which his wife, or any other female, would not sit. In fact, certain goods in the home, such as items of cutlery, belongs to the head of the house and no one else is allowed to use them. For instance, if a child was found eating with his father’s spoon or using his plate, he or she would be severely punished.

Nguzunga is portrayed as making it very clear that he is the head of the house and that nothing should be hidden from him. This is the same principle that underlies the socio-political repression of women in some of the Zulu literary texts, and has led to the disintegration of many family units. In terms of Zulu culture, because of its patriarchal nature, the man is the head of the family, and all other family members residing in the household are obliged to respect his judgment. A husband would consult his wife on matters of the family or matters regarding public debate. This would be a reflection of

a woman's contribution and recognition by her husband, and also of the value that the husband sets upon his wife. It is not easy for a wife to defy or bypass her husband's authority or judgment, even if she does not necessarily agree with it. Miller (1986:7) asserts that:

It follows that women as subordinates are in terms of, and encouraged to develop personal psychological characteristics that are pleasing to the male counterpart. These characteristics form a certain familiar cluster: submissiveness, passivity, docility, dependency, lack of initiative, inability to act, to decide, to think, and the like. In general, this cluster includes qualities more characteristic of children than adults-immaturity, weakness and helplessness, they are considered well-adjusted.

In some Zulu literary texts, women are seen as creatures that are completely different from men. They are even expected to observe certain rules and boundaries that are not applicable to their male counterparts. As a stranger who joins a clan from outside, a wife is viewed with the suspicion reserved for all strangers: she may be an agent of magic, or an agent of evil and witchcraft. In the play Nguzunga attempts to maintain and perpetuate this stereotype. In the following dialogue, Nguzunga shouts at his wife:

*Uyazi ukuthi ungumthathakathi wena MaZondi. Kwake kwathulwa kodwa nodaba olungaka...? (p. 58).*

‘You are a real sorcerer you MaZondi. How dare you keep quiet with such a big story...?’

Qunta (1987:13) remarks that:

Women cannot afford to leave their fate in the hands of males since the male-dominated system has provided men with a status that allows them to abuse women. African women must speak for themselves. They should decide for themselves who they are, where they are going, what obstacles face them and how to remove these.

It is against this background that one finds authors such as Msimang in *Ngiyazisa Ngomtanami* using characters such as MaZondi to represent the protest by women. MaZondi attempts to break away from the ties of tradition and set herself up as an agent of change. According to Zulu custom, a woman in the house of her husband is subjected to certain constraints. *Hlonipha*, respect, obedience and humility are the cornerstones of women's expected behaviour. Qualities emphasized within the family are respect for elders, and, in marriage, respect for husbands. The argument between Nguzunga and his wife about the disappearance of Bhekuzalo is taken as a sign of disrespect on the

part of MaZondi. She is not supposed to argue with her husband, according to the Zulu traditional system.

It is also worth mentioning here that Nguzunga calls their son “my son”. As has been mentioned earlier, when a wife gives birth to a baby boy, she is praised because this ensures the continuation of the surname of that particular household or clan. In other words, the new-born son will help to preserve his father’s surname so that it does not die out. In fact, a son is always regarded as the extension of his father. Although a baby daughter is welcomed in the family, it is known that when she grows up, or reaches a certain stage in her life, she may have to leave the family to marry and assume a different surname. Therefore a daughter is only appreciated because she is a source of wealth for the family, if she is lucky enough to be married.

This system of male domination is patriarchy. The definition does not illuminate, but rather obscures the complex set of factors that function together in the patriarchal system (Walby, 1990:89). One needs a more complex definition if one is to understand and challenge the patriarchal system in all its aspects. This is a system that demonstrates the subordination and the disadvantaged position of women in social institutions. In general, patriarchy is the structuring of society by family units in which fathers are the heads of the households. Within these family units, fathers hold the responsibility of the welfare of the family. This position in the family, in turn, gives fathers authority over their families. Patriarchy describes males as having more power and control over females, dominating them both culturally and socially (Walby, 1990:156). In the following dialogue, Nguzunga shouts at his wife:

*Nanso phela imihlola. Ungalokotha wena uphuphe iphupho elibi ngendodana yami uphinde ungifihlele. Kanti ekabani le ngane MaZondi? Sekungubani umnumzane lapha ekhaya? Ngiyabuza MaZondi? (p. 57).*

‘That is unbelievable. Can you dare dream a terrible dream about my son and hide it from me? Whose child is this MaZondi? Who then is the head of this household? I am asking, MaZondi?’

Nguzunga is threatening to inflict punishment on his wife for apparently being rude to him. When MaZondi tells Nguzunga that she dreamt about Bhekuzalo crying, Nguzunga bursts out loud and asks her why she did not tell him about the dream. Very submissively, MaZondi responds:

*Shwele, Lembede! Ngiyathayiza, Baba. Kube yiphutha, Nkosi yami. Ngithathe ngokuthi iphupho yiphupho...nokho-ke Lembede, ngoba nakhu kanti unxanele ukulizwa, angisale sengilixoxa, Ndima omkhulu, mhlawumbe negwebu leli eselikucinanisile lingehla (p. 58).*

‘Forgive me Lembede! I am sorry, dad. It was a mistake, my Lord. I took it that a dream is just a dream...now that you want to hear it Lembede, let me narrate it then, Ndima, the Great One, maybe you will calm down from your anger’.

When Nguzunga’s wife tries to plead with him to calm down, she makes the situation worse, and Nguzunga responds:

*Usho kimi ukuthi ngicinaniswe yigwebu...? Sengathi isagila sami sisazoke sisebenze lapha kuwe (p. 58).*

‘You are telling me that I am flustered by anger...? It looks like my knobkerrie still has work cut out for it on you’.

One may argue that Nguzunga should have opted for other constructive ways of solving problems or punishing her if she wronged him, rather than threaten to use a dangerous weapon such as a knobkerrie (short stick with a knobbed head) with the potential to kill. Nguzunga seems to feel it is appropriate to punish his wife because, in his view, she is disrespectful.

Nguzunga believes that he must exercise physical violence (use of force) in order to demonstrate his superiority as the head of the household. According to Lakoff (1980), administration of physical punishment is a sign of intellectual and moral bankruptcy. It is also a sign of cowardice that shows weakness on the man’s part, and is used whenever men run short of ideas to solve the problem at hand. Moi (1987) suggests that patriarchy sees a woman as occupying a marginal position within a symbolic order. From a phallogocentric point of view, women come to represent the necessary frontier between men and chaos. In other words, when a man is angry and needs to act forcefully, that brutal forcefulness will be absorbed by a woman. The woman is positioned between men and chaos. Radical feminists uphold the idea that a woman should gradually reconstruct her own identity despite oppression by men.

Nguzunga sees nothing wrong with the cruel and humiliating act of using his *knobkerrie*, which is capable of causing very serious harm to his wife. The author here does not comment on the inhumane actions of Nguzunga as his protagonist, instead, the author simply enters into Nguzunga’s consciousness and describes the events from the



character's point of view, thus revealing the unreachable baseness of a man who has become depraved enough to desire the humiliation and abuse of his wife. Male chauvinists maintain that their position in the family is God-given and untouchable, and that women should simply accept this without question.

Unfortunately, this is a situation that some women are compelled to endure in many patriarchal societies. In many patriarchal societies, such as the Zulu society, physical violence on women has become a norm and, in many instances, it has remained largely unchallenged. Many men still physically abuse women under the pretext of silencing them and keeping them in their place. Progressive African women see women's struggle as even more difficult as in the obvious struggles for national liberation in which the enemy is easily recognized. Koine (1983:33) asserts that:

The struggle for equal rights between the sexes is going to prove even more difficult than that of de-colonization because in essence it is a struggle between husband and wife, brother and sister, father and mother.

Adopting patriarchal authority as the head of the family, Nguzunga frowns at his wife's suggestion of going to a faith-healer. One may argue that this is the time when the couple should be putting their heads together to save their son; however, Nguzunga shows no regard for his wife's opinion and feelings. Nguzunga would love Mazrui's (2004:1) biased comment:

God made us male and female. He filled women with weakness in body and weakness in thought. In His bounty He filled men with goodness in strength, great intelligence and good thoughts, and for this reason He ordained men to be the ones to oversee women in their affairs, to take care of them. As He told us in the Koran: Men shall oversee women.

The above quotation reflects real-life marginalization of women, which is usually portrayed in most Zulu literary texts and perpetuated by certain interpretation of the Koran and the Bible. In most Zulu literary texts, women play second fiddle to their male counterparts. In some Zulu households, when conditions turn sour in the family, it is always assumed that the ancestors are not happy about something. It may also be either that a particular ritual must be performed, or that somebody is bewitching the family. Many Zulu families consistently turn to traditional healers to enquire about the cause of the family misfortunes. Traditional healers are obdurately believed to possess

supernatural powers to profess or foretell and reveal something that is hidden. That is why MaZondi suggests to Nguzunga that he should consult a faith-healer to find out what happened to their son. But there are two sides to this prognostication: Some traditional healers claim to possess supernatural powers because they wish to make money, offering false information and there are others who reveal problems, advising how to solve them. However, the stress, anxiety and curiosity engulfing a person who goes to a traditional healer normally leads that person to accept whatever he or she is told by the traditional healer.

Wollstonecraft (1792) comments that society is to blame for female oppression and that weakness in women has come to be regarded as natural. It is therefore no surprise when Nguzunga, *Ngizyazisa Ngomtanami*, scolds his wife, saying that women are the weaker sex and are not capable of keeping secrets. He even says that there are issues that may only be discussed by men and not shared with women because they (women) are not strong enough to keep sensitive matters to themselves. Wollstonecraft (1792:73) in her examination of the ‘naturalness’ of women’s inequality, asserts that:

It is a social construction to shore up the position of the privileged liberal-individualistic male. Either ... nature has made a great difference between men and women, or the civilization that has hitherto taken place in the world has been very partial.... [W]omen in particular, are rendered weak and wretched by a variety of concurring causes amongst which are inadequate parenting, bad education, the lack of property rights and exclusion from the political sphere.

De Beauvoir (1949:95) says: “one is not born a woman but rather becomes a woman”, arguing from the premise that there is no natural reason for women to be regarded, or to regard themselves, as inferior to men in society – that when in almost every known society women are seen as lesser beings, this is not a function of nature, but a mode of thought in which man is taken as the norm and ideal and a woman is his defining ‘other’, the being who validates his importance because of her differences from him. This kind of thinking, she contends, must be understood as a habit, rather than as a fact of life. De Beauvoir (1949:124) suggests that:

It is more difficult for women to analyze their own situations because they are dispersed through society and they therefore have very little sense of themselves as an alienated, oppressed group. Women are not oppressed into a geographical ghetto that makes their oppression visible. Their situation makes it more difficult to recognize the terms of their oppression since they are without a strong sense of either individualistic or collective subjectivity.

The above quotation calls for a unified struggle against the oppression of women and making invisible woman visible. It is clear that it is not only women who must fight this problem alone, men must also be involved to free society from patriarchal domination. Only through collective effort can women achieve their emancipation from male domination.

This is what happens to Nguzunga later in the play when his wife asks him what he suspects may have happened to their son, and he responds dismissively, saying:

*Akundaba yakho leyo. Mhlawumbe sewakhohlwa wena ukuthi kukhona ezifanele amadlebe ebandla kuphela, ezingahambe zikhefuzwa nje kubantu besibhuda abakhahlelwa yihashi esifubeni (p. 63).*

‘That is none of your business. Maybe you have forgotten that there are issues meant for an elite few, a group of men only, that cannot be brought to the attention of women whose penchant is telling all to any that will listen’.

The portrayal of MaZondi in the play reinforces patriarchal ideology. MaZondi is evinced as a good woman because of her compliance with patriarchal gendered roles.

From a radical feminist point of view, these feminine virtues are undermined because they prevent women from performing wider and more challenging roles. Feminist critics such as Miller (1986:7) argue against these virtues, insisting that:

...when subordinates show the potential for, or even more dangerously have developed other characteristics...there is usually no room available within the dominant framework for acknowledgement of these characteristics. Such people will be defined as at least unusual, if not definitely not abnormal. There will be no opportunities for the direct application of their abilities within the social arrangements.

The above statement concurs with the commitment of changing the status quo of women if societies are to realize their (women) meaningful contribution. This involves changing the mindset of both men and women in societies. Schapera (1933:92) maintains that:

The wife is always legally dependent upon her husband. She cannot as a rule resort to the tribal courts except through him as her representative, and if she does wrong or falls into debt, he is liable for any payment that must be made. She cannot bind herself to any contracts without his approval, she must live wherever he chooses to build his home and she must obey all his commands.

The patriarchal nature of the Zulu society becomes clear in this quotation. With the rule of the father, the woman is subjected to various cultural obligations imposed upon her through male domination. Against this background of patriarchal nature, every woman in the Zulu society is supposed to find a man who will take care of her. In the dialogue between MaThango and Themba, MaThango reveals the truth about her relationship and how she seized the opportunity of being married by Jakobe through unconventional means. She says:

*Ngamthola kahle nje! Kangiyona neze inyumba mina. Into nje uyise kwakuwumkhuhlane nje wendoda. Ngangingabe ngiyahlanya ngike ngavuma ukuba angishade. Akuphelanga nanyangana ngimalile, qhamukiyane uNdima. Usomabhizinisi dade! Ngangingabe ngizibambezele ngike ngachaza ukuthi sengiyigqashulamlenze. Ngamane ngazenza leli tshitshi elisabuza kunina ukuthi kuzophekwani. Akangishadanga enani? Buka ngoba ngempela uthando aluboni. Kwakwala noma engifice ngimqokisa umntanami uSiphiwe, wayevele akholwe uma ngithi yingane yomzala wami eyacelelwa ukuba izohlala nami... (p. 68-69).*

‘I gave birth to my child quite well! I am not a barren woman at all. It is just that her father was a weak man. I would have been crazy to let him marry me. It was hardly a month after dumping him that Ndima appeared. A businessman for that matter! I would have been delaying myself had I told him I am no longer a virgin. I just put up the show of being this naïve teenager who still asks mom what has to be cooked. Lo and behold....didn’t he marry me?’ Look, love is blind, really. Even if he would arrive when I was clothing my child, Siphiwe, he would believe me when I told him that this is my cousin’s child who was under my care...’

MaThango chose financial security for herself and her child over love. She did not get married to the father of her child because he was poor, and she also had to lie to her husband that the child was not hers so that he could marry her. The above quotation shows that in patriarchal societies, an unmarried woman (*sengiyigqashulamlenze*) who has a child before marriage has lesser chances of getting married, especially if she is getting married for the first time, hence the lies by MaThango to her husband. The word ‘*igqashulamlenze*’ is very degrading and makes a woman feel small. On the contrary, a man who has made babies with different women does not have the stigma.

The play subtly criticizes the patriarchal domination of men over their womenfolk. It constitutes a clarion call for change, especially on the question of a woman’s voice within the household. Msimang exposes these attitudes with irony and detachment, revealing how flawed they are in a time of profound transformation. Their inadequacy

is made clear at the very end of the play when Nguzunga admits that MaZondi had been right all along, and should have been listened to. Great strides have been made in trying to change the status quo of women in patriarchal societies, however, complete equality has not yet been achieved. Furthermore, abuse of women and children has become a national tragedy. Changing this mindset also calls for a change in attitude towards various traditional customs that have for a long time oppressed women.

Many feminists believe that women usually show expressive character traits towards their men which are perceived as feminine. These include warmth, sensitivity to the needs of others and the ability to express tender feelings. Relative to women, men have been perceived as lacking in these characteristics. Today, although attitudes about gender-related traits are changing to some extent, these cultural beliefs still exist in many patriarchal societies. In the dialogue, MaZondi tries to show these feminine traits towards her husbands. MaZondi says:

*Udaba oluthinta umtanami alusazifanele muva nje izindlebe zami? Kunokuxoxela unina kaBhekuzalo uqoma ukuxoxela amadoda angazange amzale? (p. 63).*

‘Lately, issues relating to my child should not be heard by me? Instead of telling Bhekuzalo’s mother you chose to tell men who never gave birth to him?’

Nguzunga’s response shocks MaZondi that her husband prefers to share his secrets and thoughts with other men other than her. This is a sensitive issue, which needs her opinion as well, as she is the mother of the child, but Nguzunga does not see it that way.

There is no reasonable justification for the notion that women are naturally incapable of keeping a secret, which has been used to justify the exclusion of women from participating in many aspects of life. Strobel (1991:102) believes that:

Sexual differences are a fact of biology, but the particular significance societies attach to sexual differences is a human cultural creation. These differences in value and behaviour assigned to men and women are embodied in gender roles. Thus, gender is a social construct, while sex is a biological condition. Various ideas, values, and beliefs about women and men are expressed through an ideology, that is, a coherent set of values and beliefs held by members of a particular society.

Nguzunga prefers to ask for advice from other men rather than consult his wife regarding their son. His actions show disrespect and a lack of trust in his wife. Such

behaviour is common in patriarchal societies because a woman's advice and intellect is never considered worthwhile, as she is regarded as a social minor. Nguzunga is trying to use the patriarchal stereotype as a ploy to discourage his wife from asking further questions. Msimang is trying to show here that there are still men such as Nguzunga who prefer to discuss their family issues with other men rather than sharing personal problems with their wives.

O'Barr (1976:191) raises the point that:

The position of women in indigenous societies intrigued Western observers, primarily travellers, traders, and missionaries, who first journeyed to Africa in the nineteenth century. Sometimes they noted the independence of African women. Other times they stressed their abject state of dependence. They talked about how hard women worked in the fields and contrasted their work with the apparent laziness of men. They marveled at the ability of African women to maintain households and to raise children while appearing to lack sufficient material resources. Above all, whether they thought African women were tyrants or chattels or something in between, they registered alarm that women tended to inhabit their own worlds of work, family and friendship with little regard for men.

As has been mentioned earlier, the role and contribution made by women in the household is never given enough recognition as it should be in Zulu literary texts. This is the stereotype that is prevalent in many Zulu literary texts either written by males or females. From the above quotation, one can see that although women had little or no resources to sustain the household, but they were able to make ends meet with little or no help from their husbands.

Nguzunga's wife is infuriated when her husband keeps evading her anxious questions. Nguzunga finally reveals his suspicions about what may have happened to their son:

*Sengizwile, kodwa lokhu kuseyisifuba sami. Mina ngicabanga ukuthi uthwale ngaye umtanami* (p. 63).

'I have heard, but this is still my secret. I have a feeling he killed my child for ritual sacrifice medicine'.

A few moments earlier, Nguzunga had been swearing that he would not share his secret with a woman- women being incapable of keeping a secret. It is therefore paradoxical that he is the one letting out the secret to his wife with little persuasion. Nguzunga is personally shattering social stereotypes that he and many like him live by, in order to

portray women as a weaker species that cannot be entrusted with responsibility and authority. Moments earlier Nguzunga had said that he prefers to discuss Bhekuzalo's disappearance with other men because women cannot keep a secret, but is the same Nguzunga now who changes his tune and let the cat out of the bag to his wife. Later in the conversation between Nguzunga and MaZondi, Nguzunga complains bitterly about the man (his brother) whom he suspects of having 'duplicated' (*ukuthwebula*) his son:

*Ngamtshela mina ukuthi le nto yezifundiswa yokuphekisa abafana kangizwani neze nayo, angifuni neze uBhekuzalo enziwe inina (p. 63).*

'I told him that am totally against these educated people's ways of turning boys into sissies that cook, and I do not want Bhekuzalo to be turned into one at all'.

Nguzunga makes it clear that he is against boys cooking, as that turns them into weak men or 'sissies'. A 'sissy' is associated with characteristics such as dependence, weakness and cowardice, which are stereotypically associated with women. The above statement is gender biased, implying that a man does not belong in the kitchen. These, according to Nguzunga, are not desirable characteristics for men. Nguzunga's utterances demonstrate the patriarchal stereotype that only women, definitely not boys or men, should perform kitchen chores.

#### **4.3.2 Marriage and procreation in Zulu society**

Marriage plays an important role in Zulu society. In Zulu society, like many other patriarchal societies, women serve only the purpose of procreation. This is confirmed by Kuper (1987:241) who comments that:

To understand African marriage we must think of it not as an event or a condition but as a developing process. The first step is usually a formal betrothal (contract between the two families). A most important stage in the development of the marriage is the birth of the first child. It is through children that the husband and wife are united and the two families are also united by having descendants in common.

A woman in a patriarchal society, whose chores are mainly to work in the fields and to look after the children, has been substituted by a new breed of competent women capable of making a fair contribution towards the accumulation of family wealth and even towards community development. Sibiyi (1990:3) argues that:

This new breed will be found among women who are making inroads and advances in various professions, careers, and the business world. They are often referred to as aggressive and at times outstanding because of their ventures.

However, Ngcangca (1987:5) believes that marriage enhances the status of both men and women in the community. It gives them a measure of respect. When a wife gives birth to her first child, she enters motherhood, as she is considered to have fulfilled the main purpose of marriage. If the couple does not produce children, the blame is usually placed on the woman. A man is looked upon as dominant in marriage and has no shortcomings. Ngcangca (1987:7) goes on to say that childbearing not only enhances the status of a woman in marriage but also secures it. Ngcangca's (1987) assertion proves that societies who follow this tradition are still under the influence of patriarchy.

Krige (1977:61) remarks that:

The birth of a child marks a further stage in the lives of its parents. No marriage was considered complete before a child was born. To a woman who was childless, it was the greatest of all misfortunes; for not only will she be taunted and giped at by her fortunate sisters; but she may even be divorced on that account.

In patriarchal societies, inheritance passes to a male child. MaThango, for instance, believes that Bhekuzalo, since he is a boy, will inherit her husband's wealth, which is why she has planned to kill him. MaThango confesses:

*Okungidina du wukuthi lo mntwana uzele ukuzodla ifa. Ngikhohliswa ngokuthi ngilethelwe ingane engizoyithuma (p.68).*

'What pisses me off is that this child was brought here to claim the inheritance. I am fooled by being told that I have been brought a child that can help me around the house'.

MaThango's suspicion proves to be true when her husband reveals that he has signed the papers with the lawyers for Bhekuzalo to inherit his wealth when he dies. This is revealed after Bhekuzalo's disappearance when Jakobe says:

*Okubhulungu nje wukuba anyamalale ngiqeda nje ukumbhalisa kummeli wami njengendlalifa yami. Ngaphandle nje kokumkhonza, bekuyindlela yokubuyisela umfowethu uNguzunga ngoba phela njengenkosana ngathatha lonke ifa labazali bethu ngamshiya encela izithupha. Bese ngithi ngiyomesula izinyembezi ngokuba indodana yakhe nayo ithathe konke okuyifa lami (p.70).*

'The unfortunate thing is that he disappeared immediately after enlisting him as the only beneficiary in my will with my lawyer. Apart from having a soft spot



for him, it was my way of giving back to Nguzunga as I had inherited everything from our parents as the eldest son and left him destitute. I was trying to appease him by leaving to his son all I possessed’.

In the dialogue between MaThango and Thembi, Thembi asks her about the child:

*Hhayi mngani! Kanti nawe wake womgona umntwana?* (p. 68).  
‘Hey, friend! You also once gave birth to a child?’

MaThango responds by confirming that she indeed has a child whom she kept as a secret from her husband. She even reveals that the father of the child was a useless person and she would not have missed the opportunity of marrying a businessman of Jakobe’s calibre.

Socialist feminist such as Spender (1980:55), believe that motherhood is the only legitimate aspiration for women in a patriarchal society. The family is the key institution through which male domination over women is secured by male control of women’s sexuality and procreative powers. For this reason MaThango is anxious about the issue of inheritance in her house. Her problems are compounded because of her failure to bear a son for her husband. Socialist feminists would interpret MaThango’s actions as indicative of what marriage means to young women. MaThango abandons her child because she fears that she would not have been married had she told her ‘husband-to-be’, at the time, the truth about having a child by a previous boyfriend.

According to Krige (1977:61), the most important thing a wife can do is to bear a child for her husband:

The first child is especially important, for no marriage is considered complete before a child has been born.

While socialist feminists acknowledge that there are natural differences between men and women (pregnancy, menstruation, etc.), they argue that women’s natural creative power should not be used against them. They also believe that childbearing should not necessarily be regarded as an ultimate goal for women. Socialist feminists maintain that patriarchal control over women’s procreative powers removes control of motherhood from women themselves and denies the fulfilment that the experience brings them. Motherhood should be removed from patriarchal control in order for its potential to be realized (Ashton, 1980:14). Radical feminists, on the other hand, believe that motherhood is one of the root causes of women oppression. They believe that women

should be the only ones who control their sexuality and not men. The Zulu society has to follow suit in order to afford total liberation of women without any restrictions or societal expectations based on their sexuality.

#### **4.3.3 Female degradation and abuse (in Zulu tradition) in *Ngiyazisa Ngomtanami***

Female degradation and abuse are clearly defined in this play. One may also argue that ironically Nguzunga's patriarchal behaviour shows his short-sightedness in taking advice from his wife. In Nguzunga's patriarchal frame of mind, his wife is an instrument for procreation and not a person in her own right. The importance of procreation is documented in the words of Schapera (as cited in Preston-Whyte, 1978:71) that:

All married people were said to want children, and a wife was expected to bear as many as she could, provided only that she did not become pregnant while still suckling an infant. A young bride when taken to her husband's home on the first afternoon of the wedding ceremonies was given a young baby to hold as she entered his hut. This rite was performed so that she too must get a child.

Childlessness is therefore a great affliction for a married woman and her own people. It means that she cannot form a uterine grouping (*kwethu*- a "house") which constitutes an economic unit and assures her comfort in old age when her daughter-in-law takes care of her. Bearing children assures her of the perpetuation of her house and status in her new-found home, and ensures her continuation as an ancestress in the life thereafter (Ngubane, in Krige, (1977:82). Unfortunately, Nguzunga's wife cannot bear children.

Kuper's observation (1987) is interesting when it comes to marriage and bearing children under the Zulu social system. Kuper (1987:258) emphasizes the significance of bearing a child when a woman is married:

In some tribes of South Africa, such as the Zulu, if a woman proves to be barren, her kin will provide a sister to bear children who will be counted as children of the barren wife. In sororal polygyny, a man, having married an older sister, also marries her younger sister...The Zulus approve of marriage with the wife's younger sister which reinforces the relationships established by the first marriage, and which, if sisters behave in a 'sisterly' way, increases the solidarity of the family group.

Whether the older or younger sister joins her to bear children or not, barrenness stays on as label.

Naming carries a special or particular meaning in the Zulu tradition. The name Bhekuzalo, serves as testimony to this. Bhekuzalo, loosely translated, means ‘looking after the family’. It is believed that when a child is given a name, such as, Bhekuzalo, that a child will live up to his or her name and fulfils the parent’s ambitions. One may therefore conclude that Bhekuzalo was his parent’s only hope of looking after them when they grew old. This is usually applicable to male children in particular because they are the ones who continue the lineage when the father dies. For this reason, inheritance is reserved for the male child. The author probably uses the naming technique here because Bhekuzalo is a male child and the only one to look after his family. It is therefore not surprising for both Nguzunga and his wife to be very concerned about the disappearance of their only son. This naming technique does not only apply to human beings in the African tradition. Naming a pet, for example, whether a dog or a cow, has special significance in the African tradition, particularly in the Zulu traditional system.

There is an interesting irony towards the end of the play when Nguzunga’s long-held belief about his brother, Jakobe, is proved to be untrue. Nguzunga goes to the traditional healer to enquire about his son’s disappearance. The traditional healer tells him that his son had been sacrificed so that his brother can strengthen his business. When the truth is revealed that his son has been severely beaten by Jakobe’s wife and taken to hospital for treatment, Nguzunga admits that his wife had been correct all along, cursing himself for not listening to her in the first place. Nguzunga also realizes that his belief in traditional healers is wrong and his patriarchal ideology questionable:

*Kanti ubeginisile uMaZondi. Uthe azisekho izangoma ezisakwazi ukubhula iqiniso lapha eNdwedwe (p. 76).*

‘MaZondi was so right! She did say there are no longer any true diviners in this Ndwedwe region’.

Mathonsi (2006:44) apprises that “women’s roles are transforming and they are no longer confined to the house or the kitchen. Women are now claiming space and roles in society”. Nguzunga’s short-sightedness and patriarchal stereotype is exposed here. The truth of his foolish obstinacy dawns on him once the damage has already been done. Stereotypical men such as Nguzunga often overrate their thinking intellect and abilities, refusing to take advice from a woman, let alone from a wife. Men like him

believe that a woman's mind is on a par with that of a child's. MaZondi in this case represents the emerging stirrings of powerful women's movements that challenge the established male-dominated system.

Barthes (1968) believes that the 'multiplicity' of meanings which make up the text are focused on the reader and not on the author. He argues that the unity of the text lies not in its origin but in its destination. The author's role in the text is that it functions or serves an ideological purpose. Authors are commonly represented as being at the source of creative talent, genius, and imagination. However, they reflect the attitudes and perceptions of a given culture. Msimang tries to capture these attitudes and assumptions by showing how her characters feel, act and react when faced by problems or conflicts. Msimang aims at undermining the prejudices against women and to encourage courageous social change.

Msimang's characterization of Nguzunga is testimony to the notion that some authors of Zulu literary texts reveal the patriarchal nature of some men in the Zulu patriarchal system as authoritative, tyrannical and self-centred, that they trust their judgment no matter what the feelings and opinions of their wives may be. Conversely, Msimang portrays Nguzunga gradually transforming from being negative and stereotypical towards his wife once he realizes and acknowledges his mistake. The only positive thing is that MaZondi emerges as a heroine. This is the kind of positive contribution by women in Zulu literature that should be encouraged. Msimang wants readers to see Nguzunga as a self-centred traditional Zulu man, in the end. Nguzunga, however, comes back to apologize to his wife. From a feminist point of view, Msimang's play reveals a transformed character in Nguzunga, showing that men can change, repudiating the patriarchal stereotype. In his study, Mtuze (1990) compares stereotypes used by male authors on the one hand, and female stereotypes as used by female authors, on the other. Mtuze's (1990) observation is that stereotyping is a universal phenomenon and is prevalent in all race groups, affecting women in all parts of the world.

Spender (1980) argues that women have been fundamentally oppressed by a male-dominated language. She maintains that if we accept Foucault's (1988) contention that what is 'true' depends on who controls the discourse, then it is apparent that men's domination of discourse has trapped women inside the male 'truth'. This is evident in

some Zulu literary texts, especially with regard to female characters, in which authors portray women as if they have internalized and acculturated men's domination over them, accepting it as normal. Foucault's (1988: 310) concept of 'self-decentring agency' suggests that:

One did not suggest what people ought to be, what they ought to do, what they ought to think and believe. It was a matter of showing how social mechanisms up to now have been able to work...and then, starting from there, one left to the people themselves, knowing all the above, the possibility of self-determination and the choice of their own existence.

Caldwell (2007:1) believes that Foucault's (1988) ideas have led to a rejection of structure dichotomies and a move towards process-based ontologies of 'organizing or changing' that which creates new problematics of agency as discourse, talk, text or conversation. Caldwell (2007:1) maintains that:

Redefined within Foucauldian organizational discourses, decentred agency can lead to new possibilities for the exploration of agency as discourse and the broader dispersal of agency in organizations. It can therefore be concluded that Foucault's concept of change fails as a theorization of change: it breaks the link between the voluntary choice and desire to act otherwise' and the moral, political and practical possibilities of 'making a difference.

The portrayal and the perception of the conditions of women in some Zulu literature are fraught with contradictions, tensions and oppositions. It may well be that these arise from the colonial domination of Africa, in which other societies still cling to unchanged organizational structures and the patriarchal system. On this point La Pin (1977:143) asserts that:

An assessment of the African woman's experience through literature is complicated further when treatment of 'isms' undergoes the scrutiny of critical interpretation. Processed through structuralism, post-modernism, or one or another mode of feminism, each of literature fosters interplay between real life experience, creation, and interpretation. Here is a shifting ideological ground that gives rise to searching questions about the condition of women in African society and women's relationship to literary art.

A rigorous feminist approach to women in Zulu literature would therefore reveal numerous examples of excesses in structures and situations that deny women equality. La Pin (1977:143) continues:

Consider the most recurrent of these questions: How does the experience of African women differ from that of men? What is uniquely African about African women's literature? When can the portrayal of the African female experience be considered an expression of feminism? The interrogation serves up a range of answers.

Numerous negative stereotypes and misconceptions about women were created during the colonial period, and continue to be perpetuated. According to Achebe (1958:150), "the personality and inner reality of African women have been hidden under generalizations and patent untruths". So for Achebe (1958), perhaps the best representative of the male writer of African literary texts is the man's experience, colonial domination and the struggles of the African man, personal and political, within the traditional and contemporary situation.

Too often, authors have overlooked the role female characters play in certain Zulu literary texts. Some authors do this in an effort to counter the accusation that describing strong women would help to support the matriarchal theory that says that Black females castrate their men, or the notion that Black males are dysfunctionally weak. Qunta (1987:13) holds that:

Women cannot afford to leave their fate in the hands of males since the male-dominated system has provided men with a status that allows them to abuse women. African women must speak for themselves. They should decide for themselves who they are, where they are going, what obstacles face them and how to remove them.

The above quotation suggests that women themselves must take an active role in fighting for their freedom and independence. This emancipation from male domination and patriarchal stereotype should spread across all aspects of human life, as womanism advocates. In other words, women must be in the forefront in this process and not let the male sex decide their (women) fate.

Literature reflects social conflicts, and family conflicts are naturally at its centre. Traditional perceptions dominate the minds and actions of characters, but the way they are reflected in fiction demonstrates the author's social commitment and engagement in relation to change. In this play, *Ngizisa Ngomtanami*, Msimang is trying to demonstrate the need for change by revealing the weakness of the patriarchal system and exposing its shortcomings.

In the play, MaZondi represents women who are striving to change in order to save their husband's self-esteem, while she simultaneously challenges the notion that women lack adequate critical skills with men claiming that women are weak and cannot engage in meaningful conversations. These are just some of the negative connotations that have been applied to certain female characters in Zulu literary texts. This is mainly evidenced by the language used by Nguzunga when his wife tries to advise him, which reflects the patriarchal stereotype that is prevalent in some Zulu literary texts. It is disturbing, though, that after the many strides that women have made in the direction of changing the existing order of the patriarchal system, this progress has largely been ignored in most Zulu literary texts.

Spender (1980) believes that men's use of language oppresses women in patriarchal societies. This, in many instances, has been evident in Zulu literary texts. It therefore makes sense that feminists and literary critics argue for the creation of a separate, feminine discourse addressing women's issues when it comes to their portrayal in literary texts. Lakoff (1980) offers a contrasting view to Spender's (1980) on the issue of women's language. Lakoff (1980) believes that women's language is actually inferior, since it focuses on the 'trivial' the 'frivolous', the 'unserious', and stresses personal, emotional responses. Male utterances, she argues, are 'stronger' and should be accepted by women if they wish to achieve social equality with men. I disagree with Lakoff (1980) because the issue of sex does not come into play in speech. Language cannot be characterized by sex, therefore there is no language designated as either male or female.

Many families in Zulu societies have suffered tremendously under the burden of the patriarchal system. This suffering is also brought about by misconceptions that came with colonialism, as has been highlighted in the earlier discussion. Frank (1982:492) offers a rather different view on this point:

Some observers suggest that linking a feminist perspective and African literature is illogical because of 'an irremediable antagonism between the African woman's identity as an African and as a woman, or because female characters are enclosed in the ...stereotypes of a male tradition, their human potential buried in shallow definitions of their sex.

Spender (1980:51) challenges the patriarchal stereotypes that have dominated African societies for many centuries. She believes that this situation has long been created by men to maintain the prevailing social order – their domination over women. Spender (1980:62) maintains that:

While for men, every appointment of a man as head, as director, as warden, as official, may ‘prove’ men are the best candidates, for women this constitutes proof that men have set up the system so that it works in the interests of men.

Davies & Graves (1986:75) affirm this when they say:

The feminine protagonist throughout the Zulu literary texts presents certain homogeneity of character which can be attributed to a basic similarity in the man’s view of the woman...Through the role of the woman, the writer may be re-examining man’s role in his changing society. Consequently, the heroine often has a didactic function that deters her from psychological developments.

Many feminists believe that some female and male authors tend to create a woman’s point of view in which female characters exist in their own right, and not as mere appendages of a male world. Some female and male authors tend to explore alternative possibilities for self-actualization outside sexual roles that are open to their women characters. Fuss (1989: xi) points out that:

Essentialism is most commonly understood as a belief in the real, true essence of things, the invariable and fixed properties which define the “whatness” of a given entity. In feminist theory, the idea that men and women, for example, are identified as such on the basis of trans-historical, eternal, immutable essences has been unequivocally rejected by many anti-essentialist post-structuralist feminists concerned with resisting any attempts to naturalize human nature.

Davies & Graves (1986) argue that African literature has up to now largely misrepresented African women and their contribution to social and political development. It is important that there be full recognition in literature of a woman’s position in every sphere of society, and of a woman’s contribution to the development of the family and the country. Davies & Graves (1986) state that:

The nostalgic songs dedicated to African mothers that express the anxieties of men concerning mother Africa are no longer enough for us. The Black woman in Zulu literature must be given the dimension that her role in the liberation struggle next to men has proven to be hers; the dimension coincides with her proven contribution to the economic development of our country.



Critical attention must be given to the absence of a feminine perspective or the stunted characterization of women in some Zulu literature. Sossou (2002:208) believes that the subordination of women must be fought on all fronts.

#### **4.4 Summary of the chapter**

The chapter has demonstrated, through Nguzunga in Msimang's *Ngizazisa Ngomtanami*, the deficiencies and contradictions of the patriarchal system from a feminist discourse perspective. In the end, Nguzunga is portrayed as a transformed man who reveals these flaws and failures when he viewed from a feminist discourse perspective. Msimang depicts MaZondi as someone longing to be acknowledged for her intellect and contribution to family affairs and not just a mere appendage to her husband. When Nguzunga is arrested for attacking his brother, Jakobe. Nguzunga acknowledges his patriarchal bias resulting in lack of trust in MaZondi. By acknowledging that MaZondi had been right all along, and should have been listened to, gestures towards a change of mind-set at both personal and societal level. The next chapter critiques the novel *Ifa Lenkululeko* and also challenges Zulu gender identities which pits women against men.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### 5. LIFE AFTER THEMBA: WIDOWHOOD IN THE NOVEL *IFA LENKULULEKO*, (1990), 'Inheritance for freedom', by A.B. Shange

#### 5.1 Introduction

This chapter explores some of the problems which arise when a widow tries to live her independent life while at the same time having to deal with her in-laws' expectations. The chapter analyses the conflicts which sometimes arise between a widow and her in-laws who expect her to conform to certain cultural practices. It also examines, amongst other things, the problems which manifest themselves in this novel when analyzed from a feminist perspective. In the novel, *Ifa Lenkululeko*, the in-laws wish to lay claim to Daisy's inheritance while Daisy is fighting for freedom and independence.

#### 5.2 Synopsis of the novel, *Ifa Lenkululeko*

The novel revolves around the main character, Daisy, who has just lost her husband, Themba. After losing her husband, her in-laws expect her to reside with them while mourning her husband's death. In addition, she has to perform a cleansing ritual as well as share with her in-laws the inheritance left to her by her husband. Daisy is opposed to all these demands, and that triggers conflict between the characters. Daisy's reasons are that she cannot remain with her in-laws because she and her husband had built a house in KwaMashu. She also argues that she cannot mourn her husband's death or conduct any ritual, because this is against her religious beliefs. After numerous attempts by her in-laws to persuade her to change her mind, the conflict ends in court. The Dlamini family loses the court battle because it becomes clear that Themba had not included them in his will.

Daisy works at the bank as a teller. After winning the court battle against her in-laws, Daisy thinks that she is on her way to happiness. Unfortunately, this is not the case. While she is at her workplace, a man approaches her and proposes that they start a relationship. This man is familiar with Daisy because she has seen him in the past, coming to deposit large sums of money at the bank where Daisy works. Daisy falls in love with this man, Buthelezi, after a few days of dating. As Daisy has just received her

pay-out from the will, she is determined to start her own business. Hearing Daisy's plans, Buthelezi offers to help her. Buthelezi robs Daisy of all her inheritance and uses it to revive his supermarket which is on the verge of closing down as a result of insolvency. Daisy loses her boyfriend as well as the money and is left to lick her wounds after the disappointment. She now has to start afresh because Buthelezi had made her sign a fake contract for the transaction in which she hands her inheritance to him.

Daisy loses her inheritance because of the silly decisions that she makes. She suffers and loses all her inheritance because, in a patriarchal society, a young widow suffers when she disrespects the established traditions and societal norms. Instead of the author portraying Daisy as the woman fighting for independence, who must take care of her own life without the interference of her in-laws, the author portrays her as a social minor, who suffers the consequences of not following tradition.

### **5.3 Widowhood and rituals questioned in the novel *Ifa Lenkululeko***

In patriarchal societies, widows are marginalized and discriminated against when it comes to property ownership. This is true in many parts of Africa. Owen (2011:618) confirms that when he says: "widows across a wide spectrum of cultures and religions are often among the very poorest of the poor, due to discrimination they experience in the inheritance, land and property rights". There is enough supporting evidence to show that some widowhood rites, with their 'perceived benefits', have certain negative effects. The humiliation and pain that is caused by these rites to many African widows far outweigh the 'benefits'. The above assertion holds true, for *Ifa Lenkululeko*. The claim by Daisy's in-laws of sharing her husband's inheritance bears testimony to this. According to them, Daisy has no right of ownership to their son's money.

Widowhood has many unsavoury and negative attitudes attached to it. The isolation of a widow, for instance, instils a feeling of imprisonment, especially when she is shunned by her community in the name of cultural beliefs associated with widowhood (Manyedi, M. E., Koen, M. P. & Greef, M. 2003). Rosenbatt & Nkosi (2007:78) point out that "during the sitting, a widow cannot leave, except to go to the bathroom. She cannot even stand..." In the case of Batswana people, for instance, the widow must not even cook for herself because of the fear of bad luck (ibid, 2003:78). Whilst this could be helpful to some in providing a feeling of safety, it removes the widow's freedom of

association and her right to community belonging. These are the prejudices and negative attitudes associated with the African traditional widowhood rites and practices. These rites appear to be one-sided, gender-based, and discriminatory, because a widower is not subjected to the same practices. Such discriminatory rites and practices are clearly based on sex and need to be uprooted as the quotation below confirms. Billington in Kramarae & Treichler, (1985:158), argues that a movement called feminism seeking the reorganisation of the world upon the basis of sex-equality in all human relations would reject every differentiation between individuals upon the grounds of sex; “would abolish all sex privileges and burdens; would strive to set up the recognition of the common humanity of women, and men as the foundation of law and custom”.

Many widows perform these prescribed traditional rites not by choice and out of fear, but by force. Many practice them because they are obliged to do so, not because they are happy to perform them. Widows usually accept these mourning rites imposed on them because non-compliance is viewed as disrespectful towards their deceased husbands, their in-laws, and the community. The fact that they are regarded as carriers and transmitters of bad luck and defilement detrimental to the community, compels them to comply unquestioningly with these rites and practices, however painful and distressing they may be.

Daisy is eager to open a business after receiving the pay-out of her inheritance. She sees herself owning everything that she can ever think of: expensive cars, an expensive lifestyle, and so much more. She is grateful to her husband that he has left her with a great deal of money, without her in-laws involved in the will. The author seems to suggest that Daisy’s tragedy later in the novel (losing money) is a result of her being disrespectful towards her in-laws. As has been said earlier, Daisy does mourn the husband’s death, but not according to cultural dictates that expect her to share her inheritance with her in-laws. The author says:

*Umyeni wakhe kwakusaphela amasonto amabili engcwatshiwe. Wayesebuyele naye emsebenzini ebhange lapho ayesebenza khona njengomamukeli wemali. Nokho wawungeke usho ukuthi uDaisy ngumfelokazi owayefelwe zolo lokhu uma uhlangana naye. Izingubo ezimnyama wayengazifakile. Wayethe lapho esengcwatshiwe umyeni wakhe, wala waphetha kwabakwa Dlamini kubo womyeni wakhe uma bethi akafake inzilo. Wathi akasiboni isidingo salokho (p. 1).*

‘It was two weeks after the burial of her husband; she had gone back to her job as a cashier in a bank. However, one could not fathom on meeting Daisy that she was a fresh widow. She did not don any mourning outfit; after the burial of her husband, she had refused point blank to the Dlamini family to wear any of such, stating she saw no need thereof’.

From a traditionalist point of view, one can see from the above quotation (the author stresses) that a widow may only be recognized when she is wearing *inzilo* (mourning dress), but from a feminist point of view, this is a patriarchal imposition to mark the woman as the “mourner”. Any other behaviour or action by a widow that does not conform to the set norms or standards of the society is considered untoward and disrespectful. Dlamini raises concerns about Daisy’s behaviour, which he regards as disrespectful. He is determined to know why she is not mourning her husband’s death:

*...ukuchaza nje kwaphela, usitshela ukuthi yini indaba ungazilile, sithi siphuma lapha sibe sazi, noma-ke singahlangene nayo yonke indlela ophila ngayo nozobe uphila ngayo ngomuso. Leyo ncazelo nje kuphela* (p. 6).

‘...just to explain only, and tell us why you are not mourning so that we know when we leave here, although we are not concerned about your lifestyle and your future lifestyle. We only need that explanation’.

Because of deviant and defiant behaviour by Daisy is scorned by the patriarchal society. It is therefore not surprising that Daisy bears the brunt of not being accepted, and is regarded as an outcast by society because of her defiant behaviour. The Dlamini believe that their daughter-in-law still belongs to them, even though her husband has passed on. For this reason they place a list of demands on her. According to them, she is married to the family, not only to her husband, therefore she must toe the line. When Dlamini is talking to his friend Jili, Dlamini voices his dissatisfaction about Daisy’s behaviour in refusing to play by their rules. Dlamini says:

*Lutho, lutho-ke mfowethu, akukho busonto kule nto yale ntombazane, buza mina engazi kahle hle. Yebo khona emndenini wakubo KwaMakhutha bakhonza lapho inzilo ichithwa khona, bethi asikho isidingo sayo, lokho ngiyakwazi, kodwa lokhu kwale ntombazane ngokokudelela nokokweya thina bakwaDlamini. Ngingalibeka ngembaba nje elokuthi ngumhedeni. Njengoba ngangikutshelile ekuqaleni, besithi-ke thina izozila, njengokwesiko lethu thina bantu, lokhu esikusho-ke namhlanje kuyinto engingenakuyimela. Inhloso nje yalokhu kungazili ukuthi itamase izwe lonke leli* (p. 13-14).

‘Hell no, brother! There is nothing Christian in any of this girl’s actions, ask from me who has seen it all! True, in her family at KwaMakhutha, the church they go to does not believe in *inzilo* (mourning dress), they say there is no need for it, and I know that. This is just sheer disrespect of our Dlamini family. I can

state it categorically that this is sheer paganism! Like I told you before, we expected her to mourn in accordance with our culture. I cannot tolerate what this woman is saying today. The only reason for refusing to mourn is that she wants to do as she pleases’.

According to the Zulu societal customs and norms, it is unusual for a widow to be seen anywhere before her mourning period is over. It is believed that a widow who disregards this norm causes droughts, thunderstorms, and poor harvests in the community. It is also taboo for a widow to exchange items or shake hands with other people as this may bring them misfortune and bad luck. A widow is also forbidden from having sexual intercourse with any man before she is ‘purified’ as this may cause him serious illnesses or even death. Preferably, in a patriarchal society, a ‘good widow’ must adopt a shy and demure demeanour, and always remain indoors.

Ndlovu (2013: 8) citing Ilanga (November 7-8, 2011:9), says the journalist, Ndiyane, states that black mourning dress or a mourning dress of any other colour is not a Zulu mourning custom. Ndiyane explains the confusion amongst the Zulu people:

*Kuvamisile ukuzwa abamnyama uma bebuzwa ngokugqoka izingubo ezimnyama bathi kuyisiko ukwenza njalo. Bancane kakhulu abaziyo ukuthi uqhamukaphi lo mkhuba. Empeleni waqala ngowe-1861 e-England emva kokushona kwenkosana yamaNgisi uPrince Albert. Ngalowo nyaka indlovukazi yamaNgisi uQueen Victoria ibonakale isidlubhe ezimnyama, izilile. Yamemezela kwindlunkulu ukuthi izogqoka ezimnyama iminyaka emibili ukuze izenelise ukuthi izile ngokwanele. Namanye amalunga asendlunkulu ezwakalisa ukuthi nawo azongena kwezimnyama ukulekelela indlovukazi, abesilisa bona bagqiza ngendwangu emnyama emkhonweni yezingubo zabo. Kube umkhuba wabo-ke abesifazane uma beshonelwe ukuba bafake izingubo ezimnyama umzimba wonke. Naso-ke isikhathi sokuzila sibe iminyaka emibili, abesilisa bona bazila unyaka owodwa ngokufaka amabhande ezingalweni.*

‘It is often heard when Africans are asked about black mourning dress and they say it is a cultural phenomenon. There are very few people who are in a Royal Council that she was going to dress in black for two years knowledgeable of an origin of such practice. In fact, this was started in 1861 in England after the death of an eldest son of English Prince Albert. In that year, Queen Victoria was seen wearing black as a sign of mourning. She announced so as to satisfy herself that she has mourned enough. The other members of the royal family followed suit, while male members decided to wear a black strip on their sleeves. Wearing of black all over the body became a normal practice as a sign of mourning for widows. Two years became a standard period of mourning for widows and one year for widowers’.

The above quotation clearly shows that there is a great deal of uncertainty and speculation about the origin of mourning. It also demonstrates that the imbalance of treatment between widows and widowers when it comes to *ukuzila* (to mourn) is unfounded. From a feminist point of view, one may argue that such double standards result from societal norms which many societies subscribe to.

By being an outcast in society, a widow may lose her self-esteem and confidence because she may feel rejected by her in-laws, who are supposed to protect her. Familusi (2012:307) apprises that:

Widowhood is associated with many practices in traditional Africa, some of which is harmful and dehumanizing. These practices vary from culture to culture. Among the Yoruba, the duration of mourning for a widow is one year. During this period, she is to refrain from sex and she must not remarry... There is no specific mourning period for the widower. In fact, he may remarry shortly after the death of his wife because of domestic care.

This is a double blow for Daisy, who finds herself in such a situation because, while she is still in pain of losing her husband, she must also contend with the expectations of her society. Ironically, a widower is not subjected to the same treatment as a widow. These societal norms, which have to be adhered to do not take into consideration Daisy's view of widowhood, or her entrenched religious beliefs. Later in the narrative, when Dlamini and Daisy are contesting the will in court, Dlamini again voices his dissatisfaction with Daisy's behaviour. He says:

*...washo wathi akamzondi umakoti, uzonda izenzo zakhe. Wathi noma ngubani angathukuthela ebona umakoti wakwakhe engayizileli indodana yakhe. Kuyisiko elihlonishwayo lesintu ukuzila. Wathi umakoti lo umane uyazenza nje ikholwa, akalona. Uqhakambisa ubukholwa ngoba eqonde ukudelela bona kwaDlamini. Ukuba ubeyikholwa langempela, ngabe akawenzi lamanyala awenzayo, okuqoma kungakapheli ngisho izinyanga eziyisithupha ingcwatshiwe indoda yakhe, kanye nokuphatha ifa ngobugovu (p. 98).*

'.....He said that he does not hate the daughter-in-law per se, only abhorred her actions. Any bereaved parent can be upset when the daughter in-law fails to mourn their late son. Mourning is a respected cultural practice and custom. He said that the daughter in-law only pretends to be the Christian she never was. She is only parading that only to spite the Dlaminis. If she was a true Christian, she would not be bringing the family into disrepute as she is dating before half a year has lapsed since the death of her husband and carelessly and selfishly handling her inheritance'.

### 5.3.1 Widowed: patriarchy in Zulu marriages

In patriarchal societies, people tend to enforce their beliefs under the guise of culture and tradition. It is therefore not surprising to hear such utterances from Dlamini. Dlamini is not even interested in Daisy's cultural and religious beliefs because he thinks what he believes in is right. Widowers enjoy more freedom than their female counterparts. Feminists believe that these rites are conceived and applied in accordance with the whims of and to the benefit of patriarchy. Sossou (2002:202), on the contrary, has this to say about rituals:

Rituals are more to do with exalting the position of the dead man than allowing a real outlet for the widow's grief. Women are expected to grieve openly and to demonstrate the intensity of their feelings in formalized ways. Far more restrictions are placed on a widow than a widower. It is the widows and not the widowers who must endure the most humiliating rituals in relation, for example, to dressing codes, eating, personal hygiene and sexual activity.

Many patriarchal societies abuse and oppress other sex groups under the guise of culture, and put bad luck as a threat if one does not perform certain rituals. Hence, there are many oppressive practices, such as the cleansing rituals, which need to be performed by widows. Nowye (2005:175) has this to say about culture:

Culture is important because it reminds us where we come from. It gives us our identity and can shape a person's personality and attitude towards life. It validates proper behaviour and discourages taboos. Cultures help us define our religious beliefs, personal values. Culture keeps social relationship intact. Culture has importance not only for men but also for the group. Culture prepares man for group life. Group life would have been poor, nasty, and short if there had been no cultural regulations. Group solidarity rests on the foundation of culture.

Notwithstanding the fact that culture shapes our identity in reflecting our origins, it should not be used as a scapegoat to oppress other sex groups.

Daisy is not given any opportunity or choice regarding whether she likes or would conform to such norms. Radcliffe-Brown (1952:211) emphasizes the following:

In consideration of the functions of social sanctions, it is not the effects of the sanction upon the person to whom they are applied that are most important, but rather the general effects within the community applying the sanctions. The



function of the sanction is to restore the social euphoria by giving definite collective expression to the sentiments which have been affected by the deed...

However, the modern Daisy is adamant that she was married to Themba and not to the entire Dlamini family. Daisy says:

*Ngizoqala nje ngokuthi ngashada noThemba indodana yakho, akusho ukuthi sengishade nawe noma nomndeni wakwaDlamini. Ngisho uThemba esaphila ubengangitsheli ukuthi angenze ukuthi, angiyeke ukuthi, cha, besihlala phansi sibonisane naye (p. 6)*

‘I will start by stating that I was married to your son Themba and that in no way implies that I am married either to you or the whole Dlamini family. Even when Themba was alive, to me or told me what and what not to do, we always sat and discussed it all beforehand he never dictated’.

Marriage in Zulu society is a complex phenomenon when one considers the above quotation. In the Zulu tradition, marriage is not regarded as a romantic union between two individuals only. It involves both families’ blessings, hence rituals that have to be performed to bind both families together.

As if Daisy’s answer is not enough for the Dlamini in the way in which she understands marriage, her father-in-law seems to take none of it. He is absolutely determined to prove her beliefs wrong. Her father-in-law’s utterances suggest that the Dlamini family owns her. She cannot do anything without their approval. She has neither freedom nor choice to do whatever she thinks is right for herself. In the dialogue, her father-in-law (Dlamini) bursts out:

*Usukhohliwe yini ndodakazi ukuthi kwaleli lifa ohlezi kulona elakwaDlamini? Usukhohliwe yini ukuthi ngelethu thina bakwaDlamini? Njengoba usukhuluma kanjena nje angithi ukhulunyiswa yilo ifa leli lendodana yami? (p. 7).*

‘Are you forgetting that the inheritance you have is a Dlamini one? Does it not occur to you that it all belongs to us, the Dlamini’s? Isn’t even the high horse you are on only a consequent of the inheritance from my son?’

Msimang (1975:77) points out that Zulu people view marriage as eternal (indestructible). From a feminist perspective, this notion of an eternal union is controversial, since it only looks at one side of the coin, at the family to whom the woman is married. It views the well-being of this family in terms of the in-laws having acquired a ‘slave’ to do everything for them. This includes bearing and rearing children for the continuation of the lineage, inter alia.

The newly married woman is in some cases forbidden to share her views, regardless of how important they are. She has to follow the instructions of her new family. Marriage is a good thing, however, many families have turned marriage into a form of slavery for many women. A newly married woman has to succumb to any form of abuse because the husband has paid *ilobolo*. Adopting a psychoanalytic approach to this phenomenon, psychoanalysts are against marriage because it subjects women to abuse, the low status that they must endure in marriage, until at least they become grandmothers. The above idea is conveyed in the following proverb from Nyembezi (1990:40) which refers to marriage as:

*Ukwenda wukuzilahla* '(To marry is to throw oneself away)' – [This is said because a girl cannot tell beforehand what her married life will be like. Therefore her marrying is like throwing herself away.]

In African societies, there are two distinctions, which traditionally characterize the relationship between women and men, and in particular, the relationship between wives and husbands. It is generally accepted that males should enjoy social superiority and exercise authority over females. Women live in a state of dependence, not only before, but also after marriage. Owing to this culturally-set subordination to men as expressed by the author, African women traditionally occupy an inferior position within the society. To say that African women occupy an inferior position implies that they live in continual servitude. When wronged, women can do little by themselves to seek redress for their grievances: they have to look to a man or men, such as their husbands, fathers, brothers, sons or other close kin for help and protection. Sossou (2002:201) stresses that:

To be psychologically oppressed is to be weighed down in the mind and it is to have a harsh dominion exercised over one's self esteem. Psychological oppression could be regarded as the internationalization of intimations of inferiority...it serves to make the work of domination easier by breaking the spirit of the dominated and by rendering them incapable of understanding the nature of those agencies responsible for their subjugation.

Hosken (1981:13) believes that:

Patriarchal authority in Africa involves firstly economic control by denying women education and modern tools. Next, segregation by excluding women from the public sphere and all decisions. And finally, physical control –

violence, rape, sexual assault, excision and infibulation. Some of these 'measures' are present in all societies.

Patriarchy plays an important role in the analysis of this novel. Feminists have identified patriarchy as the root cause of gender differences. Spender (1980:70) believes that gender must be taken as a product of power relations between males and females and "not simply the enactment of roles and formation of masculine or feminine attitudes".

While Daisy is searching for her independence and freedom without having to follow instructions from her in-laws, she is crucified for defying tradition. The Dlamini do not agree to her assertion that they do not follow such practices in her church. According to the Dlamini, Daisy is refusing to perform these rituals because she wants to 'go gallivanting', and this is unacceptable. In Zulu society, Daisy is duty-bound to follow her in-laws' instructions because she is still married to their son, even though he is deceased. Sibiya (1990:3) asserts that:

These man-made barriers should stimulate innovation. Woman in her endeavour for change often has to endure unfair and false accusations that are aimed at making her feel guilty about her achievements, thus demotivating and distracting her from reaching her fullest potential.

In many African traditions, compliance with mourning rites and practices is a sign that a widow is grieving properly and that she respects her deceased husband (Kotze, R., Lishje, L. & Rajuili-Masilo, N., 2012). All these issues, together with other symbols, are regarded as the marks of sorrow that a bereaved widow is expected to display. Kotze et al., (2012:754) believe that:

In many contemporary African villages in South Africa, the widow is required to wear Black clothes and behave in a manner that shows that she is grieving.

The widow has to give way to other road users who she meets when walking along a road or path. Kotze et al., (2012:755) further state:

The widow wearing Black clothes also has to sit at the back of a bus or taxi so as not to expose other travelers to her back and the possibility of a 'bad omen or bad luck.

This stereotype and belief by many members of the patriarchal society towards widows has no scientific basis and has yet to present evidence of its veracity. There is no research which has been conducted, or scientific evidence to prove the validity of this claim. It is therefore not surprising that widowers are not subjected to the same treatment if they sit in the front seat of a bus or of a taxi. This belief shows the injustice and prejudice towards widows in the Zulu patriarchal society. An accident in a bus or in a taxi may easily be caused by a number of factors, even when there is no widow seating in the front seat. Baloyi & Makobe-Rabothatha (2014:236) emphasize that:

In South Africa, some of the Bapedi tribes that originate from the Limpopo province believe that when a married man dies, his widow is forbidden from arriving home after sunset, visiting neighbours, attending family and community functions.

These sanctions on a widow are said to help protect the widow against suspicions of witchcraft, as Rosenblatt & Nkosi (2007:78) explain it:

For a widow in *inzila* [mourning dress], a danger is that if something happens to someone in the community, for example, if a child dies, she might be blamed. The widow is confined to her home, a tradition which is viewed by many widows as imprisonment. Even when she can start visiting other peoples' homes, she must first be ceremonially cleansed.

Nowye (2005:148) on the other hand, contends that:

African grief can be defined as the patterned way invented in traditional communities for the successful healing of the psychological wounds and pain of bereaved persons. It is a healing system grounded in ecological sound rituals and ceremonies that facilitate experiential healing. Its target clients are nay members of the community burdened by the painful loss of a loved one.

There is a belief that some mourning rites are held with the aim of removing bad luck or misfortune or *isinyama* that is said to surround the widow, and which makes people discriminate against her, or fear her. In a patriarchal society, people believe that if the widow knows that the purpose of the traditional widowhood rites is to remove the alleged bad luck or *isinyama* it can be therapeutic for her, however, there is no scientific evidence to show that this is true. Members of society believe that this can facilitate a widow's integration into the community, which she desperately longs for. Tasié

(2013:155) comments on the positive value of widowhood rites amongst African people. He contends that:

...widowhood rites in Africa were not primarily designed to de-humanize African womanhood, or impoverish and oppress women; nor are they part of the so-called male chauvinism. Rather, the widowhood rites are generally intended for the overall good of the widow.

I beg to differ with Tasie (2013) here, as this practice tends to favour only one sex group. If, for instance, it was not designed to dehumanize African women, why is it only prejudicing one sex group? Widowers are 'exempted' from many 'restrictions' which relate to mourning. Moore (1992:30) has this to say about such a patriarchal stereotype:

The radical feminists argue that the most fundamental of oppression is patriarchy. In order for women to be free from oppression, the patriarchal structures must change. Radical feminists argue further that women's oppression is biologically based since women are tied to childbirth and childrearing process, which continually place them on position of dependence on men to survive. They call for the women's movement to participate in a "biological revolution", freeing women from their biological oppression.

Radical feminists wish to see quality of life enjoyed equally by both men and women. They view patriarchy as a systematic, institutionalized and cruel form of male power that is rooted within the family and within the whole society in general. The pattern of male domination and female subordination that characterizes society reflects the power structures that operate within domestic life. Schipper, cited in Jones (1992:46) has this to say about women:

In all cultures, the woman who formulates her own claims or who protests against her situation is given a cold shoulder. If the woman who expresses herself orally is already labelled in a special way, the women who dare fix thoughts for eternity are criticized all more.

On the other hand, Nkumane (1999:118) points out that:

In any given cultural context, male and female behaviour patterns are fixed by norms. Anyone trying to break these rules can expect to meet with serious problems in the community in which the ruling group produces images and conceptions of the others to legitimize the status quo. This emphasizes the connection between people and their social environment, underlining the

reciprocity between the environment and personality. Personal and environmental factors do not function as independent determinants, rather, they determine each other.

If read by conservative people, Nkumane's (1999) assertion seems to support Dlamini's argument but are not societal norms and rules which can be broken when they are no longer valid. The author in the novel, *Ifa Lenkululeko*, here appears to support the patriarchal perspective on the role and status of women in Zulu society. He seems to be questioning why Daisy, the widow, is so 'disrespectful' to the custom, which has existed for many centuries. Hence, Dlamini is not even interested in listening to her views about the mourning or the cleansing ritual. The elimination of these fixed societal norms is, however, fundamental if society has to realize the full emancipation of women. Many people in patriarchal societies oppress women under the guise of these norms and culture.

People conform to such norms because they do not wish to challenge the status quo. Such behaviour is evident in *Ifa Lenkululeko* in which Daisy is scorned for trying to make her own decisions regarding mourning, and not 'follow' instructions from her in-laws. In a patriarchal society, community members predetermine the roles girls must play. Every child learns these gender-linked roles from infancy because they are reinforced as the girl goes through various stages of her life. This leaves those affected with no choice in the end. Women are expected to toe the line without question. When a woman tries to free herself from this, she is regarded as an outcast. Sossou (2002: 203) believes that:

Although some societies could be regarded as being receptive to social changes, certain customary practices have survived this transition. Widowhood is one of them. Many cultural beliefs and practices surrounding ceremonies have seemingly survived the transition in these modern day societies.

### **5.3.2 Daisy's autonomy**

Daisy believes in her freedom no matter what the society thinks of her. Even if Daisy had asked for an opinion of what to do in her situation, either from her mother, her in-laws or from members of society, she would have been scorned for her 'unbecoming' behaviour. She would have received negative reviews about her behaviour and actions.

She therefore sees no other option than to pursue what she believes is right for herself and her career. She sees herself as a liberated woman, although patriarchal society does not approve of this freedom to be independent.

Little (1980:134) has this to say about free women:

By a free woman is meant one who flouts or disregards conventional beliefs concerning the proper role and position of the female sex. One common thing of these beliefs is that it is wrong for a woman on her own to take a major decision. This is a male prerogative. It is also wrong to undertake roles, including occupational ones, traditionally ascribed to the male sex. Perhaps the most common belief of all is that a woman's place is in the home and her duty is to marry and have children.

From a feminist perspective, the above quotation shows that men and women are treated differently in society. Men are not subjected to similar injustice. Many feminist writers believe that such an injustice to women occurs in many spheres of life in our societies. Davies & Graves (1986:48) remark that:

First of all, we cannot only speak of women oppression by men. In capitalist systems, women tend to be exploited by the very nature of society, particularly the working and peasant women, just as men are exploited. The difference is that women are hit particularly hard. Then you have forms of abuse that cut across class lines: sexual abuse, wife-beating and the fact that men take advantage of the woman's role as child-bearer.

Ndlovu (2013:9) quoting from an article entitled, "Some of our roots should be left to rot", in UKZNNDABA, Moletsane (March 2011:7) reveals that:

It is highly possible that the things we now re-claim as "our culture" and of course nobody is exactly sure what that culture is- never really existed, and if they did, perhaps they did not happen the way we think they did. Even if they did, can we re-enact things that were practiced thousands of years ago in a changed and ever changing world?

The author views Daisy's search for independence in a negative light. However, Daisy believes that she cannot be bound by what her in-laws' dictates. She sees a bright future for herself once she has received the pay-out from the will. This comes after Daisy had refused to mourn her husband and also to perform the cleansing ritual. The inheritance

represents a huge relief to her: now she can focus on her 'supposed' bright future. The author says:

*Kwaba sengathi liyedlula ixhala. Nokho wayesese, ehleka yedwa. Kwathi kuhlwa wafisa ukuba ngabe sekusile aqhubeke nempilo yakhe eyayiya ikhazimula. Indaba yokulala nje embedeni kuze kuse yayibonakala kuye kuyindaba yesikhathi esilahlekayo (p. 19).*

'It was as if the major concern had been resolved; she was happy, smiling to herself. As the sun was setting, she wished as if it would have been the crack of a new dawn of the following day already, so she can get on with her seemingly bright future. The time of sleeping was the time she regarded as being wasted'.

Davies & Graves (1986:27) argue that studies of women in African literature rarely focus on the colonial period, and when they do, tend to show either strong mother figures in traditional society, or rootless young women pursuing individualistic and materialistic goals in modern society. The character portrayal of women in narratives dealing with traditional African society, including the jealous co-wives, the barren women, the mothers hoping for sons, and the heroines whose extraordinary abilities lift them to positions of leadership, recur repeatedly in novels written in the colonial period. The character portrayal of women dealing with those aspects of inequality, in addition to those introduced by colonialist oppressors will emerge from the following novels situated in the first stages of colonialism, in the period of colonialism in full sway, and during colonialism under siege by movements for independence (Davies & Graves, 1986). These various images in the portrayal of female characters in many Zulu literary texts reflect the complex realities of women.

### **5.3.3 Controlling desires when mourning**

From a patriarchal point of view, Daisy is not a well-behaved woman. She has recently lost her husband, yet she is now showing signs of affection for a man whom she has not yet accepted as a lover. From a chauvinistic perspective, a woman should never reveal signs of affection for a man, no matter how much she is attracted to him. Daisy's actions, according to the author and this community, are those of a loose woman. On the contrary, a man is fully entitled to proposing a woman on their first encounter: there is nothing wrong with his being forward. It is surprising, however, that societies have different attitudes towards men and women when it comes to matters of love and lust. When a woman such as Daisy claims ownership of her sexuality, she is labelled



negatively in the name of a tradition which, conversely, does not similarly disparage men. This same society expects women to comply with men's desires.

Daisy and Buthelezi's relationship upsets her in-laws and her mother. Her mother has heard that she has a boyfriend, something, which does not go down well with her. She had earlier warned Daisy of this, in their previous meeting: she is not happy with this news. What concerns her the most is that not much time has elapsed since they buried Daisy's husband. Her mother is receiving very bad reviews about Daisy from her neighbours as well as from people who know her. Daisy has become an embarrassment and a shame to her social circle. Daisy's mother says:

*...ucabanga ukuthi kumnandi ukuthukwa abantu? Akumoto le ozula ngayo namadoda izwe lonke leli? Angithi wena usuqomile? Akukapheli ngisho isikhathi esingakanani nje engcwatshiwe umyeni wakho! Mina wazi kahle ukuthi angizwani nehlazo. Lo mkhuba wakho... (p. 77).*

'...you think being hurled insults at by people is great? Are you not seen in cars with men all over town? Isn't you have a new man now? It's only been a short while since your husband was buried! You know very well that I hate disgraceful behaviour. This bad habit of yours.....'

Hall (1990:7) notes that a person's freedom rests in his or her ability to choose the values designated as most sacred. She argues that:

As women discover their most meaningful values and create identities, they convert from ascribed religions of traditional patriarchal values about gender to achieved religious egalitarian values. They move from the extremes of traditional female and traditional male values to a synthesis. Gender definitions shift into more general selections of values and identity becomes androgynous and more autonomous. Traditional gender value systems are transformed by this process, enabling women to move from subordinated roles and restricted social positions to broadened opportunities for mobility and fulfilment.

Daisy's new relationship with Buthelezi creates an interesting plot. The female protagonist is now an outcast to her own family and that of her in-laws. One would expect that Daisy would elicit sympathy from her mother regarding her new relationship, however, this is not the case. Daisy endures even more censure from her mother.

Later in the text her mother realizes that it is not necessarily fair to judge Daisy about dating somebody: Daisy is but a human being needing a companion. Her daughter

cannot go forever without dating, because she is still young. Her mother acknowledges that life has to go on, and that Daisy cannot be held back by the societal norms and expectations. The author reveals Daisy's mother acknowledging her short-sightedness and lack of sound judgement:

*Uma eshleli phansi umama kaDaisy abone ukuthi ukhulunyiswe yikho ukuthukuthela. Kona bekufanele, ayimnandi le nto eyenzekayo. Kodwa phela kufanele aqome uDaisy ngokuhamba kwesikhathi. Ngeke balindele ukuthi usezohlala impilo yakhe yonke, usemncane lo muntu. Lihlale lelo elithi ngokuhamba kwesikhathi. Noma kumele aqome, kodwa ngempela hhayi manje, masinyane kangaka (p. 77).*

'In retrospect, Daisy's mother realises that she had spoken out of anger. Though, what is transpiring is not right. Daisy must find a partner as times goes by. No one can expect Daisy to be alone for the rest of her life, this person is still young. The notion of time sticks in her head. Even though she finally has to find a new partner, it should not have been this soon'.

After the meeting with her daughter, (Daisy), Daisy's mother realises that Daisy needs support at this difficult time of grief. Daisy is dependent on her mother for support. Support, both emotional and material, from the widow's family is valued highly at her time of grief. Other support may come from friends, church members, and neighbours. Daisy's mother is trying to be sympathetic to her daughter, as she understands the pain that she is experiencing. She feels that Daisy can still enjoy life, therefore she should move on. One sees here a change of heart in Daisy's mother from taking a harsh stance on her daughter's behaviour, to being understanding because of the circumstances in which Daisy finds herself. As expected, Daisy's in-laws offer no support or sympathy. With regards to Daisy's search for independence, Delmar (1986:8) offers this clarification on feminism:

Many would agree that at the very least, a feminist is someone who holds that women suffer discrimination because of their sex, that they have specific needs which remain negated and unsatisfied, and that the satisfaction of these needs would require a radical change (some would say a revolution even in the social, economic and political order).

The Dlamini's do not seem to understand the intricacies and the complexities of a will. They are of the view that they must also receive a share of their son's inheritance. They only find out the truth about the will when they visit the lawyer who is handling their son's will. What is also disturbing to them is that they do not trust that their 'daughter-

in-law' is going to spend this money wisely. When Daisy goes to finalize the will with the lawyer, the lawyer tells her about the Dlamini's displeasure that she is the sole recipient of the money. Daisy's lawyer says:

*...bebebalisa ngemali le esengikunike yona, bethi ababoni ukuthi uzoyisebenzisa kahle, bethi ayikufanele. Njengoba-ke ngishilo, ngabatshela ngathi ngeyakho wedwa, isho njalo incwadi yefa (p. 37).*

'...they were moaning about the money I have given you, stating that you will misuse it and you do not deserve it. Like I mentioned earlier, I made it clear to them that it was yours alone as it is stipulated in the will'.

Daisy's pursuit of justice in the matter of her inheritance involves many people. She needs assurances from people she knows that they will not be witnesses against her. Jili, who has been Dlamini's friend all along, is one with whom Daisy is seeking an alliance. Jili seems to be readily available to help Daisy. He is of the view that Daisy should be set free to enjoy her money because the Dlamini's do not have a say in it. In support of Daisy, Jili says:

*Uthi ungene ngani-ke yena lapho ekudleni kwakho imali yakho, kubuza uJili nobuso obungenankathazeko, sengathi akabuzi kepha uthi, "akakuyeke angangeni ezindabeni zakho" (p. 89).*

'And where does he say he fits in the affairs of your expenditure' Jili asked with a nonchalant look, as if he is not asking a question more than stating.' Let him leave you and your business the hell alone'.

Dlamini is not willing to give up on Daisy, and keeps asking Jili whether Daisy has changed her mind about not sharing the inheritance with them. Jili's response to Dlamini is that:

*Ngisho ukuthi mina mfowethu angisiboni isidingo sokuzikhathaza ngale nto. Angiphumeleli neze ukuhamba nawe ngalolu daba. Ngingancama ukuthi okungenani ngiyivakashela le ntombi yakwakho ngiyohoxisa umqondo okungabe yawakha ngami ngokugaxeka ezindabeni zakwayo. Ngithi mina ayiyekwe intokazi le iziphilise ngendlela yayo, iqhube impilo yayo (p. 54).*

'What I mean brother, is that there is actually no need to fret over this matter. I will not be available at all to accompany you on the trip about this matter. I would rather go visit the girl privately and withdraw her from all conceptions she has of me of meddling into her family affairs. My take on this matter is, let the girl live her own life way to the fullest'.

Jili assures Daisy of his support and is determined to prove Dlamini wrong about her. Dlamini and Jili have become enemies, because they do not share the same sentiments regarding Daisy's position. Jili is prepared to testify against Dlamini because he believes Daisy's claim is legitimate, and she does not need any interference from her in-laws. Jili says:

*...kanti-ke ukuba uyazi, uDlamini lowo akaseyena umngane wami. Ngeke uze ungikholwe uma ngikutshela ukuthi ngaphoxana naye ngayo le ndaba. Wafika la kimina ezongicela ukuba ngizomlekelela khona lapho enkantolo, ngenqaba. Ngenqaba ngelithi angeke mina ngithande ukucindezela wena ngemali yakho, ngoba phela ngeyakho le mali (p. 90).*

'...and if you knew, Dlamini is no longer my friend. You may not even believe me when I tell you we had a war of words on the same issue. He came here to request me to assist him in court and I refused on the grounds that I could not help him suppress and defraud you of money that is rightfully yours'.

As has been said earlier, society believes that a woman, especially a widow, is incapable of taking good care of money because she remains a social minor who needs a man to take care of her, be it uncles, in-laws etc. Such a notion is totally unsubstantiated, and it is a misconception because many times, a wife minds the children when the husband is away at work. The wife takes care of the home, sometimes even under very trying circumstances, meeting difficult challenges. Daisy's family, the society, as well as her in-laws are against her having a boyfriend. From a feminist perspective, this is discrimination, because a widower is not subjected to the same harsh treatment meted out to widows. A widower is free to start a new relationship immediately after his wife's demise, sans or without censorship by society.

It has become a common belief that a man who falls in love with a widow soon after her husband's death is only interested in money left by the dead husband in his will. Such assumptions hold no ground because no research has ever provided proof to this effect. Such a belief does not take into account the feelings and needs of a widow who may long for a companion just as her male counterpart would. The author seems to disapprove that Daisy has a boyfriend because, according to her in-laws, she is going to misuse the money from the will. The author says:

*Futhi-ke umakoti lo wayesenendoda athandana nayo. Lokho kwakungubufakazi obushisayo bokuthi akufanele neze le mali ihlale ezandleni zakhe. Akanasimilo. Kunamathuba amaningi okuthi le ndoda iyidle imali yakhe, iyiqede nya.*

*Kuyinto engeke yaphikwa leyo ngoba isithanda ukwanda impela, abafelokazi abasha abanezimali bexhashazwa ngabantu besilisa (p. 93).*

‘Again, this young wife had a boyfriend that she was dating. That was evidence enough that this inheritance could not be in her hands. She is a loose woman. Chances are high that this man can squander this money totally. No one can run away from that as widows who are taken for a similar ride by men, chances are ten a penny these days’.

Evans (1995:43) points out that:

Feminism means that we seek for women some opportunities and privileges the society gives to men or that we assert the distinctive value of womanhood against patriarchal denigration or believe in the principle that women should have the same rights and opportunities as men.

#### **5.3.4 Lies and deceit directed against the main character (widow) in *Ifa Lenkululeko***

This novel presents a tragic story about a widow who loses her fortune through deception. The author portrays the main character’s foolishness and her inability to take control of her finances and the inheritance left to her by her husband. The author takes the view that a woman is easily influenced and deceived by a stranger with the promise of a good life to come. This stranger who approaches her, does so in the guise of a potential lover, first befriending her, and later dating her. When Buthelezi realizes that he has won her, he offers to help her to establish a business, as he himself is a businessman. Daisy, revealing her gullibility, believes everything that Buthelezi says, while he, as an ‘experienced businessman’, is plotting her downfall.

Lies and deceit dominate this novel. Once Daisy’s first hurdle has been surmounted, her only concern is to open a business in which she is going to invest her money. She has managed to evade her in-laws who wish to make her life a living hell. According to the author, she has no dealings with her in-laws anymore, since the person to whom she was married has passed on. Daisy is now more concerned about her independence as she enters a new phase in life.

The Dlamini’s suspicion about the possibility of Daisy’s misusing the money stems from a patriarchal stereotype. Daisy is unable to take care of the money, firstly, because she is a woman, and secondly, because she is a widow. According to the author, only men are capable of taking care of the money. This mistrust towards Daisy has already

been expressed by her mother earlier in the story. When Daisy visits her mother to leave her baby with her, her mother questions her decision. Daisy's remark to her mother is that she wishes to be free and independent. Her mother warns her against 'gallivanting' with men when she has just lost her husband. Ntshinga (1998:76) acknowledges the importance of a woman as a mother:

Going home is associated with going to the mother. A home is not a home without a mother. A mother is a valued person in society in that she provides a home warmth and security to children. Even nature seeks that warmth which only a mother can provide.

It is clear from this explanation that the protection of children by their mothers is an archetypal feminine role inherent in women. But the reaction of Daisy's mother is an example that women are not a homogenous group. The attitude of Daisy's mother and the reaction of her father-in-law is a reflection of a patriarchal society in which some men and women subscribe to societal boundaries and restrictions placed on women. It is not surprising to hear Dlamini accusing Daisy of being wasteful in buying herself a car. Sultana (2013:65) makes an interesting point regarding stereotypes towards women:

So it is necessary to understand the system which keeps women dominated and subordinate, and to unravel its workings in order to work for women's development in a systematic way...Patriarchal society gives absolute priority to men and to some extent limits women's human rights also.

Daisy's mother sounds very suspicious of her independence. It is as though she foresees what lies ahead of Daisy. There is a belief that an old woman's word must not be taken lightly. This is because many an old woman is a source of wisdom, having lived her life to the fullest: it is not surprising that her mother admonishes Daisy. Daisy feels as if the whole world belongs to her in that she even decides to leave her child with her mother at KwaMakhutha so that she (Daisy) cannot be disturbed. Her mother is aware of the challenges Daisy might face as she moves forward with her life, hence questioning her:

*Ukukhululeka kwani Daisy? Ungagangi la wena. Uziphathe kahle, ungavumi ukudukiswa yinoma yini eqhamuka esikhaleni. Phela nina bafelokazi abasebancane kuye kuthiwe niphazanyiswa ubala nje, uyathuka umuntu usebizwa kude (p. 20).*

‘What freedom Daisy? Just stop it! Please behave yourself and not get derailed by advice from any know-it-all from all over.....you young widows are easily misled and before you know it, you will be too far gone’.

Roland & Harris (1992:106) comment as follows about independence apropos of women:

Autonomy, independence and assertiveness, the qualities most valid in our society, are considered “unfeminine” ...when a woman is called independent, it is usually in a pejorative tone.

Daisy’s behaviour is under the spotlight here, only because she is a woman. Her search for freedom and independence is viewed in a negative light because she is a female. If she was a man she would not have been subjected to the same scrutiny. For this reason many feminists believe that our societies consist of double standards: ‘what is good for a man is not necessarily considered good for a woman’ (Spender, 1980:72). This argument does not provide any proper justification for such utterances.

Daisy is convinced that Buthelezi is a successful businessman. She believes that he is an ideal person to fall for because she has ambitions of opening a business. She has seen her suitor depositing large sums of money in the bank. Apparently, Buthelezi has noticed the looks which Daisy gives him, and is keen to approach her. Daisy’s negative portrayal in this novel shows a person who is desperate for companionship and for one who also will be an advisor to her on her business ambitions. The author does not stress Buthelezi’s dark side. His true colours are also not emphasized because the author wishes to portray Daisy negatively. Buthelezi’s infidelity is not made the centre of attention by the author because, in a patriarchal society, a married man can have a ‘mistress’: this is not a shame. However, a married woman who cheats is ostracized and is called names. Authors who perpetuate such behaviour in society seem to wish to maintain the status quo, and are not advocating for change. The author says:

*Ukusho konke nje lokhu uButhelezi uzothile, akaxhamazeli, nezwi liphansi, ungathi uyinsizwa emsulwa encenga intombi ezibona ingephile ngaphandle kwayo. Kanti lutho, wayeyindoda enenkosikazi yayo, enomuzi wayo, uDaisy ayemncenga kungumfelokazi owayefelwe izolo lokhu (p. 45).*

‘Buthelezi said all this calmly and quietly, just as any innocent suitor would, a woman he feels he can never live without. And yet, he was a married man with his own house only setting out to charm Daisy who was a fresh widow’.

Buthelezi's face looks familiar to Daisy, as she has seen him several times coming to deposit money in this bank. She is starting to fall for him, but cannot reveal this, because society does not allow such behaviour from a woman. The author says:

*Kepha okuningi ayenakho kwakungaphakathi enhliziyweni yakhe. Ngempela kuzokwenzekani ngaye nalo muntu wakwaButhelezi? Angeke akuvimbe okuhle. Qh! ngeke neze. Bangingi abantu abalahla amathuba amahle balibale ukuziqhenya, hhayi yena. Akhumbule ukuthi uyamdinga umuntu azohlala naye kube mnandi (p. 33).*

'But whatever good she had in him was within her heart. Honestly, what will become of her and this Buthelezi person? Something that is good cannot be stopped, never! There are many people who miss out on their chances of a lifetime because of pride, it cannot be her! She feels that she needs somebody to share a good life with'.

Buthelezi and Daisy's relationship creates an interesting suspense in the text. One would have assumed that Daisy would not be interested in her prospective lover now that she knows that he is married. One wonders that she would look for companionship from a married man. It is no shame for Daisy to accept Buthelezi's propositioning, because she has already been characterized as someone of loose morals. It also appears that it is only two weeks after the burial of her husband before she has found someone to spend time with. Daisy's story represents many women, who after losing their husbands, have to endure long periods of time before finding happiness in love relationships. This is caused by the custom of mourning and cleansing rituals which they must endure.

Daisy is greatly attracted to Buthelezi on the second day of their encounter. In fact, she had fallen for him on her first day after returning to work, when Buthelezi had come to deposit money. Daisy had taken two weeks' leave after the burial of her husband. She does not wish to waste her chance with him by telling Buthelezi that she loves him: she fears that she might then lose him. Daisy grasps an opportunity that she cannot miss. Traditionally, in the African society, a woman cannot show her affection for a man in their first few encounters. Feminists see nothing wrong with what Daisy does. If she is attracted to a man, she has a right to let her feelings known. The author says:

*Ezwe isango livuleka uDaisy; akavele asho. Ngempela khona eqinisweni asikho isidingo sokucasha ngomunwe kulo muntu onje, aphelelwe amazwi.*



*“Angiphikisi lutho. Ngisho ukuthi kulungile, yize mhlawumbe kungaba nezinkinga”* (p. 46).

‘Daisy heard the gate opens; she should just tell it all. There is really no reason to keep beating about the bush when all is crystal clear and she is in full agreement with it all. “I mean that it is fine, although there might be problems”.

The above quotation illustrates that a woman’s independence, from a traditional patriarchal society, may only be achieved when she takes the initiative of liberating herself, casting off her shackles. The boundaries which are created by society are, in most cases, reflected in the literary texts studied, and they always hinder the development of women in society.

Miller (1986:122) makes a distinction between women who need power to change the status quo, advancing their own development, and those needing power to limit the development of others. She states that, for women to challenge their position, and to accept and use their power to do so, this ‘threatens women with no place to go, no alternative and total isolation and complete condemnation’. Miller (1986) identifies women’s strength as arising from the fact that they ‘live change’ and must encompass the task of putting that vast unrecognized experience with change into a new and broader level of experience. On the other hand, Woolf (1994: 98) challenges women to accept and take responsibility for the dark side of their natures, and ‘to contribute the hidden perspectives of women to the policies of the twenty-first century, which will sorely need them to ensure the well-being of everyone, males as well as females’. Rosaldo (1974:3) states that:

No anthropologist observed a society in which women have publicly recognized power and authority that of men...and that women’s roles as wives and as mothers are associated with fewer powers and prerogatives than are the roles of men. It seems fair to say then that all contemporary societies are to some extent male-dominated, and although the degree and expression of female subordination vary greatly, sexual asymmetry is presented as a universal fact of human social life.

Daisy is not reserved in expressing her feelings and thoughts to Buthelezi. She is even not afraid of telling the man that she has her own money. Her attitude is that of an independent woman who does not financially depend on a man. Such a move by her may be surprising to a passive reader, because Daisy has only just met Buthelezi. The author appears to drive home the point that today’s women, especially those who are

wealthy and independent, always wish to show that they can take care of themselves financially. Daisy says:

*Ungacabangi ukuthi ngoba nakhu uyisicebi unesitolo, uthole umuntu ozolokhu ekucela imali. Mina nginemali yami (p. 48).*

‘Don’t think that just because you own a shop and are rich you have found someone who will be begging for your money; I have my own money’.

When Buthelezi tells her that they can be partners, she agrees immediately without asking any questions. Buthelezi assures Daisy of her decision:

*Ucabange into enhle Daisy. Futhi njengoba usho nje imali idinga ukusetshenziswa ngendlela ezoyandisa kangcono nakakhulu. Bambalwa kabi abantu abenza njengawe. Futhi angazi nje, bona abesifazane, bajwayele ukushayisa impela. Umuntu asabe ukungena ebhizinisini ebe enemali kodwa ngoba ethi ibhizinisi yinto yamadoda. Asenze njena-ke, kunganjani uma sisebenzisa imali onayo ukukhulisa ibhizinisi esesivele sinalo njengamanje ngakwa-O.K., kunokuthenga noma ukwakha elisha kusho uButhelezi ekhuluma sengathhi isitolo lesa esabo bobabili (p. 119).*

‘That is a good idea Daisy. And just like you have rightly put it, money needs to be utilised in a manner that can increase it better. Very few people act like you do, and I don’t know, women usually make a mistake. A person will be wary of taking up a business opportunity when they can, just because it is said that the business world is men’s territory. Let’s do it this way...how would it be if we expand the already existing business we already have near the OK shop instead of buying or building a new one’, said Buthelezi, making it as if the business belonged to them both’.

Daisy is convinced of Buthelezi’s ‘business acumen’ that she is ready to trust him with her money. She has not yet seen his shop or supermarkets which he claims to have, or anything tangible that should make her believe him. Daisy says:

*Mina Mthunzi ngingathi nje okuningi ngikubeka kuwena. Mina ngizoza nemali, wena ngivulele amasango. Uwena olazi kangcono kunami ibhizinisi. Yinto okhulele kuyona esisegazini lakho. Buka nje nalokhu oqeda kukusho bengingakunakile, ngingazi, kodwa ngihlala khona la KwaMashu. Yini, ukuthi angisiyena usomabhizinisi. Izeluleko ngizilindele kuwena ongosomabhizinisi (p. 60-61).*

‘Mthunzi, I leave the rest to you. I will come up with the money, and you will pave the way for me, you are the one who knows the business better than I do. You grew up in business, it is in your veins. Look at even what you have just said now, I had not taken any notice of, though I am a resident here in KwaMashu. The reason is that I am not a business person. I expect advice from you, the businessman’.

This novel, *Ifa Lenkululeko*, presents a different style of character portrayal. The author allows his characters to make their own decisions and resolutions regarding the predicament in which they find themselves. Such a style is quite remarkable because it allows readers their own views of the decisions and resolutions taken by the various characters. The author does not dictate to any of the characters which resolutions to take. One may therefore say that the novel is multi-voiced. For instance, Dlamini's friend, Jili, objects to accompanying Dlamini to Daisy's house. His refusal comes despite being Dlamini's close friend, and Jili is aware of the Dlaminis' plea to Daisy.

Feminists believe that texts like Shange's belong to reformist-feminist literature. Such texts censure, hinder and discriminate against women in their self-realisation (Davies & Graves, 1986). These texts accept that the socialization of men is an obvious fact in a patriarchal society; they also believe that men can gradually change their outlook towards women. They argue that this is a gradual process. In the above example, Jili symbolises such men. Earlier in the story, Jili has been very supportive of his old friend Dlamini's attitude towards Daisy. Jili accompanied Dlamini on his first visit to Daisy's house to talk about the inheritance. This was a show of support for his friend. Later in the story Jili transforms from being a conservative person on the matter of Daisy's freedom, to accepting her decision of moving on with her life. Jili questions why Dlamini cannot accept Daisy's independence and freedom to do whatever she wishes with her inheritance. The author seems to reflect Jili as slowly beginning to realise that Daisy cannot be bound in matrimony to the Dlaminis. Such texts, like *Ifa Lenkululeko*, offer alternatives for men to change their outlook, behaviour and their attitudes towards women and in many instances, to have a happy ending. Unfortunately, this is not the case in this novel.

The novel illustrates the multi-complexity of the author's characters. One would have expected Jili not to hesitate in accompanying his friend, Dlamini, to Daisy's house. Jili, on the other hand, is not influenced by his friendship with Dlamini in making his own decision regarding the matter. This multi-complexity of characters creates an interesting plot because one cannot anticipate the character's next move when confronted with a problem. Many authors of literary texts who use this method of multi-complexity, such as Shange, resist 'closure of the text', and the author de-centres himself or herself from the text itself. The author dissociates himself or herself from

the text so that readers may draw their own conclusions. This method, many believe, arises from oral story-telling in which many authors adhere to a single-voice type of storytelling, in many ways originating from folktales which were narrated by grandmothers.

Canonici (1990:23) acknowledges that women demonstrated their storytelling abilities in oral literature, yet stresses that these “extolled the virtues of humility, silent, endurance and self-effacing patterns of behaviour for our girls”. Canonici (1990:20) views the issue as one of authority, stressing the importance of women’s expressing their unique perspectives beyond the male notions of idolised mother and traditional wife. Hofmeyer (1993:76) remarks that a woman, as a storyteller, is a dominant and enduring cultural institution in South African history, however, Hofmeyer (1993:76) also questions the way in which this institutionalized speaking relates to the institutionalized silence, which characterises women’s subordination in pre-colonial Southern African societies.

Daisy’s decision to partner with Buthelezi leaves readers with many unanswered questions. Should she not be concerned about engaging in such a transaction, knowing that Buthelezi is married? Is Daisy’s decision overtly showing the author’s negative perception of women who have recently lost their husbands? Is the author showing patriarchal stereotyping of widows? Would the author portray a widower in the same manner that he does with the widow, Daisy? The author seems to stress Daisy’s ‘foolishness’ in accepting whatever Buthelezi tells her, while playing down Buthelezi’s infidelity. Buthelezi’s actions are not interpreted as negatively as Daisy’s. Now that Buthelezi has been able to convince Daisy of his business acumen, he can manipulate her to his advantage. From a psychoanalytic point of view, Buthelezi has managed to infantilise Daisy by first gaining her confidence and consequently robbing her. He has made Daisy feel young and loved, something she has been longing for. In their dialogue, now that the business deal is coming to fruition, Buthelezi even dismisses the notion that his wife might disturb them. Daisy says:

*Sazi ngani uma esebhoka la umkakho?* (p. 61).  
‘How will we know if your wife sees red about it all?’

To which Buthelezi quickly responds:

*Kanti lutho. Lalela la. Yimina engiphethe kwaButhelezi, angidonswa mina yinkosikazi ngekhala. Ngihlala ngizwa kuthiwa kuyenziwa lokho kwamanye amadoda, hhayi kimina. Angeke mina ngawunqaba umqondo wakho engiwuthatha njengomuhle kakhulu. Uma uthanda ukuya ebhizinisini nami, yintando yakho leyo engiyamukelayo. Kuzokwenzeka njengoba ufisa (p. 61).*

‘No ways! Listen here....I am the head of the Buthelezi family, no woman leads me by the bridle strap! I always hear that, that happens to other men, not me. I will not turn down a good idea from you, which I value as very good. If you want to go into business with me, that is your wish that I can only appreciate. It will all be as you wish’.

Buthelezi easily convinces Daisy, and she does not take much time in falling for his ploys. Using ‘sweet words’, Buthelezi has accomplished his mission, and Daisy can now set up her business with her new partner. With his deft choice of words, and adroitness, Buthelezi even implies that his love for his wife is slowly fading away. Ironically, his wife has done nothing to deserve any opprobrium. Buthelezi’s behaviour shows that society is full of binary oppositions (Spender, 1980). Since what is possible for a man is not possible for a woman, such binary oppositions are based on the ‘so-called’ culture rather than on human nature, and should be deconstructed. Buthelezi ‘sweet-talks’ Daisy so that she places full confidence in him. Buthelezi wishes to assure Daisy that everything is in order. He says:

*Usakhombisa ukungabaza. Thatha amazwi ami uma ngithi ngiyakwamukela ukusebenza nawe. Ngingenza kanjani ukuthi ngingakudingi uyisithandwa sami. Ngiyakuthanda Daisy. Futhi uthando lwami ngiyaluzwa lwanda imihla ngemihla. Uyazi ngiyamuzwa uMaSithebe eya ephuma enhliziyweni yami. Ngithi-ke ukuba ndawonye kwethu ebhizinisini kuzolenza nalo lithuthuke likhule, lidlondlobale ngaphezu kwawo wonke alaphaya ngasesiteshini (p. 62).*

‘You are still displaying signs of doubt. Take my word when I say I accept working with you. How can I not need you when you are my love? I love you Daisy. And my love grows in leaps and bounds each and every day. You know what, I actually feel less attracted to MaSithebe each day. I know our collaboration in the business will make it flourish and be the best of all in that station area’.

Daisy is so obsessed with starting up a business that she does not see the need for entering into a formal contract with Buthelezi. Buthelezi’s approach has been that of a trickster, because he has made Daisy believe whatever he says without questioning anything. Daisy decides to sign the cheque to start the business with Buthelezi, despite

there being no formal contract. From a patriarchal point of view, this shows naivety on the part of Daisy, because, as a teller at the bank, she should know better about such transactions. It is interesting to speculate that, were Daisy a male character would she (he) have behaved as rashly, without scrutinising the details of the transaction. The author says:

*Walisayina nangempela uDaisy isheke ebusuku. Kwakuyizinkulungwane ngezinkulungwane. Isivumelwano kwakuyileso sokuthi uButhelezi uzofuna ummeli ozobahlanganisa ngokusemthethweni. UDaisy uma ethi abathathe yena uSosibo lo wakhe, athi uButhelezi cha uzomthola omunye, uSosibo usengene kakhulu ezindabeni zakhe akukuhle asale esekwazi konke enziwe umuntu womndeni (p. 124).*

‘Daisy indeed signed the cheque that night, worth thousands and thousands. The agreement was that Buthelezi would secure a lawyer that would make them partners legally. When Daisy suggested that they utilise her existing lawyer, Sosibo, Buthelezi said no, he will find another one, Sosibo has meddled too much in her affairs, it is not wise that he (Sosibo) knows everything, as if he is the member of the family’.

Buthelezi shows the signs of a good trickster. On one hand, he manipulates Daisy to give him her money on the pretext of assisting her, while on the other hand expects her to overlook his cheating on his wife. Buthelezi is not too concerned about the circumstances thereafter, especially with his wife. Canonici (1990:52) comments on the trickster’s motive as:

He wills nothing consciously. At all times he is constrained to behave as he does from impulse over which he has no control...He possesses no values, moral or social, and is at the mercy of his passions and appetites...His actions must represent a way of getting around taboos and other restrictions without actually upsetting the order of society. In other words, the trickster functions primarily as a release valve for all the anti-social desires repressed by the men who tell and listen to his stories.

Buthelezi seems happy to lose his wife now that he has found Daisy. Had the roles been reversed, and infidelity had been by a woman to her husband, she would be labelled *isifebe*, (a whore), and yet there is no shame when infidelity is applied by a man to his wife. This shows that culture is full of double standards. Men are hunters and women are the prey. Buthelezi’s recent actions have made his wife suspicious. His behaviour has changed lately, however, he sees nothing wrong with this because he is a man. His behaviour eventually leads to a confrontation with his wife. Buthelezi responds to his wife:

*Yinkosikazi yami entsha engiyithaphi?* (p. 71).  
'From where do I get the new wife?'

To which MaSithebe retorts:

*Yona yodwa, kanti asemaningi yini? Angithi wena usuqonywe amakhosikazi abantu! Yona le moto ofika ngayo uyithaphi?* (p. 71).  
'That one only, are there lots more? Isn't it you date people's wives these days? This car you are driving now, where is it from?'

The author paints a picture of Daisy as being a family destroyer. Daisy trusts Buthelezi so fully that she even lends him her car. This is despite the fact that she knows that he is married.

Buthelezi seems destined to let go of his wife in favour of Daisy. He is prepared to divorce her because she is a stumbling block to his happiness with Daisy. The conversation between Buthelezi and his wife shows the imbalance of power between men and women in a patriarchal society. In many instances, it is very easy for a husband to dismiss or expel his wife without giving any reasons, but for a wife, it is not as easy if she is unhappy in her marriage. Buthelezi says:

*Ngoba usukwazi konke nje usangibuzelani? Uhleli lana nje ungayile emsebenzini ngoba ulinde ukungifundekela? Ngiyindoda mina, ngakha ikusasa. Uma ungafuni ukuliphila nami lelo kusasa, phuma manje la endlini, uphume uphele. Uma ufuna ukuphika nami, phuma manje uye la uthanda khona, mhlawumbe nawe uyobuya nemoto ebovu. Kodwa uma usuyitholile, ungabuyeli la kwami, ukuphuma kwakho kube ukuphuma unomphelo* (p. 72).  
'Since you know everything, why bother question me then? You have not gone to work so that you can sit here and nag me? I am a man and I am building a future. If you do not want to share that future with me, there is the door, get out! Get out of my life for good! If you want to compete with me, go to where you wish and maybe you will return with a red car. But then, if you get it, don't bother returning here, once you leave, it will be for good'.

After cheating Daisy of her money, Buthelezi plays the innocent husband to his wife and acts as if he has all along been trying to save money for their shop. He tries to downplay his cheating antics by showing his wife the money, without telling her its real source:

*Ngizokutshela into ongayazi. Mhlawumbe ngenza iphutha ngokungakwazisi yona. Imali bengiyibeka kwenye i-akhawunti eseceleni, ngiyibekela khona ukuthi yenze lo msebenzi esesizobhekana nawo manje. Ngabona ukuthi u-O.K. lo olapha eceleni kwethu angaphazamisa. Ngabona ukuthi kuzoba kuhle ukuthi*

*umuntu abeke imali okuzokuthi lapho nezinye izitolo esinazo seziwa, ayikhiphe avuselele esakhe, kuvele kube yithina no-O.K. (p. 137).*

‘I am going to tell you something you do not know. Maybe I made a mistake of not telling you about this money. I have been saving money in a separate account, saving it for a need such as this that we are going to face now. I realised that the OK shop closest to us will distract us. I realised that it would be wise to save money on the side such that if our other shops go bankrupt, one can utilise this nest to revive our shop and be left with OK store as the only competitor’.

The author seems to subscribe to the view that there is always punishment when one does not follow customs and traditions, hence the demonization of Daisy, as a widow who defied tradition. Many people believe that there are rituals that a person must perform in life, and if those rituals are not respected or adhered to, one may face problems or challenges at some stage later in life. It is believed that some of these rituals are culturally linked and are an integral part of a person’s life. It is believed that *ukuzila* (mourning) when a family member or a close relative passes on, *ukuzila* is simply one of those rituals. What upsets the Dlamini is that Daisy does not subscribe to all their customs, allegedly because of her religious beliefs.

There is a Zulu saying: *Isala kutshelwa sibona ngompho!* (This means that they will only realise their mistake not to heed advice when they are in trouble). This idiom is usually directed to those who refuse to listen to advice, hence in many instances, the saying is viewed as a curse. Her refusal to mourn her husband’s death, to wear *inzilo* (mourning dress) and to share her inheritance with them has caused unbearable pain in the Dlamini family. Her father-in-law (Dlamini) even says:

*...uDlamini wafunga wasonga wathi ngeke lo makoti alithokozele leli fa. ...Nakuba ngingenakumphihliza lo makoti mama kaSonto, yena kodwa ngibona kuzoba kuhle ukuba ngiye kuyena, ngimtshela iqiniso. Ngeke athokoze empilweni yakhe (p. 102-103).*

‘...Dlamini swore that this young bride will never enjoy this inheritance. Even though I cannot beat up this young bride, Sonto’s mother, I feel I still have to go and tell her the truth. She will never find happiness in her life’.

Later in the text, Dlamini still feels very aggrieved by his daughter-in-law’s decision. He is noticeably upset, continuing to pass negative remarks about the whole fracas. Dlamini articulates:

*...ngithi mina ngifuna ukuya kulowaya muzi kaThemba ngiyomtshela umakoti ukuthi noma elunqobile udaba enkantolo, kodwa ngeke akuthole ukujabula*



*empilweni yakhe yonke. Angaze azikhohlise. Umhlaba lo awukaze wabuswa amavukela. Anqoba isikhashana engalali nasebusuku* (p. 108).

‘...I am saying I want to go to that Themba’s house and tell that daughter-in-law that even though she won the case in a court of law, but she must not fool herself by thinking she will ever find happiness in her life. Traitors and coup leaders have never ruled the world, they can only be in power for a short while, and never even sleep in peace’.

Daisy is trying to ban the Dlamini family from coming to her house because they do not respect her rights. The Dlaminis do not wish to give up on their late son’s hard-earned money, and they keep on cursing their daughter-in-law. Dlamini warns:

*Lalela wemakoti, sizozala ngomathanda. Ngumuzi wendodana yami lo. Yizwa lokhu-ke, nakhu engizokutshela khona. Tamasa njengoba utamasa nje, wenze konke okuthandayo, kodwa wazi lokhu, ngelinye ilanga uyoqalekisa ngisho nosuku owazalwa ngalo* (p. 114).

‘Listen carefully daughter-in-law, we will come here as we please! This is my son’s house. Hear this what I am going to tell you, do as you please, but one day you will curse even the day you were born’.

Daisy feels that it is time for the Dlaminis to accept her freedom. They cannot dictate to her what to do. As has been said earlier, their coming to her house amounts to invading her privacy. She is determined to make this clear to them. When Themba’s sister, Sonto, remarks on Daisy’s freedom, Daisy responds by saying:

*Lalela la! Mina ngingahamba nanoma ngabe iyiphi indoda mntakwethu, ngikhululekile manje...* (p. 114).

‘Listen here my dear, I can date any man I want, and I am a free woman now’.

Daisy’s response is in sharp contrast to what the Dlaminis had been expecting. They still feel that she is part of the family, and she cannot do as she pleases as their daughter-in-law.

Daisy is starting to feel suspicious of Buthelezi’s latest behaviour. He does not visit her as regularly as he used to, either during her lunch times or at her home. This is new behaviour, which begins to puzzle her. Now that Buthelezi has achieved his goal, he is no longer interested in Daisy. Even when Daisy phones him, she cannot get hold of him. Daisy’s uneasiness is noted in this extract:

*...wathola impendulo yokuthi uButhelezi akekho. Alubeke phansi ucingo ejabhile. Wephuka umoya kwathi akakhale izinyembezi. Ungenwe yini kodwa uButhelezi? Seziyanda izinsuku abangasazijabulisi neze ngazo ngamadina. Kuthi ngwe emqondweni kaDaisy ukuthi lokhu kuqale manje kuleli viki emva kokuba emnike imali uButhelezi ekuqaleni kwalo. Habe, kunokwenzeka yini ukuthi uButhelezi ubemqola le mali? Lutho, sikhona isivumelwano esisayiniwe asazobuye asifunde kahle (p. 144).*

'... she got a reply that Buthelezi was not in....and she dropped the phone disappointed. She was hurt and close to tears....what has befallen Buthelezi? There have been more days without dinner outings lately; then it dawned on Daisy that all this new behaviour commenced since the day she handed him the cheque, at the beginning of the week. Good gracious! Could Buthelezi been on a mission to defraud her? No ways, there is a signed agreement that she is yet to read properly'.

Buthelezi has successfully deceived Daisy into believing him and is now prepared to discard her. He is not interested in whether he is hurting her feelings or not. Daisy had been so convinced that she had found a companion and a business partner, while, all along, Buthelezi has had ulterior motives. This shows cruelty on the part of the trickster, Buthelezi, because his relationship with Daisy also involves a lot of money. It appears as though the ruthless Buthelezi knew from the start of this relationship what he wished to achieve. It is, however, a painful experience for Daisy, and a harsh lesson. The heroine of the piece had thought that she had found a genuine and a mature person who was going to give her love. Their relationship turns sour after Buthelezi has received the money, and this spells the end of their relationship. When Daisy questions Buthelezi about not answering her phone calls and not coming to visit her as regularly as he used to, he suggests that they end their relationship immediately. Buthelezi scolds:

*Unemibuzo eminingi engayi ndawo. Uthando yinto ephelayo Daisy, ngicela sihlukane. Ngiyaxolisa nje ukukutshela lokho, kodwa nawe uzovuma ukuthi kungcono kunokuzenzisa. Sengiyehluleka. Mhlawumbe sigijime kakhulu esikhathini esifushane (p. 146).*

'You have lots of inconsequential questions. Daisy, love comes and goes, let us part ways, please. I am sorry to have to tell you that, but you must agree it is a better option than to pretend. I cannot do this anymore. Maybe we bit too much than we could chew in a short time'.

What pains Daisy the most at this ugly turn of events is the loss of her money. She does not even want to imagine the possible outcome of all this, especially her money. Very concerned, Daisy asks Buthelezi about her money:

*Ngicela ungajahi Mthunzi, asikaqedi. Ngibuza ukuthi imali yami-ke yona usuyayikhohlwa yini? Ngifuna imali yami la. Ngifuna ukubona ukuthi lelo gugu eliwumkakho lizokwenzelani. ...uma ucabanga ukuthi ngizokuncenga, nxese bhusha, inyama yakho izacile. Ayibuye imali yami (p. 146).*

‘Please slow down Mthunzi, we are not done yet. I would like to know if you have forgotten about my money. I want my money back. I want to see what your precious wife will do for you.....if you think I am going to beg you, think again! I am sorry, I am not going to fall for that. Bring back my money’.

Buthelezi calmly responds:

*Imali yakho ayikho ngakumina, anginamali yakho. Uma ukuphikisa lokho, hamba enkantolo, siyohlangana khona. Uze noqweqwe lukammeli uma uthanda (p. 146).*

‘No money of yours is with me! If you disagree, go to court, we will meet there. Bring the best lawyer, if you wish’.

Daisy’s situation seems more complicated than she thought. Buthelezi had made her sign a ‘supposedly’ legal contract document regarding the transaction, which she now realises was a bogus contract. She trusted Buthelezi so unreservedly (and so foolishly) that she simply signed the contract without even reading it. From the author’s point of view, this proves Daisy’s (like most women) naivety and stupidity: she should surely have been wise enough to read the contract before signing it. After reading the document, she would have decided whether or not she agrees with its contents. Her naivety proves fatal at the end, when Daisy discovers that it is a fake contract, and that she has been gulled. The author says:

*Uthe lapho ephakathi nokufunda iphepha, wahwaqabala. Yini le ayibonayo? Khona sekuthiwa wona eNkosini isingaze imshaye kanje? Wayifunda kaninginingi leyo ndawana eyayimbeka kwangqingetshe. Kwakubhalwe ukuthi imali leyo uButhelezi umbolekwa uyoyikhokha emva kweminyaka elishumi nanhlanu, ingenanzalo (p. 148).*

‘Her face darkened as she was in the middle of reading the document: what the heck was this she was seeing? Even if she had committed the most unpardonable sin, would God punish her like this? She read the part that gave her an impasse several times: It was stated clearly that the money loaned to Buthelezi will only be paid in fifteen years without interest’.

From a feminist point of view, Daisy’s misery does not come as a surprise. Her character portrayal is aimed at revealing that women are stupid and gullible, and are not able to foresee danger. The author seems to subscribe to the view that women are not capable of making the right decisions in life, for instance, in choosing the right partner

or spending money wisely. These are some of the views that call for deconstruction in many literary texts that appear to endorse the maintaining of the old Zulu outlook in the portrayal of female characters.

Daisy finally realises that she has been duped. This whole drama of her life's story is slowly unfolding in her mind, and she curses herself: "How did she allow herself to be fooled by someone she thought she loved?" The excerpt below shows how frustrated she is when she tries to approach Buthelezi and she receives no positive outcome. The sad truth is not only that Daisy has been left out of pocket, but Buthelezi does not even wish to speak to her anymore. Daisy is now left to lick her wounds. Adding more misery to her sadness is that she had given all her money to Buthelezi in the hope of a good return, which has now faded away:

*Walucosha futhi ucingo khona ekuseni, wazama ukuxhumana noButhelezi. Lapho sebexhumene, avele anxaphe uButhelezi bese elushaya phansi ucingo. Kuphinde futhi kuthi ngwe kuDaisy, kucace emqondweni wakhe ukuthi uyiqondile ngempela uButhelezi le nto ayishilo. Wayezokwenzenjani? Waphelelwa yikho konke ukuhlakanipha nokwazi, wazithola eyisiphukuphuku (p. 149).*

'She picked up the phone again that same morning and tried to reach Buthelezi. When Buthelezi picked up the phone, he answered it by swearing at her and dropped the phone in her ear. Again, it further dawned afresh in Daisy's mind that Buthelezi actually meant every word he had said. What was she going to do now? All wisdom evaporated, she felt like a real fool'.

Daisy's dream of becoming a successful and prosperous businesswoman has come to an abrupt end. The person she had trusted fully with her money has deserted her in the most painful way. She does not have any legal recourse to challenge Buthelezi in court, because Buthelezi has made her sign a fake contract agreement. All her dreams are shattered. After much contemplation, she realises that the only people she can talk to are her in-laws. The author indicates that Daisy, on reflection, believes that she may have made a mistake by not listening to her in-laws and denying them part of the inheritance. All Daisy wants to do is to apologise to her erstwhile family, trying to make amends, however, she is reluctant because she knows how she has treated them, and is not sure whether they will accept her apology. She is caught in a very difficult situation. The author says:

*Lapho evuka ekuseni wambelesela umcabango wabakwaDlamini. Sengathi wona yena ngokuthatha imali. Yebo kwakungeyakhe. Ibizwa ngaye, kodwa yayiphuma kwaDlamini. Akhumbule isihluku secala. Kuvele kuthi ngwe emqondweni wakhe ukuthi kayikho enye indawo ayengabambelela kuyona phansi komthunzi welanga ngaphandle komndeni wakwaDlamini. Noma-ke isihluku ayesikhombise kubona babezosibuyisela kuye? Ithemba lobuhle lithi ngeke (p. 153).*

‘On waking up the following day, the thoughts about the Dlamini’s nagged her. Maybe she was wrong in taking the money. True it was hers, left to her, but it was still Dlamini wealth. Then she pondered on the crudeness of the court case. It then became clear to her that her only refuge under the sun was the Dlamini family; true she had been cruel to them, but would they want an eye for an eye in return? Hope for the best chime says, no, they would not’.

Daisy’s tragedy is that of a stereotypical character portrayal of female characters in some Zulu literary texts. It would be interesting to learn his fate were the protagonist a male character. Would he suffer the same ruin? From a feminist point of view, it is unlikely that the protagonist would, as a man.

#### **5.4 Summary of the chapter**

The chapter has presented some of the challenges facing widows in a male-dominated society, as well as some contradictory aspects of *ukuzila* (to mourn), as well as a woman’s search for freedom in the patriarchal society. Daisy’s search for freedom after her husband’s death is viewed as deviant mainly because she refuses to observe certain traditional rites and practices and that she is not prepared to share her inheritance with her in-laws.

Daisy’s depiction in this novel shows the authorial bias. From a patriarchal point of view, Daisy’s behaviour is unacceptable, hence she is deserving of the punishment of losing her inheritance to Buthelezi. But, from a feminist perspective, Daisy is within her rights to follow her heart and mind, without being **curtailed** by the patriarchal stereotypes. Her freedom must not be infringed by things based on the ‘supposed’ adherence to the oppressive traditional rites that she has to perform. Indeed “some our roots should be to rot”, a sentiment shared by Moletsane in this chapter. The next chapter deals with the textual analysis of the play *Ngiwafunge AmaBomvu*.

## CHAPTER SIX

### 6. A CRITIQUE OF FORCED MARRIAGE *NGIWAFUNGE AMABOMVU*, (1993), 'I swear by AmaBomvu', by L. Molefe

#### 6.1 Introduction

This chapter analyses and outlines bravery and courage of a female character as evidenced in the play by Lawrence Molefe, *Ngiwafunge Amabomvu*. The chapter outlines ways in which some of the traditional practices have oppressed women and violated their rights. It also examines and challenges the flaws and failures of the patriarchal system. From a patriarchal point of view, King Mgidi is portrayed as a weak king because he does not follow tradition that has existed for many centuries in the AmaBomvu kingdom.

#### 6.2 Synopsis of the play, *Ngiwafunge AmaBomvu*

The play begins with Thulisile, the protagonist, being chosen as the wife by the king, Mgidi, with her twin sister, Thulile. Thulile has already accepted the marriage offer from the king, regardless of what her sister wishes. Thulisile, however, has a boyfriend, Zaba. Thulisile intends to maintain her steady relationship with her boyfriend at whatever cost. The king notices Thulisile's negative and unbecoming behaviour, and orders his *inyanga* (herbalist) to work on her, in order for Thulisile to love the king.

Thulisile falls pregnant, and the king thinks he is the father of the unborn baby, however, he eventually finds out that the child is not his: it is Zaba's. The king realises the element of determination between the two lovers, hence the acceptance of his fate. Instead of killing them as expected, ironically the king appoints Zaba as his informer as a reward for his bravery in defying the king's orders. The king declares Zaba and Thulisile husband and wife. Zaba is later promoted to be the king's officer.

The concept of forced marriage which will inform the bulk of the analysis of this play in this chapter is summarised below. A forced marriage is a marriage in which one or both spouses do not consent to the marriage but are coerced into it. Duress can include

physical, psychological, financial, sexual, and emotional pressure (Kotze, *et al*, 2012:42).

The practice of a forced marriage is the major theme in *Ngiwafunge AmaBomvu*. The contrast between the two reactions of the twins to polygamy, as one of the controlling institutions of male authority, exemplifies Molefe's use of more than one perspective in tackling this issue. Thulile and Thulisile's differing responses to forced marriage reflect Molefe's own ambivalence towards this tradition, and leaves room for different readers' responses (Rimmon-Kenan, 1983:50). The multiple perspectives suggest the impossibility of a unified subjectivity. Such a practice is directly opposed to that of most pre-modernist thought, or novelists who present a univocal authorial voice and who make all the decisions for their readers. However, it seems that Molefe does not derive her influence from modernism but rather from the practice of orality. These multiple perspectives, dramatised by Molefe, have been transposed from oral practice, and allow more than one perspective to have equal validity (Rimmon-Kenan, 1983:65). For instance, Thulile passively and unquestioningly accepts the king's proposition for a marriage, while Thulisile vociferously rejects the idea. Thulisile questions how both of them, she and her sister, Thulile, can assume the status of a queen.

### **6.3 Women, patriarchy and forced marriage**

Forced marriages were common practice amongst the upper classes in Europe until the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and is still practised in parts of South and East Asia, Africa, and the Middle East. Forced marriages are usually acceded to because of family pride, or because of the wishes of the parents, or for social obligations. In most cases, but not in all forced marriages, the female, rather than the male, is the involuntary spouse (Kathrada, 2015:30). The United Nations views forced marriages as a form of human rights abuse which violates the principle of freedom of autonomy of individuals. Bride kidnapping or marriage by abduction, or marriage by capture or elopement is a practice by which a man abducts the woman he wishes to marry. Bride kidnapping is a practice that still occurs in some parts of South Africa, especially in the Eastern Cape, and also in South Asia. Thulisile's 'supposed' marriage is a forced one because she does not give consent to this arrangement, only the king and her family wish it. Khonzeni tries to convince Thulisile:

*Ningumuntu oyedwa nina Thulisile ninoThulile, kanti uthi yini ebangele ukuthi inkosi inithathe nobabili?* (p. 3).

‘You and Thulile are one person. What do you think made the king to marry you both?’

Nokufika insists on the misconception that twins should never be separated because they are one person:

*Awehlukani swa amawele Khonzeni, ikakhulu uma eyogana inkosi. Wumthetho wenkosi nesizwe kanye namadlozi aso lowo* (p. 44).

‘Twins are never separated Khonzeni, especially when it comes to marrying the king. That is the law of the land and its ancestors’.

The play demystifies the myth that twins are like duplicates. In the play, twins refuse to collaborate, implying the author’s unqualified support for women’s differing resolutions to problems. Thulisile says:

*Wuthunge-ke umlomo wami okungcono. Ngeke ngithule ngingayitsheli inkosi ukuthi iphaphalazile uma iphaphalazile. Iphaphalazile phela. Ukuphaphalaza lokhu* (p. 4).

‘Rather shut my mouth then! I can never be silenced into not telling the King that he has committed a grave error; he has made a big mistake indeed.’

The play reflects the author’s understanding of the contradictions between women, particularly twins, as in this case, depicting them in a variety of solutions along the continuum of victimhood to self-affirming assertiveness. In the play, the author allows Thulile and Thulisile to make their individual choices regarding their marriage to the king. Both women are granted these individual choices and these reflect their own life-histories, their interests, experiences, and individual solutions to the problems. Therefore, a criticism that seeks for a single coherent outlook in the author or in his characters may prove to be flawed.

The play portrays a strong, mature woman who is capable of making her own decisions with regard to her own life. She does not accept what she considers the practice of a barbarous limitation to her freedom of choice. She does this despite her knowledge that no one may disobey the king: everyone under the king must follow his orders. What makes the situation even more difficult for her is that her boyfriend is the son of the king’s most loyal headman, Msanka. When one of the girls accompanying Thulisile to



her 'new home' tells her that she must follow orders and not disrespect the king, Thulisile replies:

*Akusho lutho lokho kimi* (p. 1).  
'That does not mean anything to me'.

It is evident from the extract that Thulisile is not afraid of the king. According to her, it does not matter who gives orders. This is a sign of unimaginable bravery in the face of tradition. What Thulisile does is against the social norms in a patriarchal society. For this reason everybody around her is concerned about her negative attitude towards the arrangement. Her courage and bravery is viewed in a negative light because she is a woman, while she is content to fight for her freedom and to release herself from the shackles of patriarchy and tradition.

It is interesting to point out that Thulisile's boyfriend, Zaba, also does not wish to hear anything about this forced marriage. He is determined to stand by Thulisile, no matter the outcome. This is proof enough of true love from both of them. Zaba is prepared to elope with Thulisile regardless of the dangers they might encounter along the way. He is prepared to die for her.

*Thulisile, tshela impelesi yakho ukuthi sesiyahamba manje. Ungowami wena, angikuhlanganisele nabanye abantu, anginandaba ukuthi banazikhundla zini labo bantu.* (p. 24).  
'Thulisile, tell your chaperon that we are leaving now. You are and mine only and I do not share you with other people, I do not care what positions those people have'.

Zaba's utterance of such words raises concerns, but also affirms his commitment to their love. Their lives are put into more danger because of this commitment. Firstly, Thulisile's rejection of the king puts them at risk. Secondly, the king is not aware of Thulisile's relationship with Zaba. Thirdly, Thulisile is pregnant with Zaba's child. The king, on the other hand, knows about Thulisile's pregnancy, but he is of the opinion that the child is his. Thulisile reminds Zaba about the danger they may face were the king to find out that the child is not his. She says:

*Manje ake usho nje Zaba, isizwe sizothini uma sithola ukuthi le ndlalifa engiyithwele manje akuyona eyamaBomvu? Uyazi ukuthi impilo yethu iya ngokuya ingena enkingeni? (p. 51).*

‘Now tell me Zaba, what will the whole kingdom say when they find out that this heir I am carrying does not belong to AmaBomvu? Do you realize that our lives are getting more and more complicated?’

Thulisile and Zaba are united in their resolve to oppose this arrangement. They are a pair of equal minds who are determined to shape their destiny and future. The irony here is that, since the king is not aware of the relationship between Thulisile and Zaba, he wishes to appoint Zaba as his informer. Zaba has proven to be an intelligent individual who has been of great help to the royal household. The job of an informer is a high-profile position that requires the individual to be a loyal servant of the king. It also requires him to be trustworthy. King Mgidi shares his secret with his most trusted right-hand-man about what he is planning for Zaba:

*Ngizokhuluma indlebe Msanka sisobabili njena. Umfana wakho ngizomenza inhloli yami (p. 31).*

‘Let me tell you something between us only, Msanka. I will make your son my informer’.

Zaba’s family is also very anxious about his actions. His family warns him that disrespecting the king will put their lives in danger. His mother, MaGubeshe, cautions:

*Akuyona inganekwane lena. Wena Zaba uyadlala thina sibe siphatheke kabuhlungu ngento ezosehlela. Lo muzi inkosi izowushisa wonke, ibulale konke okukuwo. Musa ukusenza izingane (p. 59).*

‘This is no fairy tale. Zaba, you keep fooling around when we are dead worried about what will befall us. The King will burn down this household and kill all in it. Do not treat us like kids’.

Zaba is not interested in his parents’ advice. He has only one thing in mind: that Thulisile will never marry the king while he is still alive. This is the same sentiment shared by Thulisile. The king does not frighten him, even if he has to face death. His father, Msanka, again warns him:

*Inkosi iyinkosi Zaba. Inkosi ngumuntu wokuhlonishwa (p. 59).*

‘Zaba, the king is by virtue a king. The king is the person who is to be respected’.

Thulisile is steadfast and knows what she wants in life. No one can break her resolution.

She says:

*Khonzeni, ake ungitshela, wena ungavuma nje ukuthi wehlukaniswe nesoka lakho? Ungavuma uma inkosi ithi gana umfana wayo manje ushiye uMzinto wakho? Mina ngoba nakhu ngisamthanda ngasese uZaba angikamqomi lokhu kokwaziwa yizwe lonke kuhle ukuthi ngenziwe nje? (p. 2).*

‘Khonzeni, just tell me...would you agree to be separated from your beloved? Would you agree to leave Mzinto and marry the King’s son right now if he said so? Just because I am still secretly in love with Zaba and have not made a public declaration thereof, does that justify my being treated thus?’

Thulisile believes that one cannot be separated from one’s lover simply because orders come from the king. She stands by her decision regardless of whom is giving orders for her to marry the king. Khonzeni says:

*Kahle Thulisile. Ngeke ilunge le ndaba uma ulwa. Zithobe. Inkosi uma isikukhethile ukuthi uyigane, isikukhethile. Akukho okungenziwa, kodwa mhlawumbe zikhona izaba umuntu angazenza (p. 2).*

‘Hold on Thulisile! Nothing will come right of this issue if you go on a war path. Humble yourself. Once the King has chosen you to be his bride, it is a done deal; nothing can be done but perhaps we can try’.

It is clear from the above quotation that Thulisile is supremely confident and steadfast in her decision. This is a woman who defies all the odds and stands by her position, regardless of the consequences. Thulisile continues to say:

*Akuwona umendo kodwa lona (p. 3).*  
‘This is actually no marriage though’.

From the above quotation, one may observe Thulisile’s defiance. For her, this is not marriage; it is marriage of convenience on the part of the king, which she is not prepared to accept. For some girls, this would have been a dream come true, especially being married to a king. Marrying a king carries an enviable status and recognition in the community, the wife assuming the status of a queen (Manyedi *et al.*, 2003:72) has this to say about arranged marriages:

Although the arranged marriage issue affects both young men and women, it is usually women who are victims. Besides the fact that men can manage to refuse if they do not want to marry the woman given to them, they still have the

advantage in other respects. For instance, even if he marries the woman given to him by his parents, he still can go ahead and get himself another wife of his own choice, which is not the case with women.

The above quotation shows that the practice of arranged marriages only benefits the man and disadvantages the woman. It also follows from the above quotation that the man may still marry another wife, if he chooses to, while the woman cannot take on another man. From a feminist point of view, this practice does not afford both sexes equal rights in the marriage partnership, and therefore women are subjugated and deprived of the freedom to marry whom they want to get married to.

### **6.3.1 Defying the patriarchal system and the divine rights of kings**

Thulisile's defiance is clearly evident throughout the play. She questions the right of the king to force her to marry him, thus running contrary to the generally accepted social norms that a king can pick and choose anyone to marry in his community. As if to render his message clearer, Molefe also introduces Thulile, who is Thulisile's twin sister to serve as her foil. Thulile does not refuse or even object when she is forced to marry the king. Thulisile's friends warn her that her defiance would endanger the lives of all the people around her, as the king has powers to kill his opponents or those who do not follow his orders. According to her, this tradition only favours men and not all members of society, especially not women. Her twin sister, Thulile, is also very concerned about her sister's defiant behaviour:

*Udadewethu udinga ukunikwa izeluleko ezinjani ngoba uyazi ukuthi iyingozi le nto ayenzayo. Okubi nje ukuthi akazange alususe uchuku ngenkathi silethwa lapha ukuba sizogana inkosi (p. 11).*

'I see what my sister is up to. It is terrible! I am just wondering what advice she can be given as she must be aware the route she is opting for is dangerous. What makes it worse is that she never raised a storm when we were being brought to be the king's wives'.

Thulisile insists that she would rather die than be forced to marry the king. The dramatic conflict intensifies when Thulisile refuses to eat and to be pleasant to the king. Thulile advises her sister not to challenge the authority of the king. Khonzeni, who is accompanying them, reminds Thulile about the consequences if her sister does not change her mind. She says:

*Make ngigcizelele nje Thulile, udadewenu uzokwenza ukuthi nibulawe nobabili uma eqhubeka kanje. Nizofa ngempela. Akuyona into enzima ukuthi inkosi ikhiphe izwi elithi umuntu ongayenelisi makabulawe (p. 11).*

‘Let me emphasize this Thulile: if your sister carries on like this, she will ultimately get you both killed. You will surely die. It is no big deal for the king to order a swift execution of anyone that displeases him’.

The death threat that moves other girls does not move Thulisile. This conflict becomes dramatic irony in that the girls should be joining Thulisile’s fight for the rights of all Zulu women, instead, they plead with her to agree to the king’s proposal of forced marriage. What Thulisile does is against the social norms in a patriarchal society. For this reason, everybody around her is fearful in the face of her negative attitude to the arrangement. Thulisile’s courage and bravery is viewed in a negative light by those involved, while she is content to fight for her freedom and release herself from the shackles of patriarchy and tradition. The man poses a rhetorical question to Thulisile:

*Wavumelani ukuzogana enkosini pho? (p. 91).*

‘Then why did you agree to be married to the King?’

In the man’s mind Thulisile has no other option but to obey the king’s orders. Her response is clear and straightforward and is a sign of bravery. The forced marriage reflects the unfair treatment of the people by the king, especially in choosing the wife. Thulisile says:

*Inkosi kayiphikiswa (p. 91).*

‘No one objects to the King’.

Thulisile, ironically maintains that one should be free to choose one’s partner, regardless of the expectations of the society. Thulisile represents many women who have been oppressed and afraid to challenge such subordination in the guise of tradition. Zaba offers the promise of love, which is what Thulisile wants, while, on the other hand, society expects Thulisile to conform to societal norms and tradition. She is prepared to die for something that she believes in rather than submit to something she does not want.

The paradox arises when the king appoints Zaba as his informer, as a reward for his father’s loyalty. At the end of the play, Zaba’s mother MaGubeshe, Thulile, Thulisile,

Nokufika and Khonzeni (who are accompanying the twins) are all brought up for public trial for betraying the king. King Mgidi states that they are all going to be killed. Zaba tells the king that he is prepared to die for the girl he loves and requests that the king let others go. Again Thulisile reiterates her point: “*Ukugcagca nomuntu ongamfuni kufana ncamashi nokufa!*” (P. 91). ‘(To be married to someone you do not love is the same as dying!).’ Again, Mgidi realises that his insistence on marrying Thulisile is a force to reckon with. Ultimately the king is impressed by the courage displayed by the couple.

The play shows cultural and social conflict between men and women when confronting the problem of freedom of choice of a marriage partner. Many societies do not intend to change what they consider a legitimate tradition that gives men all the advantages, in order to listen to the reasons of the hearts of their daughters on the question of marriage. Thulisile challenges men’s conservatism, and strives for change because tradition is heartless and exposes her to horrible abuses. Thulisile does not wish to give herself completely to a man she cannot trust and does not love.

*Angingani mina umuntu ongangishelanga* (p. 13).

‘I do not get married to a person who has never even tried to woo me’.

According to her, such a marriage arrangement denies her freedom to choose. She says:

*Bengingazi ukuthi kugana nabantu abanamasoka abo kulo muzi wasebukhosini mina. Bengingazi ukuthi kugana abantu abangabuzwanga ukuthi banabo yini abantu babo abazikhethela bona ngoba bebathanda...* (p. 12).

‘I never knew that even girls with boyfriends are made to marry into this royal household. I did not know that women are married without being asked whether they have their chosen lovers whom they chose because they love them...’

Patriarchal domination is especially detailed in this play. The play illustrates how brave a woman can be when she is fighting for her right to choose her marriage partner, even when a person of the status of the king is involved. Thulisile maintains that such a marriage will only happen over her dead body:

*Inhliziyo yomuntu yiyo engumbusi wakhe. Ukugcagca nomuntu ongamthandi empilweni yakho kufana ncimishi nokufa* (p. 91).

‘Every person follows their heart. Agreeing to marry someone you do not love is equivalent to death’.

### 6.3.2 Compliance and non-conformity to tradition

Thulisile’s twin sister (Thulile) tries to make her understand that the king’s orders have to be respected and his decisions cannot be questioned. Thulile says:

*Bewungakaqomi dadewethu. Futhi lo muntu omganile akatshelwa leyo nto. Ucabanga wena ukuthi inkosi kufanele ibange nabafokazana?* (p. 12).

‘You had not officially declared him your lover, sister. And the person you are married to can never be told any of that. Do you think the King must compete with commoners for wives?’

It is clear from the above dialogue that the king and the rest of the society do not know about Zaba and Thulisile’s relationship. Traditionally, a young woman and a young man would not date openly in the Zulu society without all the relevant procedures and processes having been followed. For instance, a young man and the young woman who are dating would erect what was called an *iduku* (white flag) in their respective homes to show society that they are in love. After this, when both families had agreed, *ilobolo* negotiations would resume between the two families. Neither Zaba nor Thulisile have followed this protocol, hence nobody knows about the love affair.

Khonzeni continues to emphasise the way in which the king goes about demonstrating his powers, especially to his people. She says:

*Inkosi Nokufika inezinye izinyathelo ezingahambisani nenqubo eyejwayelekile. Okokuqala nje, aweshelwanga lawa mantombazane avele alandwa ngoba ngawabafokazana. Kade ezokweshelwa ukuba kade ezalwa ebukhosini. Uyayibona leyo nto?* (p. 43).

‘The King Nokufika follows other procedures which are unusual to normal ones. To start with, these girls were not courted, they were simply fetched because they are commoners’ children. They would have been courted if they were of royal lineage. Do you understand that?’

The above quotation shows that the king is allowed to abuse his power in choosing his marriage partner. No one may challenge his orders once he has made his decision. This is demonstrative of patriarchal powers which Foucault (1977: 29) terms ‘discursive formation’, in which power operates via mechanisms of socialism and community. This

term is also used to refer to the particular discourse governed by the principle in which different examples share the same patterns of concerns, perspectives, concepts or themes.

According to Foucault (1977:40), discourse refers to the ways of constituting knowledge, together with the social practice, forms of subjectivity and power relations which are inherent in such knowledges and relations between them. In short, discourses are more than ways of thinking and producing meaning. In this type of set-up, people have learned to exercise self-discipline, conforming, without the need for direct action. This is what one witnesses in this play- conformity from the members of the society without questioning the king's actions. In a patriarchal society, daughters are taught to accept the roles that society assigns them, with deviant behaviour punished to ensure their sexual and social acceptance (Jewkes, 2002:77).

Nevertheless, Khonzeni has been portrayed by Molefe as Thulisile's confidante. In many instances in the play, Thulisile is seen confiding in Khonzeni all her desires and feelings about the whole situation. Khonzeni seems to be the closest person to her, although Thulile is her twin sister. Khonzeni's attempts to convince Thulisile seem to fall on deaf ears. From the beginning of the play, Thulisile has stood her ground and is not prepared to change, hence Khonzeni admits that:

*Sengizame ngadela ukumbonisa. Usho kugcwale umlomo ukuthi yena angeke azenzise athi uzothanda umuntu angamthandi. Uthi ufuna ukuya kuZaba, isoka lakhe (p. 9).*

'I have tried all I can to speak sense to her. She states it categorically that she will never fake loving a man she does not. She says that she only wants to return to Zaba, her love'.

Khonzeni serves as a mouthpiece of the oppressed, represented by Thulisile in this case. Khonzeni represents the voice who are, by some 'patriarchal innovations', have been silenced to speak for fear of reprisals. In the above quotation, Thulisile makes it crystal clear that she only wants Zaba, her boyfriend, and not the king. Ironically, Khonzeni has warned the king and his headmen about Thulisile's refusal to marry, but the king wants to hear none of it.



Thulisile's role in the play is quite obvious. She does not wish to entertain the idea of 'giving herself' away' to a man she does not love. Her argument is that this tradition dehumanises people and makes them forget about the needs of the heart. She feels that this tradition should be abolished because it causes more harm than good in the lives of people. She says this with reference to the fact that she already has a boyfriend whom she truly loves. She is also not prepared to discard her boyfriend merely to follow tradition.

Thulisile's insistence on not marrying the king has everybody worried, especially those associated with her. She does not fear the king nor what society will say about her behaviour. Thulisile shows real bravery in ignoring and disregarding the advice given to her. Nokufika warns:

*Uzobulawa Thulisile* (p. 13).  
'You are going to be killed Thulisile'.

Socializing boys and girls to acquiesce in the domination of men throughout life unwittingly perpetuates and normalises violence as an acceptable or tolerable means of asserting power and resolving conflict. In Foucault's (1977:57) view, this play shows the imbalance of power relations among the members of society as expressed through language and practices used in the play. Thulisile's actions are threatened with death and the members of society have been made to believe that this is normal. In this instance, violence and aggression is a demonstration of male superiority and power, frequently used as a solution in renegotiating ideas of masculinity or to resolve a crisis of male identity. Violence and aggression also serve to enforce distinct gender roles and hierarchy through punishment of transgressions, demonstrating the low social value and power of women who do not fulfil gender role expectations (Sawicki, 1999:45). The punishment of transgressors by the king is what many fear in this play. Thulisile shows great resilience in opposing the forced marriage. In opposing the forced marriage in the excerpt below:

*Ngingamane ngife* (p. 13).  
'I would rather die'.

The above quotation shows how determined Thulisile is to reveal her stance to the king. She is ready to face the consequences. She is also ready to take her destiny into her own hands. The sad thing is that she will not be the only one put to death – those around her would also suffer the consequences. Nevertheless, the fatal consequences seem to not frighten Thulisile. It is important to acknowledge here that these patriarchal systems are not only obstacles to the liberation of women; they are a societal problem for both males and females. Kathrada (2015:33.) states that:

If you are a girl, automatically you are at a disadvantage right from the start. Boys or men, they don't get that, they don't feel the same pressure, they are put on a pedestal in a way, because they are male. Even if she is not the one in the wrong, a girl is never trusted to be going the right way.

The statement above appears true when one studies Thulisile's situation from a patriarchal point of view. Her actions are deemed reckless and deserving of punishment because she is challenging the social order that has existed for many centuries. Her actions are judged rebellious because, traditionally, no one challenges the king's authority. Thulisile's situation also becomes complex because she is a woman who is not supposed to voice her feelings, especially in a patriarchal set-up.

Thulisile argues:

*Bese uthi uyangithanda-ke umuntu ozongibulala uma ngiveza amaqiniso angaphakathi enhliziyweni yami? (p. 3).*

'And then you tell me that a person who is going to kill me for telling the truth about my innermost feelings loves me?'

Thulisile is very strong and positive in her stance against the forced marriage. Both Khonzeni and Thulile insist that she cannot challenge the king's powers. Thulisile believes that she cannot be forced to love somebody she does not (love). She says:

*Dadewethu, uma ngabe ukhuluma ngale nto akade engiyale ngayo uKhonzeni, ngiyaxolisa ukuphinda ngisho ukuthi akulona isoka lami inkosi le na. Ayisoze futhi yaba yisoka lami. Mina? Ngiqome uMgidi, ekhona uZaba? Ngingaba nomyeni ngingazange ngidlule ekubeni nesoka? (p. 11-12).*

'My sister, if you are referring to the issue I have been advised on by Khonzeni, I am sorry to reiterate that the king is no boyfriend or love of mine, and never will! Fall in love with Mgidi when Zaba is still alive? Never! How can I have a husband when he has never been my boyfriend?'

Thulisile appears to question the decisions and powers of the king in many instances during the course of the play. She cannot imagine a woman who already has a boyfriend being forced to marry somebody she does not love. She is not moved to change her decision despite the fact that this predicament involves the king and her boyfriend, who is a commoner.

The above quotation reflects the imbalance of power between men and women in a patriarchal society. It is accepted as normal for boys to behave in a certain way, while in similar conditions, such behaviour in a girl would be deemed unacceptable. Feminists such as Young (1990) have identified three main areas in which they have conceptualized power: as a resource to be (re) distributed, as domination and as empowerment. In this play, it is clear that the king is using his power to dominate and subjugate women, Thulile and Thulisile, in particular. Young (1990) shares the same idea with Butler (1990) as he does not view power as a resource or critical social good, but instead views it in relation to domination. Although feminists have used a variety of terms to refer to this kind of relation – including ‘oppression’, ‘patriarchy’, ‘subjection’, and so forth – the common thread in this analysis is an understanding of power not only as power over, but as a specific kind of power over relation, namely, one that is unjust or illegitimate.

The king’s privilege to choose any wife he desires entails the violation of someone else’s rights and this means disregarding the woman’s feelings. This is equivalent to oppressing women. Thulisile stands as an example of women who believe that change is necessary and must be imminent when women reject what they believe is unfair and unjust. Thulisile is prepared to sacrifice her life rather than submit to such a marriage.

Some female characters in literature, such as Thulisile, set a very good example of women who are courageous agents of change. The play, *Ngiwafunge AmaBomvu*, contains a clear demonstration of this. It is a model of oppressed people speaking out and breaking the shackles of their bondage and oppression, setting an example for future developments. Another similar example of the violation of a woman’s right to marry may be drawn from *Uvalo Lwezinhlonzi* (1956), ‘(Fear of Frowns)’, written by J.K. Ngubane. This novel, *Uvalo Lwezinhlonzi*, similarly, shows how the father uses his patriarchal powers to choose the husband for his daughter so that he accumulates

his wealth and elevates his social status. The novel views the failures of this system, condemning the greed of the parents. It also reflects that a woman, legally, according to patriarchal tradition, has no freedom in the choice of her marriage partner. The unequal treatment of women is grounded on the assumption of their inferior status that has, historically, remained largely unchallenged. Although *Uvalo Lwezinhlonzi* was published in 1956, its theme is still relevant today. Bajwayele, who is the main character in this novel, shows great courage and bravery in fighting inhumane practices by her father (Gumede, 2002:31). Her action resembles Thulisile's in *Ngwafunge AmaBomvu*.

Spivak (1988) cited in Fuss (1989:31) addresses the critique levelled against materialists, exposing and undermining the elitism which characterizes South Asian culture and the failure to address adequately questions of subjectivity. Spivak (1988:197) argues that:

Subaltern studies deploys essentialism as a provisional gesture in order to align themselves with the very subjects who have been written out of conventional historiography.

What is strikingly different about Spivak's (1988) reading of Subaltern studies is that she does not dismiss their essentialism out of hand. In fact, she reads the collective's humanist ambitions to locate a subaltern consciousness as a 'strategic use of positivist essentialism in a scrupulously visible political interest'. Her critique and endorsement of Subaltern studies' essentialism suggests that humanism can be activated in the service of the subaltern; in other words, when put into practice by the dispossessed themselves, essentialism can be powerfully displacing and disruptive (Spivak, 1988). Spivak's (1988) analysis speaks to the play under discussion, where the elite, King Mgidi, uses his power to control his subjects, including Thulisile.

The play, *Ngwafunge AmaBomvu*, shows that, in a patriarchal society, honour functions as the tool demonstrative of the necessity of gender inequality to maintain the traditional norms. Violence is theorised as a corrective force for sustaining social order generated by patriarchal structures. This is evidenced by the threat of death that is to be meted out to Thulisile and company. Rules and sanctions construct formativeness, gaining legitimacy from religious or moral codes interpreted by reactionary elements in order to authorise, restrict, and punish female social behaviour considered

transgressive of gendered social norms – the boundaries of acceptable femininity laid down by their ethnic or social communities, particularly those related to sexuality and marriage (Feldman, 2010: 307).

### **6.3.3 The female body as the site of resistance: *hlonipha* custom**

The play demonstrates that the female body becomes a political field inscribed and constituted by disciplinary power relations operating to achieve gendered effects. For instance, by engaging in a freely chosen illicit sexual relationship, a woman undermines the ownership rights of others to her body and challenges the traditional social order. Thulisile's relationship with Zaba, is considered illicit because her choice of Zaba 'denies the king the right' to her body. This means that her sexuality is controlled by societal norms which dictate to her what to do with her body. Non-compliance with the patriarchal social norm has dire consequences which involve a broad spectrum on the continuum of violence, ranging from verbal and physical abuse to coercion, psychological harm and life-threatening actions – all of which perpetuate female subordination (Heise, L.L., Raikes, A., Watts, C.H. & Zwi, A.B., 1994:22-26). As part of the expression of masculinity, honour is always lived out openly before other people to provide a public display of patriarchal power – one primarily achieved at the expense of women (ibid., 1994: 30).

The play also presents a paradigm shift in female character portrayal. The playwright has chosen Thulisile as the person through whom events are seen. Thulisile is presented as the woman who is able and willing to voice her feelings and to stand up for her rights. She is in a situation in which, traditionally, a woman would have to accept her fate and go to her traditionally chosen husband without question. Thulisile shows extreme courage in challenging the king's position and his despotic rights. Her act also constitutes a challenge to the social order and ideology that privileges the king to determine and control the lives of his subjects. The playwright evidently wishes to present a model of a free and empowered woman.

Thus, Thulile's character is one of a submissive, subordinate woman who accepts and conforms to the status quo – that the king has absolute powers over his subjects. One would have thought that Thulile and Thulisile would have the same attitude towards

marriage, being twins. Twins often have tastes and ideas in common, however, this is not the case with these twins. In many African cultures, the king has absolute powers to choose whoever he wishes to marry. This practice is still prevalent in many traditional societies of the world. An example of this custom may be drawn from the present ruler of the Swazi Kingdom, King Mswati, and the present ruler of the Zulu monarch, King Goodwill Zwelithini, who still call girls to Umhlanga ceremony and then pick one girl to be the next wife. This tradition has a long history, and monarchs who still practise this tradition do it under the guise that it is their God-given right to do it. It has remained unchallenged for centuries as it violates a girl's freedom to choose whom to marry.

In many societies, once the king has chosen his bride-to-be, the girl cannot refuse, even if the order goes against her will. Such a practice also coerces young girls into marriages, which in some instances results in abuse by the husband. A girl, because she does not have a choice, may be married into a polygamous marriage. She cannot refuse because she, sometimes together with her family, may otherwise be subjected to death. This was, and still is, the harsh reality of forced marriages.

The patriarchal domination is evident in the play. When the king ordered that both twins, Thulile and Thulisile, are to marry him, regardless of their feelings and expectations, he does not even wish to know whether either of them has a boyfriend. He expects his orders to be followed. Thulisile is pressured by her father to marry the king because he knows the consequences if she refuses. The fear in Thulisile's father is further compounded by the fact that he is the man most trusted by the king because of his position in the royal house; for him there is no way that his daughter cannot marry the king. Thulisile's father is among the trusted men who enforce the law in the royal house, either by death or by other means if the subject is not willing to abide by the king's orders.

Male domination is deeply entrenched in the history of the African tradition. Male domination and male superiority surface when men exercise the most control and influence over society's members. The essence of male domination lies in that, for centuries, men have been defined as normal, standard, or even ideal human beings, while women have been viewed as different from men. De Beauvoir (1949:79) has

observed that a man is defined as a human being while a woman is defined as the 'other'. Whenever a woman tries to behave as a human being, she is accused of trying to emulate her male counterpart. In many African societies, women traditionally learn to sit in a 'ladylike' position, while men are permitted to relax and sit as they like. Male domination has a long tradition that is rooted in the pre-historic agricultural revolution. Until fairly recently, it has been virtually unquestioned.

Plant (1905:54) comments on the behaviour of men towards women:

A man found himself tacitly allowed... authority as absolute in its limited sphere as was that of a king in the wider realm of the nation, so much so that if any of his wives or children refused obedience to his authority, and his righteous indignation, seized a thick stick and broke an arm or head, there was no one to interfere with this...

The above quotation shows that men in patriarchal societies have absolute power to punish their wives or daughters who appear to be transgressing their orders, and no one is entitled to question them. In patriarchal societies, men believe that these are God-given powers: anyone who opposes them must be punished.

Davies & Graves (1986:16) argue that African literature has, up to now, largely misrepresented African women's contribution to social and political development. It is high time that a woman's position in every sphere of society, as well as her contribution to the development of the family and the country, be fully recognised. Davies & Graves (1986:16-17) state that:

The nostalgic songs dedicated to African mothers that express the anxieties of men concerning mother Africa are no longer enough for us. The Black woman in Zulu literature must be given the dimension that her role in the liberation struggle next to men has proven to be hers, the dimension which coincides with her proven contribution to the economic development of our country.

The play, *Ngiwafunge AmaBomvu*, constitutes a clarion call for change, especially on the question of women's choices. If this message was modern, relevant, and somewhat revolutionary in the 1990s, when this play was published, it is still relevant today. Many strides have been made in the fight for women's freedom and independence, however, complete equality has not yet been achieved. Parents should begin to act in accordance

with the momentous socio-political changes that the entire world is experiencing. Women have the right to choose with whom to spend the rest of their lives as their husbands, companions, lovers, and fathers of their children. The choice must not be guided by tradition or patriarchal stereotypes. This is the tradition that Thulisile is fighting against.

Critical attention must be given to the absence of a feminine perspective, or the stunted characterization of women in some Zulu literary texts. One need not defend the conscious and unapologetic commitment to freedom of women which underlies the inspiration of most Zulu writers, especially women. By the same token, methodological approaches are consciously and unapologetically devoted to the social, and political substance of women's presence in literature. Women's strides for freedom and self-determination should be reflected in Zulu literary texts if society is committed to liberating women. One should see heroines such as Thulisile given more freedom in Zulu literary texts to express their feelings in the fight against women's oppression.

The play subtly criticises the patriarchal approach of the domination of men over their womenfolk. It shows the failures of the system whereby a king chooses his bride against the bride's will or wishes. The king does this in the guise of the *hlonipha* custom, as every citizen has to respect the king's orders, no matter how cruel or inconsiderate those orders may be. The traditional Zulu *hlonipha* custom is still held in high esteem, but the custom is wide open to abuse by parents and kings, inter alia. Dowling (1988:58) offers that:

As a custom, *hlonipha* will continue to exist because of its historical authority and legitimacy. Research that has been conducted indicates that for many people, its survival is desirable and important. Apart from what people desire and consider important, however, there are other considerations involving factors such as political change, imported values syncretism, the implications and effects of which are as yet not entirely predictable.

In light of the above quotation, one may argue that this *hlonipha* custom is, in itself, oppressive, because it indirectly or directly legitimises women's subordination. Some women are afraid to challenge these man-made practices and customs because they have been brought up under this *hlonipha* custom. Challenging men's conservatism, according to them, is seen as disrespectful.



The play reflects that women are discriminated against and oppressed, unable to choose freely how to run their own lives, and to decide on what to do with their sexuality. This is a political factor, in the sense that it involves 'power-structured' relationships and arrangements whereby one group is controlled by the other. In Zulu society, sex and class are used to marginalise women. The social status is determined by men. *Ilobolo*, for example, is an expression of lack of freedom on the part of women as well as a source of endless unhappiness among women. Men's cruelty to their daughters and wives unfolds as witnessed when *ilobolo* is abused by the husband who has paid it. But this also shows that not all women conform to patriarchal dictates.

The aim of feminism, defined as a struggle to end sexist domination and oppression, is not to benefit any particular sex group, race or class of women nor does it privilege women over men. It challenges the patriarchal conception of male and female roles in society. It also draws a distinction between sex and gender in order to redefine male and female roles. The movement confronts sexual oppression in domains such as reproduction, production, sexuality and socialization. According to Kemp & Squires (1997:24):

Feminism is freedom of women to decide their own destiny; freedom from sex-determined role; freedom from society's oppressive restrictions; freedom to express thoughts fully and to convert them freely into action. Feminism demands the acceptance of women's rights to individual conscience and judgments. It postulates that women's essential worth stems from her common humanity and does not depend on the other relationship.

In light of the above quotation it becomes clear that Thulisile is exercising freedom to dethrone her own destiny and freedom. No one should dictate to her what to do with her life or decide her destiny. She sticks to her guns and does not want to conform to restrictive and oppressive societal customs. She rejects any type of ploy thrown at her by her friends and her twin sister. Now she challenges the king's intentions as she does not agree to his (king) advances. She does not understand how a person who claims to love her can resort to violence if she does not agree with him. The king's final wise judgement is the acceptance of his fate that he has been rejected by Thulisile.

A man from the gathering probes Thulisile with questions regarding her feelings for the king. Thulisile's response sounds like a fairy-tale to the man, as he has never witnessed such bravery from a woman.

*Wena uchaza ukuthi kawuyifuni inkosi? (p. 91).*  
'Do you mean you want nothing to do with the King?'

Thulisile's response is that:

*Ngangingeke ngiyiqome noma ngabe yayiyisesheli sami esinemithi ehlanganiswa yinyanga enamandla ngaphezu kwazo zonke izinyanga esinazo lapha eMaBomvini. Yiqiniso engicela ukulifela manje lelo (p. 91).*  
'I would never fall in love with the king even if he was my suitor who had the best love potions mixed by the best of all the traditional healers we have in this area of eMaBomvini. That is the truth I am ready to give my life up for'.

This is a very bold statement from a woman who faces death as a result of her actions. Such a statement flies directly in the face of male domination in which a woman is expected to toe the line according to instructions given to her. As a woman, and also because of the king's orders, she is expected to *hlonipha* (respect) the king. Miller (1986:62) asserts that:

Women are taught that their main goal in life is to serve others – first men and later children...women are better geared than men to first recognise others' needs and then to believe that they can respond to others' needs without feeling this as a distraction from their sense of identity. The trouble comes only when women are forced to serve others' needs or when they are expected to do so because it is the "only thing women are good at.

Very shocked and in disbelief, the same man asks to ascertain Thulisile's resolute decision:

*Wala inkosi phambi kwabantu abangaka ntombazane, unamagangozi. Kukufanele ngempela ukufa. Ngizophakamisa ukuthi inkosi ilandelise ngawe emva kwalo mfana (p. 91).*  
'How dare you reject the King in front of so many people, girl! You are playing with fire. You really deserve to die. I will recommend that you be next to be strangled after this boy'.

Thulisile's response shocks everyone in attendance. They have never heard of such disrespect towards the king from a young girl, or any member of society for that matter.

Every member in the gathering sighs with awe at Thulisile as this, according to the community, deserves severe punishment. In a patriarchal society, a woman never voices her negative feelings towards the set of norms and traditions that govern the lives of the people.

Overall, the play challenges the king's authority over his subjects under the guise of tradition. The author does this by subtly using Thulisile, the protagonist and heroine, who does not passively accept the king's orders, although she knows that her refusal may result in her death. The argument for her refusal is simply that she can never marry someone that she does not love. She also mentions that the king has never courted her, and even had he done so, she would not have reciprocated because she does not love him.

*Angishongo yini ukuthi ngikhetha ukufa mina kunokuthi ngizohlalela ukuphonswa ngemithi lapha? (p. 38).*

‘Did I not make it clear that I would rather die than agree to come and be part of this witchcraft den?’

Thulisile reiterates her stance with regard to the marriage arrangement. Thulisile chooses death as the only option rather than submit to the king. It becomes apparent from the above assertion that true love conquers everything. Another person would have jumped to the opportunity of marrying a king as it comes with many material benefits; however, Thulisile chooses a commoner, Zaba, whom she truly loves. This serves as testimony that true love always prevail, no matter the obstacles.

It becomes clear from the above discussion that the abuse of human rights of women has existed for a very long time. Such an abuse becomes clear when one examines, for instance, the Vhavenda communities. This practice has existed in these communities under the guise of culture. As has been said earlier, this practice goes as far as teaching a young girl how to become a ‘good wife’ in the Vhavenda culture (Maumela, 1991:8). This practice is sometimes achieved without the consent of the young girl. If the girl does not give consent to such an arrangement, she is likely to endure a life of hell in her new home. In some other countries, for instance, East Asia, the girl sometimes resorts to suicide because of this abuse. An example of resorting to suicide by a bride who does not give consent to such marriages may be drawn from *Uvalo Lwezinhlonzi*. Bajwayele

resorts to taking her own life rather than submit to a marriage she does not desire. Bajwayele escapes from a forced marriage that has been arranged by an extraneous third party (Gumede, 2002:31).

Thulisile is, culturally, supposed to value marriage, family, and children, but for her, this is not the case as her freedom to choose comes first. Khonzeni says:

*Umendo Thulisile. Yini ungacabangi ukuthi kusukela ufikile lapha sewuthathwa njengendlovukazi? Bangaki abantu abavame ukuthola leli thuba ngoba bambalwa* (p. 3).

‘It is definitely a marriage Thulisile. Why can you not see that since you landed here you are treated as the Queen!? Very few people are usually afforded this chance’.

According to some feminists, marriage is a good thing, however, men have transformed its nature to render it a form of women’s subordination. Marriage is a recurring theme in all the literary texts that are analysed here. It can be concluded that marriage plays an important role in African societies. It can be further argued that women in marriage are expected to display certain attributes, like submissiveness, kindness, humility, self-sacrifice and perseverance in order to be socially approved. Masuku (1997:159) states that:

Society still idealises the belief that all women are destined for marriage. One hopes that such beliefs concerning marriage will change as society must concede that culture is dynamic and it is only fair that women are not put under so much pressure as far as marriage is concerned. It should be left to an individual to decide what is best for her as marriage should be a blissful experience for women, and not a bondage.

It becomes evident from this play that tradition and culture are riddled with double standards. Society displays binary opposition between men and women. In a patriarchal society, man has power while a woman has none. Because of the privilege of this ‘power’, men take advantage and abuse women. For instance, Thulisile must follow orders and not disobey the king’s orders because she is a woman. In a patriarchal society, Thulisile has no power to reject the king. Double standards characterise many societies that adhere to the patriarchal system. Such binary oppositions are based on culture rather than nature, and should be deconstructed. Notions like this are based on patriarchal stereotypes and therefore call for change.

### 6.3.4 Unpacking polygamy and polyandry

It is important to examine the concept of polygamy in that it features prominently in this play. Traditionally, and even nowadays, the king, and any person who can afford polygamy would do so with the permission of the first wife. The husband has to be given permission by the first wife before he can take the second, third or fourth wife. Such a decision is also based on the affordability of the husband to maintain his wives.

In *Ngiwafunge AmaBomvu*, King Mgidi's obsession with marrying the twins at the same time is that he believes that at least one if not both of them will bear him the heir to the throne. He also wishes to continue the tradition of having many wives that was initiated by his forefathers.

Polygamy takes centre stage in the play as the king desires to marry both Thulile and Thulisile. Thulisile questions how both of them, she and her sister, Thulile, can assume the status of a queen. Thulisile says:

*Uma kuyimina indlovukazi Khonzeni, uThulile bese eba yini?* (p. 3).  
'If I am the Queen Khonzeni, then what becomes of Thulile?'

Thulisile is concerned about her status in this kingdom. She is not amused by the idea of sharing her husband with her sister, let alone sharing her husband with another woman. Davies & Graves (1986:8) identify polygamy, initiation rites, and *ilobolo* and/or dowry as the most difficult of traditions to eliminate and most discouraging to women. Davies & Graves (1986:8) argue thus:

It is easier to eliminate the colonial, bourgeois influences that were imposed on us and identified with the enemy than to eliminate generations of tradition from within our own society.

Fashions come and go, and so good habits, like fashions, may become obsolete and bad. When that happens, they deserve to be discarded. Feminist scholars see polygamy as one of the most oppressive customs in patriarchal societies. In many instances, if not all, it silences wives, oppresses them, and subjects them to many other inhumane abuses. Thobejane (2014:58) states that:

There are more disadvantages for women who are in polygamous marriages than there for their counterparts in monogamous relationships. He argues that there is a potential for the unequal and discriminative treatment of wives by their husbands in polygamous marriages. With this in mind, there is an urgent need to address such treatment of women in polygamous marriages, regardless of their social, cultural, religious, and also economic background.

It is worth noting, however, that people share many different views apropos of this contentious topic. From a feminist point of view, polygamy is viewed as the most oppressing and degrading practice. Although it has been widely claimed that traditional African marriage creates a satisfactory situation for women, mainly by means of the security it offers and the bonds that it forges between co-wives, the narrators of African realist literature almost expose only evils associated with polygamy. Ndabayakhe (2013:50) cites that:

In most instances, co-wives experience conflict with one another, not bonds. Men become egocentric beings that greedily satisfy their sexual impulses at the expense of women. Encouraged by their families, they inflict irreparable damage not only on their accumulated wives but often also on their off springs. While blinded by their desires, these men father many unplanned children for whom they take little fatherly responsibility.

Polygamy may sometimes create animosity between co-wives, affording the husband power to manipulate the women to his advantage, keeping them powerless. Women in a polygamous marriage inevitably become 'voiceless' in whatever abuse takes place in their marriage. Wives keep quiet in order to win the husband's favour: if one wife challenges the husband, she is likely to become an outcast, and the husband will prefer the one who accepts the abuse without questioning it.

In many traditional societies people believe that polygamy, as an economic system, promotes communal and cooperative values, and ensures the economic security of the members of the household. Such people believe that it facilitates the shared mothering of children, and guarantees women some autonomy, personal freedom, and greater mobility than would have been possible in a monogamous, nuclear family. The emphasis on communal living, cooperation, and peaceful coexistence with co-wives necessitates the development of good interpersonal skills, diplomacy, and responsibility for men and women. It may be argued that, despite the implications and manifestation of female subordination, polygamy provided several safeguards against male

domination and female destitution. This may partly explain why it is still practiced today, even though its economic usefulness in production is increasingly becoming obsolete.

Waciuma (1962), as cited in Davies & Graves (1986:152) argues that:

For myself, I have decided against polygamy but its rights and wrongs are still being argued furiously in our schools and colleges and debating clubs. There seems to have been a time in our society when there were many more women than men, possibly as a result of raiding. Under these circumstances, polygamy may be socially good. Even today, our women like to get someone to help them with the hard work of the farm and the house. I also hate it because it hurts the position and dignity of women and exaggerates the selfishness of men.

Perhaps to redress the imbalances of the past, women can also demand to engage polyandry.

Polyandry is whereby a woman has more than one husband (Gumede, 2002:4). It is a form of polygamy that is practiced in few countries in the world. With two habits practised concurrently in the same context, men would begin to realize how bad polygamy is.

### **6.3.5 Class and ethnicity: Arranged marriages revisited**

There is a belief that twins, whether male or female, would have the same taste in many things because they are considered one person. The belief continues that twins sometimes even wear the same colour of clothes to show that they are one person. In bygone times, when one twin had died, the other one would be killed, because of the belief that one twin cannot outlive the other. In short, twins must always be together and do things together wherever they are. Anti-feminists may argue that this may hold true for the king, who, in *Ngiwafunge AmaBomvu*, wishes to marry both women. There is also the belief that because they are twins, they will have similar views. This proves not to be the case with these twins as they both have different outlooks, different tastes, and different interests. Msanka sees through the whole situation about the twins not sharing the same perspective. Msanka says:

*Bengivele ngasola ukuthi laba bantu abangene eNdlunkulu ngeke bathande into eyodwa ngoba nakhu kuthiwa bangumuntu oyedwa (p. 17).*

‘I initially suspected that these two chosen to be Queens may not be of a similar persuasion just because of the assumption that they are one person’.

Khonzeni tries to make Thulisile understand the precarious situation she is putting them all in. She tries to talk sense to her about the king’s power to choose a marriage partner.

Khonzeni says:

*Noma zingayibonisa kanjani izinduna Nokufika ngale nto kaThulisile, inkosi kayaliwa Nokufika. Kayaliwa nje (p. 9).*

‘Whichever way the headmen can advise the king Nokufika on Thulisile’s issue, No one rejects the King Nokufika. He is never dumped’.

In patriarchal societies, adherence and conformity to the set norms and tradition appear to capture the minds of people. Any divergent view or behaviour from this, is punishable with death by the king, and that is what everyone expects in Thulisile’s case.

Thulisile’s father is the king’s hero, who has won many battles for the king and has been rewarded with many cattle for his bravery. He is one of the most feared headmen in the village. Khonzeni says:

*...okokuqala, uyihlo uyiqhawe lenkosi elethenjiwe elihlabanayo, eselixoshiswe ngezinkomo kaningi kabi (p. 9).*

‘...firstly, your father is a trusted, respected valiant king’s warrior who has been awarded cattle many a times’.

Thulisile seems not fazed by her father’s achievements and accolades (class). They do not concern her. She believes that her father’s accomplishments belong to him and not to her.

*Konke lokho okukababa nenkosi. Akangene uThulisile kukho (p. 4).*

‘All that is between my father and the king. It has absolutely nothing to do with Thulisile’.

Thulisile’s view is that her father’s status in the kingdom has nothing to do with her likes and dislikes. The relationship between her father and the king cannot determine who she chooses as a life partner. This shows great courage and an independent mind. She seems confident and prepared to tell the king that he has made a serious mistake.



Her actions demonstrate great courage in challenging the patriarchal stereotypical belief that no one may act against the king's orders. Her actions show a radical response to patriarchal domination that has held women down on the social order. Radical feminists believe in such actions by Thulisile, because, if people do not stand their ground against such abuse, society will remain forever under the domination of 'male supremacy' which condescends to women. Thulisile's courage is viewed negatively because she is a woman, and also very young to challenge the king's orders. Even the king's trusted headmen and advisors have a certain way of advising the king if they see that he is making a mistake. It is only those very close to the king that have the courage to advise him.

Some headmen who are close to Thulisile's situation are now starting to realise that the king may have acted erroneously by taking both women. Their assumption that these twins will have similar views and feelings proves to be wrong. Msanka and the other headmen also realise that this arrangement might not work. This time around, the headmen fear to warn the king of what they suspect, thinking that he might not take their advice kindly. They must therefore find a way of making the king realise his short-sightedness in marrying both girls. Msanka even says:

*Mina kodwa Mzwezwe bengizothi mayicetshiswe inkosi ilidedele leli elinye iwele liye kwahliziyo ngise (p. 17).*

'But still, Mzwezwe, I would personally say the King be advised to let the other twin do as she wishes and be allowed to follow her heart'.

Khonzeni and the other girls who are with Thulisile seem to agree with the headmen. They maintain that the king should rethink his stance of marrying both girls. They believe that the king should consider the feelings of both women. Khonzeni even mentions that:

*Empeleni ixakwe yini inkosi ngoba uThulile yena uyayithanda nje? Ifunelani ukuphoqa izinto? (p. 44).*

'And why is the King bothered anyway since Thulile loves him? Why must he force matters?'

Khonzeni seems to understand Thulisile's defiance in refusing to marry the king. She concedes that Thulisile will never deviate from her stance of rejecting the king's

proposal. By rejecting the king, she is rejecting patriarchal traditions which favour men only, and fail to take into account women's feelings. She believes that this tradition is out-dated and should be changed. Women should have freedom to choose with whom they wish to spend their lives. Khonzeni, in support of Thulisile's sentiments, questions this tradition:

*Banephutha bonke labo bantu. Abantu okufanele banqume lokho yiwona amawele ugobo lwawo* (p. 44).

'All those people commit an oversight. It can only be the twins themselves who can make a final ruling on that'.

Tong (2009:69) argues that:

Only women can give each other a new sense of self. That identity we have to develop with reference to ourselves, and not in relation to men.

Several critics are now starting to realise that this tradition must be challenged and changed. Many people seem to have been following the king's instructions without questioning them (instructions), even when such instructions are detrimental to their lives. From a feminist perspective, these patriarchal powers are abusive and are a drawback to the society that strives to liberate women. hooks (1991:87) asserts that:

Middle class white women who were at the forefront of the feminist movement made no effort to emphasize that patriarchal power, the power that men use to dominate women, is not just the privilege of upper and middle class white men, but the privilege of all men in our society regardless of their race or class.

By failing to look at patriarchy as it affects women from all races, white feminism overlooked the experiences of other women who are not White. Hence, hooks (1991:115) believes that feminism and patriarchy are not only limited to White women. She speaks about the fact that Black people's unwillingness to challenge the patriarchal social order' is at the root of their focus upon racism and their sole oppression. For instance, in the play, *Ngiwafunge AmaBomvu*, many people seem not brave enough and prepared to challenge this tradition which silences them. hooks (1991:117) contends that Black men and women who support patriarchy and consequently support sexist oppression of women, try to present the social situation of Black people as oppression and victimization caused by racism.

However, later in the dialogue with his most trusted headmen, the king realises that he may have erred in marrying the twins. Thulisile's refusal to marry the king has brought uncertainty about the king's power and integrity. It has also brought instability to the royal household. Earlier in the dialogue, Msanka had voiced his concern about the same issue; however, he was too timid to warn the king. When Mgidi realises his foolishness, he quickly shares this with his headmen. The king says:

*...ngiyasola ukuthi kukhona iphutha engalenza ngokuganisa lezi zintombi. Kepha maningi amehlo angalibonanga, ngoba nawenu awalibonanga (p. 61).*  
'...I guess there was an error I committed in getting these girls married. But then, there were lots of other pairs of eyes that failed to discern the error, including yours'.

As events unfold within the royal household, the king accepts that there is nothing he can do to change Thulisile's mind. This has caused much uneasiness, discomfort, and fear in the girls who are with Thulisile. The king has tried all he could, including the use of *muthi*, to change Thulisile's mind, to no avail. It seems as though the girls have also given up trying to convince her to remain. It becomes clear that something is wrong when Thulisile gives birth, and the king witnesses this. Thulisile shares her fears with the other girls about the difficult labour Thulisile has had:

*Uqinisile Khonzeni, izobona inkosi ukuthi akakwazi ukukhululeka kabuhlungu kangaka uThulisile uma kungekho mkhuba okhona (p. 65).*  
'You are right Khonzeni, the King will realize that Thulisile cannot have such difficulty giving birth if there was no mischief involved'.

Mgidi concedes that no other woman has experienced such difficulty while giving birth in his kingdom. He says that there is no history of such difficulty in the *AmaBomvu* dynasty. For this reason everybody is suspicious about the child that Thulisile is about to deliver. This is a conundrum, because nobody else knows the truth about the child's biological father except Zaba and Thulisile. The prevailing situation also infuriates the king because he, suddenly, does not trust anyone, including his cronies.

When the king first discovered that Thulisile is pregnant with a baby boy, he was excited. He even confessed that he has found an heir to his throne. However, as events unfold, the king is proven wrong. He suspects foul play in this whole situation. He confronts Khonzeni who has been with Thulisile since they arrived at the king's palace:

*Nkosazana, undlunkulu lona ubethembekile lapha koMkhulu njengoba eshilo kithina? Lo mfanyana uma ubheka uyawadinga amasiko alapha ekhaya? (p. 85).*

'Lady, was the Queen loyal to the Royal house like she stated to us? Do you think this boy can be initiated according to all the rituals of this household?'

Khonzeni bravely answers:

*Akawadingi Ndabezitha (p. 86).*

'No. Your Royal Highness, he does not'.

This is the turning point in the play. Khonzeni is preparing herself for whatever outcome she may face. There is no way that Khonzeni can hide the truth anymore because there have been telling signs when Thulisile was giving birth, and there have been many unanswered questions regarding the baby. She, and everybody else, who knew the truth from the beginning, have to face the wrath of the king. The king confronts Khonzeni again:

*Ntombazane, ake ucabe amathambo ukhiphe umnkantsha. Lo mfana akayena owasebukhosini, nginamanga? (p. 86).*

'Girl-woman, just tell the truth. This boy is not of this Royal family, am I wrong?'

In response to the king's persistent questions, Khonzeni finally tells the truth:

*Akumanga nkosi (p. 86).*

'True my lord'.

To verify what he has been told about the child, he confronts his traditional healer, Mzwezwe.

*Hhi? Uthini Mzwezwe? Kuchaza ukuthi kumele ngikulalele lokhu okushoyo ngempela? Ngoba kuzophuma umphefumulo nje lapha ngaphakathi kwamasango omuzi kababa. Yini lena engehlelayo? Mzwezwe, uthini? Uthi undlunkulu uphumele emahlangeni wabuya eseke walandelwa amanxahi? Yakheke kanjani nikhona? Yakheke kanjani zikhona izinhlozi? Sengathi ngisheshe ngazixoshisa ngezinkomo ngisagcwele inkovu emehlweni (p. 77).*

'What? What are you saying Mzwezwe? Do you really mean that I must take note of what you are saying? Lives will be lost soon within my father's household. What has befallen me? What are you saying Mzwezwe? You are telling me that the Queen committed an infidelity and there is an outcome

thereof? How did that happen? How did that happen in the presence of informers? It seems that I have been quick to reward them before scrutinizing them’.

King Mgidi’s suspicions are growing stronger that this child might not be his. This is further fuelled by Mzwezwe’s ‘bones’ ruling him out as the biological father of the child. King Mgidi becomes furiously angry because he does not understand how such a thing could have happened with so many people who are ‘his eyes and ears’ around the royal household. These include his headmen, his informers, as well as the girls who are accompanying Thulisile while within the royal family. The new developments also threaten and undermine the king’s supremacy and power over his kingdom. These new developments are an embarrassment to the *AmaBomvu* nation because this has never happened before; for this reason the king wishes to punish mercilessly all those involved. The king eventually reveals the secret that the nation did not know. He says:

*Indlovukazi ingidelele ngendlela engingenayo indlela yokuyichaza!  
Yivezandlebe leli eliphethe ezofa kanye nalo* (p. 88).

‘Words fail me for the kind of disrespect that the Queen displayed to me. This is an illegitimate child that she is going to die with’.

Marriage and procreation in African communities is a unit: without procreation, there is no marriage. Procreation is advantageous for a man because, by having many children, especially male children, he is safeguarding his clan name and his wealth, if any. Children are the crowning glory of marriage: the more children, the greater the glory and joy. There is a ‘contentious’ belief that polygamy also raises the social status of the family concerned. In the minds of African people, a large family earns its head (the husband) great respect.

The playwright at this point exposes the loopholes of the tradition of forced marriage. The king eventually comes off second best after all his determination and attempts to convince Thulisile. The solution is to severely punish those who disrespect and undermine his powers and the custom. He says:

*Anginaso isikhathi sokulalela amanye amanga manje. Msanka, liyabhubha ebukhosini kusukela manje* (p. 78).

‘I have no time to entertain more lies. Msanka, there is destruction afoot in the royal household henceforth’.

Interestingly, his subjects, including Msanka, readily accept the punishment that is to be meted out to them by the king. One may argue that his people are quite used to the idea of punishment by the king when they have wronged him. It also goes to show that no one can object once the punishment has been pronounced. No one can question the king's decision, no matter how severe the punishment is. It is even more difficult because the culprits are people who are close to the king. Zaba, being the son of the headman, should have known better than to undermine or disrespect the king. When the king first talks about the issue of punishment, Msanka is ready to accept it and this shows blind obedience towards the king on the part of Msanka.

*Ndabezitha! Siyobe sifa ngomoya omuhle uma sifela inkosi yethu* (p. 78).  
'Your Royal Highness! We will die happily in service of our king'.

What has unfolded in Mgidi's kingship has severely damaged his reputation as the king and also embarrassed him, especially the birth of the illegitimate child. The king feels that his people have disrespected him and are undermining his authority. He intends to show the nation how he punishes contemptuous people. Those who knew the secret of Zaba and Thulisile's affair have been apprehensive about this day. The play culminates with the king's pronouncement of the judgement and the punishment to be meted out to those involved. When he addresses his people he says:

*Bandla lami, bonke laba bazoklinywa bafe. Bazoklinyelwa phambi kwenu. Ngifuna ukubakhombisa ukuthi ubaba wayewenzenjani amahlongandlebe esizweni sakhe* (p. 87).  
'Elders, all these people will be strangled until they die. They will be strangled in front of you. I want to show them what my father used to do to rebels in his kingdom'.

True love prevails at the end of the play. Zaba and Thulisile confess in front of the whole nation that they love each other. They both share the same sentiments about their love. They are prepared to die for each other. When the truth comes out, everybody is in shock because nobody ever expected that something like this would ever be articulated to the king. But before the king can punish them, Zaba makes his final plea:

*Ndabezitha! Ngicela uNdabezitha abasindise abazali bami kanye nabo bonke abantu abazofa ngenxa yami nale ntombazane. Ngiyafunga phambi kwenkosi nabaphansi kanye noMvelinqangi ukuthi bonke laba bafa nje bangikhuzile. Baba, ngicela ukuthi inkosi ikholwe ukuthi nguMvelinqangi owakhe uthando*

*phakathi kwami nale ntombazane. Wakhe uthando ezinhliziyweni ezimbili. Ngibone ukuthi iyazethemba imvelo nxa idala lokhu kubantu abasondelene nenkosi, ngakho ngibone ukuthi iyazi ukuthi yenzani (p. 89-90).*

‘Your Royal Highness, I beg the King to spare my parents and all the other people who have to die because of me and this girl. I swear in front of the Lord Almighty and the ancestors that it was not for their lack of attempts to stop me. Father, I would like the king to believe that our love between myself and this girl was God-given, a love only between the two of us that he allowed to flourish and he knew what he was doing when he did this to people who are close to the king’.

Zaba and Thulisile equally show unbelievable bravery. They have committed themselves to each other and they are not about to let go just because Mgidi is the king. They voice their commitment to each other in front of everybody in attendance. One man in the audience asks how Thulisile could allow herself to fall in love with a commoner when the king had chosen her.

*Ndabezitha! Mina ngisacela ukuzwa ukuthi indlovukazi yona yayibona ukuthi yenzani ngokuganga nebhoxongwana eligcwele umoya wezikhova? (p. 91).*

‘Your Royal Highness! I would like to know what the Queen thought she was up to, fooling around with this belligerent boy?’

Zaba and Thulisile’s actions show that love has no boundaries, even when the king is involved as the competitor. Thulisile had already chosen her man and would not deviate from her decision. When the man asks why Thulisile has agreed to come to the king’s palace, knowing that she has chosen Zaba, Thulisile says:

*Linye izwi engizolisho, ukuthi ngithe ngiza lapha esigodlweni ngabe sengimshelile uZaba ukuthi ngiyamthanda (p. 91).*

‘I can only say one thing: When I was brought to the royal household, I had already declared my love to Zaba’.

Okin (1994:12) states that:

Most cultures and customs are suffused with practices and ideologies concerning gender...suppose that there are clear disparities in power between sexes, such as that the more powerful male members are those who are generally in a position to determine and articulate the group’s beliefs, practices and interests. Under such conditions, group rights are potentially, and in many cases actually, anti-feminist. They substantially limit the capacities of women and girls of that culture to live with human dignity equal to that of men and boys, and to live as freely chosen lives as they can...

Many feminist scholars, such as Monyane (2013) and others, believe that such practices, under the guise of culture or tradition, such as forced marriages, are problematic, especially in relation to the struggle for gender equality. For instance, Monyane (2013: 64-82) cautions that:

Forced marriages deprive girls of their right to choose whether to marry, whom to marry, and when to marry. It impacts on aspects of girl's lives including their right to human dignity, their right to education, right to live free of violence and their right to freedom and security. Forced marriages perpetuate the cycle of gender inequality.

However, some critics argue that gender alone is not enough to explain women's oppression, and that ethnicity, sexuality, and class, are also important factors in this, particularly in the case of Thulisile, as she comes from a lower class than the king. Regarding the above comment, Parekh (2006:336) argues that there is a 'politics of difference' in feminism. He observes that people are culturally embedded:

They grow and live within a culturally structured world, organize their lives and social relations in terms of its systems of meaning and significance, and place considerable value on their cultural identity.

It is no surprise, therefore, that everybody in the royal house disapproves of Thulisile's refusal to marry the king, because she is disregarding tradition which has been in existence for many centuries. It is clear that the king's subjects must always toe the line, no matter how difficult that may be for them; and many subjects have lived to accept this imposition of the king's will. Hall (1990:21) remarks on women who deviate from their social norms:

Women who decide to change or re-order their values, consequently moving away from their traditional roles, are customarily perceived as deviant. Because this labelling is a negative sanction, it pressures them to move back to traditional patterns. However, in spite of continued widespread social expectations, that women be confined in domestic roles, it is increasingly difficult for most women to conform to these restricted roles. As society changes, it is clear for them to deviate, and ultimately that deviance becomes a norm.

Thulisile is an epitome of the 'deviant woman' as she rejects any type of ploy thrown at her by her friends and her twin sister. The king's judgement come as a shock and as



surprise to his people. No one ever expected such leniency from the king after such an embarrassment. Pereira & Souza (2002:54) believe that:

Feminism is more than a struggle to do away with male dominance. It is also about transforming what goes on in the mind of women and men about asking different kinds of questions that will require new conceptualization.

The author uses the narrative technique, the plot twist or twist of the tale, when he shows sympathy towards Thulisile and Zaba when everyone in attendance is expecting the worst. The king's utterances show that men can transform and change their mind-set towards the emancipation of women as the quote suggests. This is a very bold statement by the king which comes as a surprise to all in attendance. He says:

*...siyisibonelo esihle ebuthweni lakho isibindi sakho sokumela iqiniso noma sekumnyama. Ngikwenza inceku yami enkulu kusukela namuhla. Ngizokwakhela indlu enhle lapha ngaphakathi esigodlweni wena nenkosikazi yakho. Ngiyabathanda abantu abazisa amaqiniso (p. 92).*

'...your bravery of withstanding the truth is a good example to your regiments under difficult circumstances. You are my main servant starting from today. I will build you and your wife a beautiful house inside the palace. I like people who stand for the truth'.

The dramatic twist occurs when the king concedes defeat and declares Zaba and Thulisile husband and wife, something no one ever expected to be the verdict from the king. The king's change of heart proves what radical feminists always advocate for. Radical feminists believe that women's freedom from oppression and subordination from male domination requires everybody, both male and female, to stand united. They argue that it is possible for men to change from their patriarchal stereotype and traditional practices and work as champions of change. Therefore, women's subordination is not only a problem which must be solved by women – everybody must make an effort to liberate women. King Mgidi symbolises such willingness of men to change. He proves that it is possible to change one's mind set on societal norms and traditions which have existed for many years. The king's action is merely one step in the right direction towards the liberation of women from the shackles of male domination.

#### 6.4 Summary of the chapter

The chapter has presented some challenges facing women in a male-dominated society with regards to arranged marriages. The king's authority, power, customs, and traditions that have violated women's rights by choosing a marriage partner have been interrogated. Thulisile is prepared to die for what she believes is right for her despite widespread social expectation that the king can choose and marry whoever he wants. Her bravery and defiance towards the king and his people is something never seen before and as such, is expected to be punishable by death.

The brave woman, Thulisile, represents an army of women who insist that the time has come to change the status quo. Meanwhile the king's gesture of setting Thulisile and Zaba free heralds the changing times with regards to certain practices in Africans, and among the Zulus', as both Zulu women and men act as a collective to challenge arranged marriages. Perhaps this suggests that some of these African traditional customs and practices are outdated and need to be re-visited and modified where need be. The play has raised questions which require new conceptualization of female agency in Zulu literary texts, such as Ngiwafunge AmaBomvu. The next chapter analyses the image of a 'liberated' woman in the novel *Umshado*.

## CHAPER SEVEN

### 7. FEMINIST DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF THE IMAGE OF THE “LIBERATED” WOMAN in *Umshado* (2006) by N. Zulu

#### 7.1 Introduction

This chapter analyses *Umshado* in relation to differences in attitudes and behaviour, and also in relation to ‘free’ expression or subjectivity by a woman. This is achieved by exploring the use of language by both men and women in this literary text. By engaging a nuanced discourse analysis, this chapter seeks to explore some contradictory aspects of selected Zulu traditional practices, beliefs, norms and rituals, and how these negatively impact on the rights of women. The chapter also explores the struggles that a woman goes through in trying to attain her freedom and independence which unfortunately lands her in trouble and emerges as a victim.

Feminist movements have, over the years, demonstrated that language, as discourse, functions as a powerful tool in patriarchal culture. The language used by the author in this novel appears to support the retention of male domination, that women should always play a subordinate role or second fiddle to their male counterparts. Radical feminists believe that this patriarchal culture forms part of the ‘micro-political structure’ that helps to maintain the larger politico-economic structure (Thorne & Henley, 1976). “The use of language shapes our understanding of the social world, our relationships to one another and our social identities” (Thorne & Henley, 1976:15). They further note that sexual identities reflect the material interests of those who have power and those who do not. Hence, this relationship between men and women is inextricably linked to the language that is used to describe female characters.

Zulu’s novel, *Umshado*, is historically conditioned by a number of factors relating to public morals in a patriarchal society. It challenges human sexuality and the new outlook on women in society. It also explores some of the modern problems resulting from the ‘liberated’ approach to sexuality, as exemplified in *Umshado*. The author’s portrayal of Tholakele’s behaviour actively casts her in a negative light for the reader

because she is a woman, while Bhekani's behaviour does not seem to warrant the same opprobrium or censure. I argue in this chapter that the author uses Tholakele's disapproved behaviour by society intentionally to show double standards in the treatment of men and women. This also **echoes** an imbalance in the treatment of men and women in the Zulu society.

## 7.2 Synopsis of the novel, *Umshado*

This novel is concerned with problems experienced by both men and women. It revolves around the beautiful Tholakele, the protagonist. Tholakele has just lost her husband, and her brother-in-law, Bhatomu, is asked to take over the responsibilities of his late brother (*ukungena*). Tholakele decides to run away from her in-laws and goes to live in a shack in Nyawushane where she gets involved in drugs after befriending people who sell and take drugs. Tholakele's friend, Pamela, a lesbian, is the mastermind behind the selling and dealing in drugs.

Bhekani's misfortunes are also worth highlighting. He has a recurring dream in which his father insists that he must get married. Bhekani is confused because his former lover, Lindiwe, has left him and he has not been in contact with her for a long time. The pressure from his father in the dream forces him to find a girlfriend urgently. In the midst of his dilemma, he falls in love with Tholakele and immediately plans to marry her. Bhekani's father does not 'show' him in his dream which girl to marry, therefore when Bhekani meets Tholakele, he is convinced that she is the one to marry. Bhekani's wish to marry Tholakele flies in the face of his mother's warning against marrying somebody who has been married before and also, who is a widow. Bhekani's mother tells him that his father will never be happy if he marries such a person. Towards the end of the story, Bhekani's clothes are burnt at his home; he is robbed of his *ilobolo* money; and he is disgraced in his community when his fiancée Tholakele is arrested by the police on drug charges in the church during the wedding ceremony.

### 7.3 Stigma associated with widowhood: *Ukuzila*, *inzilo* and other forms of female subjugation and ancestral worship

During Tholakele and Bhekani's conversation, unbeknown to Bhekani, it surfaces that Tholakele's dress is that of a widow:

*Sengeshelwa ngaqoma, ngagana, ngafelwa. Impela kunjalo. Bengithi ubonile ngifake izingubo ezimnyama. Uma kukhona ofuna sikukhulume Bheki okuqondene nokuthandana, linda ngize ngikhumule inzilo* (p. 8).

'I have been courted, been married and widowed, really it is like that. I thought you could tell from my black mourning clothes. Bheki, if you need us to talk about a possible relationship, please wait until I have been cleansed'.

Widowhood, the state of being a widow, occurs when a wife loses her husband through death and does not remarry. According to Buitelaar (1995:1) the word 'widow' derives from the Latin word *vidua* which relates to a root, meaning, 'to place apart'. From this root word, widowhood is thus a separation, the placing apart of a wife from the husband through death. It is not clear where this practice originates from. The loss of the husband through death generally represents the loss of a partner, a friend, and a breadwinner. In most cases, this results in a radical change in the woman's social status and lifestyle. Owen (2011:8) says: "widowhood tends to impact traumatically on the woman, altering forever the way she is perceived, and consequently affecting her self-image".

Widowhood is a universal human phenomenon shaped by, among others, the culture within which people function. In Africa, mainly, it constitutes a traumatic life event. According to a recent United Nation's report on discrimination against women in Africa, widows, irrespective of their ethnic affiliations, are among the most vulnerable and destitute. The situation is fuelled by cultural practices and beliefs, patriarchal domination and inheritance laws which militate against the rights of a widow. A number of perceptions of widowhood from different parts of Africa seem to confirm this.

Orabueze (2004:115), for instance, notes that 'widowhood' is a word that every woman dreads to mention. In Africa, it brings to a peak all the humiliation, subordination, degradation, and oppression which an African woman endures in her lifetime. From the time of her husband's death to the time of her own death, his family and society blame her for the passing away of the much-needed male. She is indirectly asked "why should

you survive when the man is gone?” For Acholonu (1999:97), “widows are subjected to a whole gamut of obnoxious widowhood rites, aimed at making her die within the mourning period of about one year”. Kuyela (2014:1) observes that:

In most African societies, widowhood represents a ‘social death.’ For women, it is not simply that they have lost their husbands, their breadwinner, and the supporter of their children. Widowhood robs women of their status, and confines them to the fringes of society in which they suffer discrimination and stigma. Widows are generally trodden upon, remain poor and least protected as their lives are determined by local patriarchal interpretations of tradition, discrimination, and stigma.

These perceptions of the widowhood landscape in Africa identify two broad defining aspects of the experience, namely, disinheritance/deprivation and mandatory observance of culturally prescribed burial rites which reflect psychologically and physically on the widow. The challenge presented by the neglect and maltreatment of widows does not receive sufficient attention, as contemporary scholarship seems reluctant to speak out on African widowhood rites and their consequences. These rites and practices therefore remain largely unexposed, unchallenged, and insufficiently reflected upon, despite the pain they inflict on the widows. Owen (1998:10) asserts that:

Research into nature and effect on widows’ mourning rites has been scant although the practice violates many basic principles contained in all key institutional human rights conventions.

Strict measures are exercised against the woman who deviates from the rules and cultural obligations of the society as already discussed in chapter 5. In many African societies, one of the woes of widowhood is the demand for the daughter in-law to remain in her husband’s home even after his death. It does not matter how she had been relating to her in-laws and the community. The problem with this custom is that, in many instances, it is executed without the consent of the widow, as is Tholakele’s case in *Umshado*. Masenya (1998: 83) states that:

In my culture, the death of one’s husband is not supposed to release the *ngwetsi* (daughter in-law) to engage in another marriage relationship if she wishes to. Traditionally and even today in some circles, the deceased husband’s brother is expected to take over the responsibilities of the deceased for the purpose of carrying on the dead brother’s line.

The above quotation points to coercion exerted by the patriarchal structures on the widow and without volition on her part. Ramphele & Boonzaier (1996:99-117) view this aspect of widowhood as constituting an ambiguous situation in which a widow, while mourning the loss of her loved one, her spouse, is still considered married.

Although African cultures are diverse, there are many commonalities with regard to widowhood rites and practices. For example, Kotze *et al.*, (2012:744) point out that the widows they interviewed when they were doing their research claimed diverse cultural identities, however, despite their different cultural affiliations, the women's experiences of mourning practices in their communities share a number of similarities. The SADC Protocol on Gender has endorsed the rights that must be enjoyed by widows in case of their husband's death.

Widowhood in Africa is extremely difficult and problematic in women's lives, even though SADC Protocol on Gender purports to protect them. According to the Southern African Development Community (SADC) (2008), Protocol on Gender and Development, ARTICLE 10: (Widows' and Widowers' Rights) states that:

- (a) Widows are not subjected to inhuman, humiliating or degrading treatment.
- (b) A widow shall have the right to an equitable share in the inheritance of the property of her husband.
- (c) A widow shall have the right to remarry any person of her choice; and
- (d) A widow shall have protection against all forms of violence and discrimination based on her status.

However, in patriarchal societies, liberated women who exercise their right to do whatever they wish with their bodies are seen as disrespecting culture and traditions. Some view the behaviour of these women as an act of resistance to male domination, as a fight against the system of patriarchy that allows men to oppress women. Some of these women even change their lifestyle and behaviour by engaging in same-sex relationships, taking drugs and wearing clothing of their choice, no matter what society says of them. Some may even go to the extent of having sexual relations with whoever they choose, without any promise of love. Regarding this kind of behaviour, Gumede (2002:91) states that "the world [then] witnessed the introduction of the birth control over women's reproductive faculty, but also introduced a level of sexual freedom never experienced before". From the above assertion, one may argue that women were taking

the initiative of controlling their own lives rather being submissive and subordinate to men. This proved their eagerness and willingness to refresh their lives. Tholakele, in *Umshado*, represents such women. She believes in her own gratification and freedom. From a feminist perspective, no one should dictate nor control her life, actions, or behaviour because this is her life.

In the dialogue between Bhekani and his mother, his mother is concerned about her future daughter in-law who is still in mourning:

*Kodwa umfunani umfelokazi wena?* (p. 49).  
'What do you want from a widow?'

One can see from the above extract that, in a patriarchal society, a widow is a curse who must not have any association with other people. The following excerpt attests to the stigma that is associated with a woman in mourning. Bhekani's mother is concerned about Bhekani's actions of dating Tholakele while Tholakele is still in mourning. She asks:

*Umfelokazi Bheki! Ziphelile yini izintombi uze ufune ukushada nomfelokazi nje?*  
(p. 42).  
'A widow Bheki! Are there no more girls now that you want to get married to a widow?'

It becomes clear from the above extract that a widow becomes an outcast and is ostracized in society because of her status. It is an unfair treatment for widows because widowers are not subjected to the same treatment. The inference of the above excerpt is that there are many factors that contribute to discrimination against gender. These include the culture of a society, the language used in that society, its customs, and also the way people live in that society. In support of the above excerpt, Tripp (2000:3) posits that:

In this way, a particular cultural context through its language, vocabularies and signifying practices, through its customs and conventions, through its social structures, institutions and technologies will encourage certain ways of thinking and behaving and preclude others. And once all of these things are to a larger extent subject to change, so too are our understanding and experiences of what it means to be women and men.



When Bhekani visits his uncle to ask for his blessings and also accompany him for *ilobolo* negotiations, his uncle echoes the sentiments of his (Bhekani) mother. This shows that he is disapproving of Bhekani marrying a widow. Bhekani's uncle says:

*Enjalo nje lo makoti ungumfelokazi* (p. 64).  
'This bride is a widow for that matter'.

The assertion by Bhekani's uncle shows that women are oppressed by man-made practices that are 'supposedly' regarded as intrinsic to their culture. Bhekani's uncle continues:

*Ngisho ukuthi angizimisele ukukusiza ndodana...kodwa-ke unjani wena othanda abafelokazi abanye bengabafuni?* (p. 64).  
'I mean that I don't want to help you, son...what type of a person are you who likes widows when others don't?'

Bhekani's mother voices her disapproval of the 'supposed' bad luck that Tholakele is carrying:

*Isinyama lesi azosishiya kuwe?* (P. 13).  
'What about this bad luck that she is going to leave you with?'

When Bhekani's mother finds out that her future daughter in-law is selling drugs and dagga, he warns him of the possible danger that might occur if she finally becomes his wife. Bhekani's mother has realized that there is nothing that she can do to change his mind about Tholakele, hence the warning. She says:

*Uma lo mfelokazi efuna ukuzogana lapha, mtshela ahlukane nayo yonke le mikhuba ayigilayo. Uma eza nalezi zinto zakhe lapha, uyosonteka intamo afe nohlangothi* (p. 70).  
'If this widow wants to get married to this home, tell her that she must abandon all these evil deeds that she is doing. If she comes here with all these evil deeds, her neck will be twisted and will suffer from a stroke'.

When Bhekani tries to digest what is being said by his mother, his mother continues to warn him:

*Uma idlozi limcasukele kakhulu mfana wami, ngeke nishade ngisho ukushada kodwa lokhu* (p. 70).

‘If the ancestors are so angry about her, my boy, you will never even get married’.

The author seems to use the literary device, foreshadowing, here which prepares the readers of what might happen in the future between Bhekani and Tholakele.

The only stumbling block for Bhekani’s plans to continue with *ilobolo* arrangements is that Tholakele is not ‘cleansed’. The ‘cleansing’ ritual has to be performed first before any fruitful negotiations can take place between the two families. Bhekani’s situation creates an interesting plot as no one knows who is going to help him with *ilobolo* negotiations. As is usually the case, the man’s uncles are usually the ones who negotiate this process, but it seems Bhekani is facing an uphill battle as he is rejected by his family.

To this day, a person who has lost a husband is always associated with bad luck. One cannot be in a relationship with a person who is still in mourning, which is usually shown by the wearing of *inzilo*. The black dress of mourning worn by women stigmatises them. It restricts them in many aspects of life. For instance, passengers in a taxi usually feel uneasy when a passenger who is still in mourning sits in the front seat. There is a belief that she might bring bad luck to the taxi or that the taxi may be involved in an accident, but there is no scientific explanation or proof to this.

The patriarchal stereotype of Tholakele’s mourning dress seems to be her burden in whatever she wants to achieve. When Bhekani talks about *ilobolo* negotiations to Tholakele, she responds:

*Ngiyabonga sthandwa. Kusho ukuthi nami angiphuthume ukukhumula inzilo le* (p. 47).

‘Thank you my love. That means I must hurry up and get ‘cleansed’.

Bhekani is puzzled by Tholakele’s answer:

*Kanti ayizukukhunyulwa abasemzini?* (p. 47).

‘Is it not the in-laws that are going to cleanse you?’

As has been stated earlier, the cleansing ritual of a widow has to be done by the in-laws and certain strict procedures must be followed. This cleansing ritual involves the slaughtering of the goat, burning of *impepho* (loosely translated ‘incense’) and other rituals that go with it. This is what confuses Bhekani because Tholakele does not mention her in-laws in this cleansing ritual.

The period within which this ritual must be performed after the burial, varies with families. Some families may take several months before performing the ritual and others may take more than a year. It is believed that these rituals remove *isinyama* (bad luck) from the person affected by this tragedy – who will otherwise, if the rite is not performed, carry this bad luck with him or her wherever he or she goes. In Tholakele’s case, she has not performed the cleansing ritual after her husband’s death, which is why she is still wearing the black dress.

Tholakele’s freedom and independence is affected by patriarchal ideology which prescribes the wearing of mourning dress (*inzilo*) so that everybody can see that she is in mourning. Kwatsha (2009: 127-156) believes that:

Traditional culture often plays a prominent role in oppressing women. Men have often used and still use traditional culture in order to benefit themselves at the expense of women. The way men hold on to these gender inequalities shows that somewhere in their subconscious mind, they fear that, if they give women a chance, they will be overpowered.

There is an interesting relationship between preserving culture, belief in the ancestral spirits, and the ‘ways of the heart’.

A woman is sometimes viewed with suspicion when she is wearing this colour (black) because everybody can see that she is in mourning. Paradoxically, according to many cultural beliefs and customs, a man who has lost his wife does not wear *inzilo* (mourning dress). Even if a man does wear an *inzilo*, sometimes the fabric is so small that it may not even be recognised as a mourning apparel. The *inzilo* may be a piece of cloth, which also varies with colours. Widowers are usually not stigmatised as negatively as widows. In simple terms, this shows bias and unequal treatment of sexes

when it comes to mourning, which is another form of female oppression and degradation.

Although there are many different mourning practices in Africa, it is not possible to trace back any tradition of wearing black dresses for mourning. Mourning does not only include wearing a black dress; there are other ways and means of observing this practice. For instance, when someone dies, there are certain rituals, activities or behaviour that the close family members will avoid and observe as a sign of respect to the person who has died.

Nowadays, people show that they are in mourning by wearing different colour dresses or having small pieces of cloth – green, blue, or even white – sewn onto their garments, which could be a dress, a T-shirt, a blouse, a shirt, etc. Shaving of heads, especially with the Zulu people, is also a popular way to show that one is in mourning. However, not all families bother to observe this practice anymore. This practice varies with families, especially in the modern times. Nkosi (2012) as cited by Ndlovu (2013) states that:

*Owesifazane olinyalelwe umyeni wakhe wayezila ngezikhumba. Kwakuhlathwa izimbuzi, bese kuphalwa izikhumba zazo, kususwe bonke uboya, bese embathiswa zona umfelokazi, azigqoke unyaka wonke. Owesimame ozila ngalolu hlobo yilowo osonisiwe nothelwe ngenyongo wamukelwa emzini njengonkosikazi womuzi, hhayi noma ubani nje. Uma owesimame ezilile ngalolu hlobo, wayegoya ahloniphe, angazihlanganisi nabantu ngoba kwakwaziwa phela ukuthi unesinyama okungamele engame ngaso abantu.*

‘A woman whose husband has passed on used an animal skin to mourn. Goats were slaughtered and make their skin supple to be worn by the widow for the whole year. A woman who does this is the one that is traditionally married, sprinkled with a gall and accepted by the ancestors as family wife, not just any woman. If the widow is in mourning process, she would have to confine and respect herself and was not allowed to mix with other people because it was believed that she had a shadow of death which she must not contaminate other people with it’.

Magwaza (1999:268), as cited in Ndlovu (2013:7), concurs with the above assertion of *ukuzila* (to mourn) when she says that:

The wife of the deceased before and at the burial would be easily spotted by a large animal skin over her head concealing her from the public eye. Thereafter

she will be identified by a large cowhide worn over her shoulders which she will only take off once a cleansing ceremony has been performed for her.

Dosekun, (2007:12), notes that for a married woman, there is also an undesirable element that is associated with mourning– the stigma associated with a woman who has become a widow. This stigma is evident in the case of Tholakele who has just lost her husband. In the narrative, Tholakele is ostracized from the start of the novel instead of being recognised for the normal human being that she is. She is regarded as someone who has *isinyama* (bad luck) and should not be in another relationship before a certain interval of time has elapsed. She has to undergo a cleansing ritual before she can attain her freedom again. When Bhekani asks how she (Tholakele) intends to do the ‘cleansing’ herself, she responds:

*Angiboni: Phela asisezwani nabasemzini ngenxa kaBhatomu ofuna ukungingena ngingamfuni* (p. 47).

‘It’s not going to be like that. We are not on good terms with my in-laws because of Bhatomu who wants to ‘take over’ his later brother’s responsibility without my consent’.

Bhekani further asks for clarification:

*Manje uzomisa kanjani pho?* (p. 47).

‘How are you going to do this then?’

Tholakele responds:

*Isu liyozakha* (p. 47).

‘I will find a plan’.

The ancestral spirits always play a vital role in the performance of the rituals. The family may ask for forgiveness from the ancestors if they believe that the tragedy occurred because of the anger of the ancestors; or the family may plead with the ancestors to be kind to them and prevent such a tragedy from repeating itself. Tholakele’s situation is controversial, depending on how one looks at it. Tholakele did not perform these rituals after her husband’s death, as is it clear from her black dress that she is still in mourning. There is no mention of ancestral forgiveness or appeasement, leaving it unclear whether this could be the cause of her misfortunes.

From a patriarchal point of view, Tholakele is portrayed as somebody who does not conform to the societal norms and rituals. She is portrayed as rebellious because, in a patriarchal society, she must be submissive and not be deviant from culture. When Bhekani tells her the procedure that has to be followed in the cleansing ritual, she sounds not convinced about the idea, and she is dismissive:

*Angazi Mntakwethu. Mina angizwani nalezi zinto zamasiko. Kodwa-ke kungenziwa nje lokho okuncanyana, ngingakwamukela... (p. 52).*

‘I don’t know my love. I’m not in favour of these things that are related to culture. But then we can try something small, I can welcome that...’

All Tholakele’s attempts to free herself from these oppressive practices receive the author’s disapproval. Feminism, as a political label, has always shown support for the aims and needs of women, since its inception in the 1960s. Since its appearance, feminism has constantly attempted to unseat patriarchal domination by men, advocating for the belief in sexual equality as well as for eradication of sexist domination in many societies. Feminism places emphasis on women’s gaining freedom and independence. The above argument is supported by Phillips, (2007:68), who says:

It is the freedom to decide her own destiny, freedom and sex-determined roles, freedom from society’s oppressive restrictions; freedom to express her thoughts fully and to convert them into actions. Feminism demands the acceptance of woman’s right to individual conscience and judgment. It postulates that woman’s essential worth comes from her common humanity and does not depend on other relationships of her life.

In the dialogue between Sifiso and Bhekani, it surfaces that Tholakele is not legally divorced from his late husband. Sifiso asks:

*Usehlukanisile yini uTholi? (p. 54).*

‘Is Tholi legally divorced?’

Bhekani responds:

*Kwathi uma ngimbuza lokho wathi akusiyo inkinga ukwehlukana (p. 54).*

‘When I asked her about that, she said that, that is not going to be a problem to divorce’.

Bhekani's mother advises him to ask for permission from his father by burning *impepho* (loosely translated 'incense') because he is marrying a widow. Such a view that most Africans subscribe to is that ancestors control peoples' lives and the conditions under which they live on earth. Cultural belief in ancestral spirits is still an indisputable tenet in African thinking, particularly in times of crisis. Traditional African religion is, in fact, centred on the veneration of the *amadlozi* (ancestors), who are seen as the founders of the nation and as guardians of its welfare, but also as the custodians of customs and tradition. Bhekani's mother is convinced that for this arrangement to succeed, the ancestors must be appeased first:

*Iyangehlula le ndaba yakho Bheki. Kuzofuneka kushiswe impepho, kubulawe imbuzi kucelwe kwabaphansi. Mhlawumbe sekungabonakala-ke uma sekwenziwe lokho (p. 49).*

'This issue of yours is beyond me Bheki. We will have to burn *impepho* and slaughter a goat and plead with the ancestors; maybe we can see what happens after that has been done'.

Bhekani's mother is confused about her daughter-in-law's situation. She cannot fathom how Tholakele can get married to her son without being cleansed from her deceased husband. This is a conundrum that must be solved to appease the ancestors before she can get married to her son.

Unmarried Zulu men marrying for the first time, are always warned against marrying somebody who has been married before, especially a widow. Zulu society is usually sceptical of a man who wishes to marry a woman whose husband has died, although this has become less important recently. People present a variety of uninformed theories about why the husband died, and speculations of this nature usually complicate the situation even further. The problem may also be compounded in that certain rituals may already have been performed for the wife in her first marriage, making the situation difficult for both the 'new' husband and his 'new' wife. It is much more acceptable if the man is marrying for the second time, and marries a person who has been married before, or a widow. This explains the difficult situation that is facing Bhekani and perhaps also his mother.

#### 7.4 Questioning the custom of *ukungena* (forced marriage or love) in *Umshado*

Like other texts discussed in this study, this novel reveals the inequality between men and women in relation to *ukungena* custom (to take over the late husband's responsibilities). This custom has endured many centuries, and it is still practiced in some patriarchal societies today. Traditionally, this custom was sometimes imposed on the woman who had lost her husband, even if she did not agree to it. After all the necessary rituals had been performed regarding the late husband and the widow, the family decides on somebody, usually the brother of the late husband, to *ngena* (take over the late husband's responsibilities) the wife. This is done so that the wife may continue to bear children with the same surname or within the same family. In other words, it is a continuation of the late brother's legacy and name. According to Kuper, (1987:234):

The African does not think of marriage as a union based on romantic love although beauty as well as character and health are sought in the choice of a wife. The strong affection that normally exists after some years of successful marriage is the product of the marriage itself conceived as a process, resulting from living together and co-operating in many activities and particularly in the rearing of children.

The custom of *ukungena* also means that the wife cannot marry someone else, outside of this family. This is a harsh fate for some women – having to contend with *ukungena* while still mourning the death of the husband. No cattle is paid in the case of *ukungena*, as the late husband will already have paid *ilobolo*. Gichaara (2008:192), citing Dube, claims that the system of patriarchy works as follows:

Gender does not distribute power equally between men and women. Men are constructed as public speakers, thinkers, decision-makers and property owners. Women are constructed primarily as domestic beings, who belong to the home or in the kitchen.

In patriarchal societies, divorcees and unmarried women are regarded as outcasts and they were the minority in the community, although this is slowly changing in modern society. Kuper (1987:259) adds that:



In the Zulu social system a marriage establishes a relationship between a man and his brothers and the family of his wife which should be permanent. Divorce is objected to because it is destructive of this permanence.

The fight for the equality of the rights of men and women does not concern women only; men are also engaged in this fight. For radical feminists, men have to be part of the struggle against women's oppression. In the novel *Umshado*, Zulu, being a woman, does not show sympathy with Tholakele in fighting for her freedom. Tholakele runs away from her home because she does not wish to enter into an arranged marriage. From a feminist point of view, the author seems to support the idea of *ukungena* (to take over the late husband's responsibilities) as Tholakele is followed by Bhatomu even after running away from her home.

In the novel, *Umshado*, Tholakele is forced to marry her late husband's brother, Bhatomu. Tholakele retorts:

*Lalela-ke Bheki. Ngilapha nje ngibalekile. Ekushoneni kukababa wakithi, umfowabo wabe esethi uzongingena. Ngangingamfuni nhlobo. Ngathi nyawo zami ngibelethe. Njengoba ungibona ngilapha nje, ukuzisondeza kwakho kimi kungakudalela ingozi. Uyangifuna uBhatomu, futhi ungifuna ngenkani* (p. 8).  
'Bheki, listen, I am here because I ran away. After the death of my husband, the brother said he would take over his late brother's responsibility, and I did not want him at all. I took to the road, hence you see me here....your closeness to me can only bring you danger actually. Bhatomu wants me back and by force too if he must'.

In the analysis of the novel, one observes Tholakele's in-laws are using patriarchal stereotype to control her. Pauw (1990:85) also shares some thoughts on this practice:

A Sotho widow's marriage is not terminated by the death of her husband but has been, as it were, only temporarily interrupted, to be continued after the period of mourning, ideally an agnate of the late husband.

The greatest injustice in this custom of *ukungena* is the fact that gender inequality is the norm. For example, in the case of a widower, the marriage is terminated by the death of the wife. In other words, there is no coercion on the part of the widower; he does remain unmarried. The motive for forcing the widow to remain at her husband's home may vary, but in some instances, the in-laws are motivated by greed to demand that the widow remain in her in-laws' home and marry the husband's brother, especially

if the in-laws wish to keep their deceased son's wealth in the family. The intention is indirectly to keep the widow poor and easy to control. This arrangement also points to the imbalance in the treatment of women by men in the society, especially widows. Ramphela & Boonzaier (1996:156) describe the male dominance prevalence in African societies as follows:

Widowed women fall under the control of a designated brother-in-law who assumes the responsibility of his late brother, including fathering the children for him. This system confers the status of perpetual minor on African women, and has been re-enforced by legal provisions of White governments in some other African countries.

In patriarchal societies, a woman married with *ilobolo* paid is not the sole property of her husband. She becomes a member of her husband's nuclear family as well as of his extended family. She is bound to serve the interests of his entire family. Children born of her belong to their father, they live with him, owe him respect, and bear his clan name (Junod, 1962:279). Consequently, when her husband dies, in order to look after her, this woman is taken over by the deceased's brother through the custom of the levirate. The younger brother is entitled to have sex with her in order to raise the family on behalf of his late brother (Junod, 1962).

In this way, the levirate custom is significant, as it provides for widows and orphans. Such families in patriarchal societies believe that it also strengthens the relationships between the nuclear family and the extended families. Seligman (1932:172) remarks as follows with regard to the *ilobolo* and the levirate customs:

Though no marriage would be valid without the exchange of bride-wealth, and a widow's position is one of dependence on her deceased's husband's heir, it is not true to say that wives are bought as slaves, nor that they are inherited as property is inherited.

In today's world, in light of the above quotation, apropos of levirate marriage, this custom is disadvantageous to widows because some of its obligations prejudice women who may become victims of the situation. Such an arrangement may lend the woman into an abusive marriage by the deceased's brother and she may have little say over such abuse because of fear of reprisals from the in-laws.

The man who is to ‘take over the responsibilities’ may do so against the wishes of the bereaved woman. If the wife refuses to accept the person chosen by the elders of the family, she is frowned upon, and sometimes ostracized, and this can create tension between her and her in-laws, including the extended family members. Although this constitutes a violation of her rights, it may happen that *ukungena* is imposed without the wife having been consulted about the decision of the family; she can simply be informed about the decision and told who is going to ‘take over’ her late husband’s responsibilities.

In the dialogue between Tholakele and Bhekani, Tholakele reveals how serious Bhatomu is in taking her as his wife:

*Zimbi izinto mntakwethu. UBhatomu uthi ngiya ekhaya kumnyama kubomvu (p. 44).*

‘Things are bad, my love. Bhatomu says I’m going home, dark or blue’.

From a feminist point of view, Tholakele portrays the image of a liberated woman. She quickly wants to move away from the bondage of being forced to follow the patriarchal tradition of *ukungena* that is imposed on her. Tholakele believes that she cannot be forced to marry somebody she does not love, hence her running away from her late husband’s brother, Bhatomu. She is searching for her freedom and independence irrespective of her in-laws’ instructions and demands. She defies the odds and strives for her independence.

Bhatomu’s insistence on taking over his late brother’s responsibilities is evident here. He is not about to give up just because this arrangement is against Tholakele’s wishes. Tholakele says:

*Uthi phela ngangigane umfowabo ngokwesiko kufuneka ngingenwe (p. 44).*

‘He said because I was married to his brother I must therefore marry him’.

Tholakele is searching for a new lease of life without being dictated to by customs and traditions. Radical feminists believe that women should create their own meaning of language.

Many people in patriarchal societies believe that *ukungena* is part and parcel of their culture. This custom, according to many feminists, is inhumane and degrading because it does not take into account the feelings of a widow. It also forbids the widow from continuing with her life outside her in-laws, which is why many widows choose to run away from the abuse of their in-laws. This custom forbids the widow, in the guise of culture, her freedom to choose the way she wishes to live her life. Koreih (1996), cited by Sossou (2002:206), has this to say about Nigerian widows:

These arrangements have become unattractive and burdensome, and most people are no longer interested in widow inheritance or levirate marriage in which a widow is remarried to her husband's brother or other relative.

Bhatomu is adamant that Tholakele will never get married to Bhekani while he is still alive as he considers her to be his wife. Bhatomu is prepared to kill Bhekani so that their wedding does not materialize. The author says:

*Ashaye ngempama kuTholi uBhatomu* (p. 46).  
'Bhatomu slapped Tholi'.

On his way from the hospital to check on Tholakele, Bhekani meets Bhatomu on the way and a confrontation ensues. In the dialogue between Bhekani and Bhatomu, the latter claims that Tholakele is his wife:

*Ufunani kumkami ndoda?* (p. 76).  
'What do you want from my wife, man?'

Seeing that Tholakele is not interested in his advances, Bhatomu chooses to use force to compel Tholakele into accepting him. Feminists believe that the use of violence against women is a sign of cowardice when men can no longer think rationally (Gumede, 2002). Feminists believe that the only way of resolving an impasse is when force is used and this is what Bhatomu is doing. In the ensuing confrontation, Bhatomu tries to stab Bhekani but he is unsuccessful as Bhekani runs for his life. The author says:

*...agqabule ummese omude uBhatomu. Athi uyawushaya esiswini sikaBheki, akhwece aze awe uBheki...ummese uklebhule iyembe likaBheki ...* (p. 76).  
'...Bhatomu takes out a long knife. He unsuccessfully tries to stab Bhekani in the stomach, Bheki evades the knife until he falls down...the knife tears Bheki's shirt...'

After escaping from danger posed by Bhatomu and his two accomplices, Bhekani runs for his dear life. All Bhatomu can say is:

*Lalela la mfowethu, ngeke uze ushade noTholi ngisekhona. Umshado lowo ngizowumisa...* (p. 76).

‘Listen here my brother, you will never get married to Tholi while I’m still alive. I will stop the wedding...’

Bhatomu’s actions still show the injustice of the practice of *ukungena* because Bhatomu is trying to force Tholakele to be his wife without her consent. This practice also means that the widow is unable to have a partner of her choice after her husband’s death. Bryant (1949:38) cited in Ndlovu (2013) poses that:

It is worth considering Bryant’s (1949:38) crucial issue of levirate marriage which was normally practiced by the African people where the widow was expected to marry one of her husband’s brothers. If the woman failed to comply with that, she was dismissed from the family and sent back to her parents, leaving behind property including children. This cultural practice is still observed in some traditional societies. It is oppressive and abusive. But many widows would prefer to submit themselves rather than to lose their property. Worst of all losing their children. Arguably, in the twenty first century such a practice should be obsolete as mitigating circumstances such as HIV render this cultural practice insignificant.

In *Umshado*, Tholakele shows strong non-adherence to the norms and traditions of the Zulu custom. She is portrayed as disobeying and disrespecting her in-laws by refusing to be married to her late husband’s brother. According to the author, she is acting against the societal norms, and this defiance is deemed un-African. The patriarchal stereotype shown by the author towards Tholakele is seen when, after all her struggles, she gets arrested. This supposed freedom and independence of a woman is viewed with suspicion in a patriarchal society. Tholakele’s running away from her in-laws results in her using drugs. Roland & Harris (1992:106) argue the independence in relation to women as:

Autonomy, independence and assertiveness, the qualities most valid in our society, are considered “unfeminine”...When a woman is called independent; it is usually in a pejorative tone.

The above quotation shows that, while women have other needs to serve (childbearing and rearing, and motherhood, inter alia), they are not expected to have the opportunity of developing themselves and attend to their own needs and desires. Selden (1993:35) maintains that “women themselves are in the position to assess the true existential possibilities of womanhood”. Scholes (1985:218) cited by Fuss (1989:26) argues that:

We are subjects constructed by our experience and truly carry traces of that experience in our minds and on our bodies. Those of us who are male cannot deny this either. With the best will in the world we shall never read as women and perhaps not even like women. For me, born when I was born and living where I have lived, the very best I can do is to be conscious of the ground upon which I stand: to read not as but like a man.

The striking theme in the above quotation is the insistence on the socialization of an individual. Society plays an important role in the socialization of a person. This includes his/her behaviour his/her type of friends he/she chooses, the language he/she uses etc.

### **7.5 Dress code and man’s lust under the guise of tradition**

The colour and the length of the mourning dress is prescribed for widows. The dress is usually black in colour and the prescribed length is that it should go below the knees. Tholakele’s dress is black but it is so short that Bhekani is able to see her thighs. The special meaning of the *inzilo* dress that Tholakele wears for the death of her husband is questionable because it is very short for a widow in mourning.

In the novel *Umshado*, a man’s lust becomes evident. In the extract below, the author offers this description:

*Umoya ufune ukuphephula isiketi kuvele kancane iphezulu lamathanga. Anikine ikhanda uBhekani. Umqondo wakhe uvele usakhe usiqede sonke esingezansi sale ntokazi (p. 2).*

‘The wind almost blew up Tholakele’s skirt, and he could partly see the upper part of her thighs. Bhekani shook his head. His mind just imagined the whole lower part of this woman’s body’.

Bhekani is obsessed by what he is seeing. This shows that women are described in terms of what is appreciated by men. What Bhekani has just witnessed convinces him to court

Tholakele. He eventually proposes, and she accepts him immediately without any waste of time.

Women's right to choose their dress code should not be seen as secondary to issues such as domestic violence and sexual abuse, as this in some way is connected to forms of gender oppression. Policing women's dress should be seen for what it really is – another means of controlling women's bodies. By saying what is or is not suitable clothing for women is a notion that is based on sex because it does not apply to men.

Sifiso's comments about the way Tholakele is dressed when Bhekani saw her is very judgemental. Because of the dress she is wearing, she is deemed to have loose morals. If it was a man dressed in a supposedly 'improper manner', she would not have been labelled negatively as Tholakele is. Bhekani says:

*Angisayiphathi eyethanga layo mfowethu, ngithe uma ngithi nhla kwagijima igazi ngokushesha (p. 3).*

'I don't even want to talk about her thigh, my brother, when I took a glance at it, I had an adrenalin rush in my body'.

In the dialogue between Bhekani and Sifiso, his colleague, the latter asks him why Tholakele is dressed in such a manner that Bhekani is able to see her thighs:

*Ubekhindeleni uze ubone amathanga nje? Sengathi akanasimilo nje lo muntu ombonile ndoda (p. 3).*

'Why was she wearing a short dress that made you to see her thighs? It looks like this person you saw has loose morals, man'.

Bhekani describes Tholakele's dress as more suited to a fashion show, and it is this dress, which fires Bhekani's attraction to her, leading him to declare his love for her the first time he sees her. When Sifiso asks Bhekani if Tholakele's short black dress is not for mourning, Bhekani quickly refutes the claim:

*Leziya Sifiso ezomswenko nje, akusiyo inzilo (p. 3).*

'Those ones, Sifiso, are for looking good, they are not for mourning'.

What women wear and where they wear it, is highly contested in patriarchal societies. In patriarchal societies, men are 'supposedly' allowed by culture to satisfy their lust

and this is evidenced by Dosekun's (2007) comments. Dosekun (2007:10) believes that a man's behaviour is loose and that his main enjoyment is sex, for which there are easy opportunities when he is out herding goats, away from home. Some men see women as sex objects who are there to satisfy their lust. Research shows that there was a practice in the Zulu tradition called *ukusoma* which men engaged in, to deal with the problem of lust. A woman was available for a man for this practice and the sexual gratification in this practice did not consider the woman's feelings. As long as the man was able to satisfy himself, it was ok. As noted by Von Kapff (2011:57), "traditionally the sex game *ukusoma* (the type of sex that does not involve penetration) was practiced to alleviate sexual tension".

The author further reveals Bhekani's lust for Tholakele when he sees Tholakele's breast:

*Wazizwa efudumala kancane uBheki ethintwa ibele likaTholi* (p. 8).  
'Bheki felt slightly warm when he was touched by Tholi's breasts'.

These examples show Bhekani's lust for Tholakele simply in the way he looks at her body – *amabele* (breasts), *amathanga* (thighs) *kanye nesingezansi* (the lower part of her body). It is the body features that seem to attract Bhekani the most. At this stage, one may therefore assume that Bhekani is interested only in her physical attraction rather than in true love that may ultimately lead to marriage.

Some women wear very revealing dresses outlining the shape of the body, doing so either to attract men's attention or without realising how this might attract attention. Those who do this purposely, do it because they know sex is a commodity that sells quickly to men who cannot control their lust. The author says:

*Ngale nkathi uTholi wayesusa izitsha zokuphuza ezibeka etafuleni, uBhekani elokhu embuka ehla enyuka. Le ngubo ekhanyayo yayisuke imgulise uBhekani. Isimo sikaTholakele yayisibeka obala* (p. 11).

'During this time Tholi was taking the items that they were using to drink and putting them on the table, Bhekani kept his eyes on her as she was going up and down. This revealing dress was making Bhekani crazy. It was clearly showing how every part of Tholakele's body was shaped'.



When women are attacked for dressing ‘inappropriately’, they are then blamed for these so-called acts of morality. This only strengthens the belief that policing women’s dress is the right thing to do. The way people dress can be an important expression of their religious, cultural or personal identity or beliefs. As a general rule, the rights to freedom of religion or belief and freedom of expression entail that all people should be free to choose what – and what not- to wear. What women wear and where, is highly contested by feminists. No one has a right to determine the dress code of another person, regardless of that person’s sex. Women, therefore, should have the right to wear what they choose – be it traditional African attire, a miniskirt or pants – free of coercion. The author says:

*Washeshe waqeda ukugqoka uTholi. Waphuma esegqoke ingutshana elulwelwesi elula, eyayikuveza konke ayekugqoke ngaphansi* (p. 11).

‘Tholi quickly finished dressing up. She came out wearing a “see-through” dress that was revealing everything that she was wearing underneath’.

Tholakele is portrayed as being interested in male companionship, which, in many instances, results in sexual intercourse. She appears not to be interested in getting married to Bhekani who is desperately looking for a wife. Bhekani’s desperation is mainly influenced by his late father, who constantly reminds him (in his dream) to get married.

Davies & Graves (1986:48) make the point that society also plays a role in the oppression of women:

First of all, we cannot only speak of women’s oppression by men. In capitalist systems, women tend to be exploited by the very nature of society, particularly the working and peasant women, just as men are exploited. The difference is that women are hit particularly hard. Then you have forms of abuse that cut across class lines: sexual abuse, wife-beating, and the fact that men take advantage of the woman’s role as a child-bearer.

hooks (1991:31) believes that patriarchy may be seen as a ubiquitous male hierarchical ordering of society which is implemented in order to achieve and sustain political and social order. She argues that before “we can resist male domination, we must break our attachment to sexism; we must work to transform female consciousness”. She contends that women, as an oppressed group, comply with their own subjugation by failing to

examine their socialization, hence maintaining the tradition. (hooks, 1991:29) also states that the authority of patriarchal ideology is such that:

It encourages women to believe that we are valueless and obtain value only by relating to or bonding with men. We are taught that our relationship with one another diminishes rather than enrich our experiences. We are taught that women are ‘natural’ enemies, that solidarity will never exist between us because we cannot, should not, and do not bond with one another. We have learned these lessons well. We must unlearn them...We must learn to live and work in solidarity. We must learn the true meaning and value of sisterhood.

Many feminists such as hooks (1991) believe that women need to recognise and celebrate their strengths and differences rather than allow themselves to be manipulated by divisive forces. What is stressed by hooks (1991) is the value of differences as a basis for true sisterhood. hooks (1991:38) sees feminism as “politics, as a lifestyle, as something you become rather than something you do”. She believes that women need not share common oppression to overcome oppression. Obbo (1980: 43) states that:

Even though the world is changing all about women, it seems that woman’s own attempts to cope with the new situations they find themselves in are regarded as a ‘problem’ by men, and a betrayal of traditions which are often confused with women’s roles. Women must act as mediators between the present and the future.

According to patriarchal stereotype, Tholakele’s behaviour is controversial, given her situation as someone who has recently lost her husband. People such as Tholakele represent women who are liberated from the societal norms that restrict their actions and their movements, and confine them to certain practices that are acceptable to a patriarchal society. Paradoxically, in spite of all this, Bhekani is madly in love with Tholakele and he wants to make her his wife. Ogunyemi (1985: 65) believes that:

For a novel to be identified as feminist, it must deal not only with women issues but it should also posit some aspects of a feminist ideology in which a reader can expect to find a combination of literary themes, such as critical perception of and reaction to patriarchy, sensitivity to the inequalities of sexism, a change leading to female victory in a feminist world, or a failure to eliminate sexism and finally, a style characterised by acrimony of a feminist discourse.

A man may be easily seduced by a woman’s dress, and usually, this is a man’s weakness. Man’s weakness and selfishness, which they claim as a right given by

physiology, in many cases, tends to spoil whatever they touch in nature, as is revealed by the high number of sexual abuses on women and children. In a situation where a man proposes love from a girl that he meets for the first time, and the girl accepting the man's advances immediately, that particular woman is described in negative terms, *isifebe* (whore), but when this is done by a male, he is given a positive term, *isoka*, (a male person with many girlfriends). This shows double standards from the society with regard to the behaviour of women and men.

The impression created by the above discussion is that some women are readily available to men. In patriarchal societies, Tholakele's behaviour is un-African because an African woman would initially pretend to refuse. Tholakele here breaks the rules of the Zulu patriarchal tradition. If a man is allowed to make advances to a woman at their first encounter, the woman should be able to do the same. In a patriarchal society, a woman may even be scolded and accused of having loose morals when she openly shows her affection to her partner.

In the dialogue between Sifiso and Bhekani, Sifiso is intrigued that Bhekani and Tholakele are already dating after having met for the first time. Bhekani explains:

*Angeshelanga. Sabonisana. Sathola ukuthi siyathandana. Izimo zethu zazifana. Ushonelwe yindoda; ngifuna umakoti* (p. 13).

'I did not court her. We shared ideas. We found that we are in love. Our situations were the same. She has lost her husband and I want a wife'.

Bhekani seemingly sees nothing wrong with Tholakele showing her affection in their first encounter. Tholakele believes in her own self-gratification, no matter what the society says about her or her behaviour. He is suspicious about how things have quickly unfolded between Tholakele and Bhekani.

The author wants to depict Tholakele a liberated woman who represents women who flaunt their sexuality. She is not shy of revealing her sexual feelings when the occasion is suitable. Tholakele is a very 'open' and 'easy-going' person when it comes to expressing her sexual interests and desires.

In the dialogue, where Bhekani asks where they can sit and talk, Tholakele suggests that they go to her house so that they can talk and act without any disturbance. Tholakele responds:

*Asiye kwami. Uzokhululeka lapho, akukho nkinga (p.7).*

‘Let’s go to my house. You will be free there, there is no problem’.

It is only their second meeting and she is already showing signs she wants them to make love. One may argue here that the author intentionally creates suspense for readers to arrive at different interpretations as some (readers) may think that women should not be readily available to men. The author draws further suspense by saying:

*UTholakele aqabule uBheki. Ethuke uBheki. Namuhla uyolala kwami Bheki (p. 26).*

‘Tholakele kisses Bheki. Bheki is shocked. Today you are going to sleep at my place Bheki’.

According to Zulu culture, Tholakele should not initiate the move so early and should have waited for Bhekani to take the initiative. For Bhekani, this is the first time he meets a girl of the type of Tholakele, who is not shy about displaying her feelings for him. In patriarchal societies, women are seen as inactive because they cannot initiate the process of making love: only men are supposed to take the first step. Evidently, in a patriarchal society, men are hunters and women are the prey. Tholakele wants this reversed and equality achieved and does not need any justification or approval from anybody.

In the extract below, the author paints a picture of Bhekani facing a dilemma of not knowing what to do with his two lovers. This dilemma to choose one or the other shows internal conflict within Bhekani. Lindiwe comes at a time when Bhekani’s mind is still occupied by Tholakele’s love; Lindiwe’s arrival obfuscates the situation further. The author says:

*Ukufika kukaLindiwe sekumsanganisile impela. Athathe bani manje? Akasaqondi...Athathe uthando uBheki alufake esikalini. OlukaTholi luhamba phambili (p. 56).*

‘The arrival of Lindiwe has really confused him. Who must he marry? He is not sure... Bheki puts his love on the scale for each one. Tholi’s love is by far the best’.

When Tholakele visits Bhekani at his home, unbeknown to him, she encounters Lindiwe visiting Bhekani, and Bhekani does not know what to do in this situation. He does not want the two women to meet each other because he is not sure what the outcome of their meeting will be. Lindiwe is not aware that Bhekani has a new girlfriend, Tholakele, and likewise Tholakele. Tholakele has come to fetch Bhekani to her house.

Bhekani's actions show that he is only interested in sexual intercourse, especially, with Lindiwe, without any promise of serious commitment afterwards. Lindiwe even notices this and accuses him of sexual exploitation. She says:

*Ngibona sengathi wena Bhekani ungithanda embhedeni nje kuphela. Xola, umoya wami uwuxove kakhulu* (p. 29).

'I think you, Bhekani, love me for sex only. Relax, you have disappointed me a lot'.

In the novel, *Umshado*, Tholakele and Lindiwe are portrayed as tools or sex objects to provide sexual pleasure for Bhekani. Although Lindiwe appears to be really serious about her relationship with Bhekani, Bhekani seems to be playing sex games with her and less interested in a serious relationship now that Tholakele has come onto the scene. The author does not stress Bhekani's weakness that he has a girlfriend, Lindiwe, other than Tholakele. He is a cheater. Furthermore, even if the author had stressed this, he would not be accused of endorsing the belief of the society.

The Zulu tradition expresses sexual conquests in women in terms of *ukudla* (devouring). This misconception creates an impression that women are commodities who provide sexual favours or pleasures for men. This commodification of women by men is prevalent in many patriarchal societies where men with many girlfriends becomes a 'hero' (*isoka*) because of his prowess and sexual conquest. When men go gallivanting with many different women, it is not frowned upon by society because he is a man. Such actions, in many instances, lead to sexual encounters with these women and may ultimately results in unplanned pregnancies. In such cases, men treat women as sex objects who are ready to be 'devoured' (*-dliwa*) by men, as is the case with Bhekani.

Gender stereotypes about African women have been identified as one of the barriers to women achieving their full potential. Generally speaking, stereotypes against women are often based on pre-conceived notions of what women are assumed to be capable of, and this has been proved to be a fallacy. It is important to remember that gender has to be understood as a social rather than a physiological construction. By encouraging males to analyse their socially-constructed gender profiles, it is possible to educate them on how their social roles may have an impact on gender equality. This will involve analysing the entrenchment of traditional male stereotypes in society and their consequent impact on women. Certain masculinities preserve and promote the inequalities experienced by men and women, and in order to achieve gender equality, they must be dismantled. Male stereotypes, in the context of gender inequality, do not operate in isolation. As de Beauvoir (1949:26) puts it:

Thus humanity is male and man defines woman not in herself but as relative to him. She is not regarded as an autonomous being. She is defined and differentiated with reference to men and not he with reference to her; she is the subject; he is the absolute— she is the other, the object.

But Tholakele is an exception to this. She is not a common girl. Her happiness depends on her and she does not want to allow societal norms to dictate to her how she must live her life.

Female characters are often treated more as symbols than as living, suffering individuals. Some authors seem to identify undesirable qualities in modern women in terms of female–male relationships. In *Umshado*, Tholakele is characterised as a woman of doubtful virtue. Her actions are deemed undesirable in a male-dominated society. Tholakele’s search for freedom brings her nothing but trouble because she is a woman. Radical feminists believe that, for women to thrive and attain their freedom, they must be aggressive in their approach, and fight for their autonomy.

In most Zulu literary works, depictions of female characters are from a fiercely male perspective, reflecting male conceptions of female sexuality. Some authors tend to overplay the sexuality of their female characters, creating the impression that women have no identity outside of their sexual roles. Such female characters usually serve to

enhance the images of the male protagonists who occupy central positions in such literary works.

There is no problem for Bhekani in having two girlfriends at the same time as this appears to be a norm in African societies. The author here simply reflects social custom, accepting it as more normal for boys to have greater independence than girls. This shows double standards in the treatment of males and females by patriarchal society. Peterson and Runyan (1993:21) contend that:

...the social construction of gender is actually a system of power that not only divides men and women as masculine and feminine, but typically also places men and masculinity above women and femininity and operates to value more highly those institutions and practices that are male dominated and/or representative of masculine traits and styles.

Hickman (1989) makes the point that women are commonly described in terms of objects, or in association with food. She believes that this association is aimed at acculturating women in relation to kitchen matters. The patriarchal ideology that a woman should be in the kitchen because that is where she is 'supposed' to be, is archaic and sexist, according to feminists. There is nothing intrinsic in women's bodies that associates them with the kitchen. Women should be wherever they want to be as they are as competent as men are. Women have proven their worth and abilities of having the power to face any challenges that come their way. Lindiwe is slowly realizing that Bhekani is not really interested in her as he has already chosen another woman over her. It seems as if Lindiwe's mistake is her unwavering love for Bhekani. This shows Bhekani's calibre as he is just one of the play boys who wants to satisfy his sexual desires.

Freud (1992) argues that men use psychology to infantilise women in order to oppress them. Men do this by first gaining their confidence before seducing them, which may ultimately lead to sexual intimacy. An example of this would be the way a man might refer to his girlfriend, wife or lover as *ingane yami* (literally, 'my baby'), never considering her real age. One may argue that some women like to be called 'my baby' because it makes them feel younger, attractive, cared for, and so on.

The author uses Tholakele and Pamela to problematize the myth of a ‘problem free’ lesbian relationship in this novel. We find the same sex relationship freedom in which Tholakele is dating Pamela. Conversely, Tholakele is also dating Bhekani. The author says:

*Nangu uTholakele esencela amabele ale ntombazane yomlungu. Nayo ayimyekile uTholakele. Ilokhu incumbaza wona amabele. Izandla izigijimisa emhlane wonke (p. 24).*

‘Here is Tholakele sucking this White woman’s breasts. This woman is also doing the same. This woman keeps on touching Tholakele’s breasts. Her hands are all over her back’.

In many democratic and progressive countries, the union between partners of the same sex is legalised. This legalisation therefore challenges societies who are still patriarchal to change their mind-set about the relationship of the same sex. Sossou (2002:208) believes that women need to stand together and fight this discrimination.

The educated African women and scholars therefore have a responsibility and obligation to champion the cause of fighting inequalities against all women. This could be done through organising women’s groups, social education, advocating for gender-sensitive legislation, networking locally, nationally, regionally and internationally with other women’s groups and by taking collective actions aimed at drawing attention to the plights of women in general.

The twist in the novel occurs when Bhekani’s wife-to-be is arrested on account of drug dealing on their wedding day. This is extremely embarrassing because it happens in the presence of Bhekani’s family and the guests attending the wedding. This shows patriarchal stereotyping by the author in his portrayal of Tholakele as a woman and as a failure. If it was a man who behaved like Tholakele, this would not have been as negatively depicted as the author chooses to depict Tholakele. The author seems to paint the picture that women who wish to ‘break away from the society’s shackles’, and fight for their freedom and independence, finally suffer negative consequences and become victims of their own act. When Tholakele is arrested while taking vows in church, everyone in attendance is shocked. Tholakele is arrested together with Pamela and Zenze, who has been acting as Tholakele’s right-hand man:

*Yini Tholi? Niboshelwani? kubuza uBheki ekhala (p. 81).*

‘What’s happening Tholi? Why are you being arrested? The crying Bheki asks’.



The disastrous end to this narrative shows that Tholakele and Pamela deserve to be punished for their illegal activities. Tholakele can only say:

*Ubofika ecaleni mntakwethu* (p. 81).  
'Come to the trial my love'.

Bhekani's mother who, from the start, had been against him marrying Tholakele is also shocked as things unfold. She had reluctantly come to the wedding hoping that things will eventually get right for Bhekani and his bride-to-be. With the turn of events, Bhekani thinks it is because the ancestors are unhappy about the whole arrangement. He says:

*Kwenqabe lona idlozi* (p. 81).  
'The ancestors did not agree'.

## **7.6 Summary of the chapter**

This chapter has explored some oppressive, stereotypical customs, rites and traditions prevalent in the Zulu society. It has shown how Tholakele searches for a new kind of identity in society. She strives for the role that would allow her to be free from traditional norms and restrictions. She represents women who wish to introduce change, and who long to be placed on the same pedestal as their male counterparts. From a feminist point of view, some men regard such actions and behaviour as rebellious and challenging to the domination of women. Again female characters, Tholakele and Pamela emerge as victims as they are imprisoned for dealing in drugs and Lindiwe is left to leak her wounds after being impregnated by Bhekani. This is the unfortunate reality women face in patriarchal societies.

Throughout, language has been used in this novel to emphasize sexual differences between females and males. In a similar vein, negative moral judgement is passed on a 'free-spirited' woman, Tholakele, who is judged as being a 'bad' woman. The new 'free sex' morality gives women freedom to do what they wish, not requiring any commitment in return; however, the patriarchal society is not ready to accept this behaviour by a woman. Lorde (1984) feels that empowered women should not shy away

from using their erotic powers. According to Lorde (1984:54) erotic autonomy observes that:

The erotic has often been misnamed by men and used against women. It has been made into the confused, the trivial, the psychotic, the plasticized sensation. For this reason, we have often turned away from the exploration and consideration of the erotic as a source of power and information, confusing with its opposite, the pornographic. But pornography is a direct denial of power of the erotic, for it represents the suppression of true feeling. Pornography emphasises sensation without feeling.

Bhekani's infidelity is not questioned because he is a man and the patriarchal society does not have a problem with his behaviour. Such double standards in the treatment of women and men are prevalent in some authors of Zulu literary texts who still subscribe to the idea of male domination over their womenfolk.

The next chapter deals with the general overview of the study, the findings and observations and the conclusion of the research and also highlights recommendations for further research.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### 8. CONCLUSION

#### 8.1 Introduction

In this concluding chapter, I intend to offer overall observations, interpretations, findings and concluding remarks, based on the analysis of the chosen literary texts. The chapter offers suggestions and recommendations for further research, especially on the issues that this study did not cover.

The study has presented a discursive analysis of the negative portraiture of women in four selected Zulu literary texts written between the years 1990 and 2006 by female and male authors. The objective was to establish whether there is negative portrayal of female characters either by female or male authors in Zulu literary texts, using literary discourse analysis, and feminist literary theories. The conclusion arrived at is that there is negative portrayal of female characters by both female and male writers.

#### 8.2 Findings and concluding remarks

By employing the multi-dimensional theoretical framework as a discursive strategy to depict the concerns of women by means of thematic concerns reflected in the literary discourses, the study has shown that women are still suffering. The study has revealed that the discourse reflects power imbalances or inequalities in intervention in which marginalised women play a peripheral role. In the four selected literary texts analysed, authors have depicted women as victims. Most of the authors portray their female characters negatively and seem to perpetuate the notion of women subjugation. While female characters strive to achieve their independence and freedom from the shackles of patriarchy, these authors appear to maintain the status quo in the suppression of women. It must be mentioned though that some authors challenge the the status quo and the imbalance in the treatment of women.

Words such as *umfelokazi*, (widow), *inzilo*, (mourning dress) and *ukungena* (taking over the responsibilities of the late brother) are used to depict female characters as

objects, victims and agents in the fight against patriarchy. Such words conjure up images of hopelessness, despair, horror, terror, helplessness and powerlessness. Men's death does not relieve women but brings sorrow and perpetual bondage, in-depth suffering, and painstaking. Women are generally configured as down-trodden by patriarchal realities and fictional experiences exposed by critical discourse analysis and feminist literary analysis.

In *Ifa Lenkululeko*, written by Shange (a male), Daisy, who is the main character, is characterised negatively. Daisy endures a great deal of pain and suffering from her in-laws until she loses her inheritance to her boyfriend. Shange seems to be cemented in a patriarchal system in which a woman, Daisy, cannot make sober and sound decisions apropos of her inheritance and her sexuality because she is a widow.

In *Umshado*, written by Zulu (a female), Tholakele, the female protagonist, is portrayed negatively for a reason to challenge the status quo. Tholakele endures a great deal of pain when her late husband's brother, Bhatomu, wants to take over the responsibilities of her late husband. Tholakele is not prepared to accept this decree, therefore runs away from her in-laws. I had anticipated that Zulu, being a female, would present her female protagonist positively, however, Tholakele becomes a victim at the end of the narrative while fighting for her freedom and independence. Tholakele's portrayal in this novel would have shown positivity towards women's emancipation and independence if the author had portrayed her in a positive light. Given that this novel has recently been published (in 2006), I would have expected Zulu's portrayal of her female character to be more positive in the light of recent strides towards women's emancipation.

Both novels, *Ifa Lenkululeko*, and *Umshado*, depict female characters negatively. *Ifa Lenkululeko* shows the way in which widows are generally downtrodden and least protected, as their lives are determined by society, patriarchal interpretations, and expectations of tradition, discrimination and stigma. In most African societies, widowhood represents a 'social death' for women (Kuyela, 2014: 52). It is not just that they have lost their husbands, but widowhood robs them of their status and confines them to the fringes of society where they suffer discrimination and stigma. Owen (2011) argues that widowhood tends to impact more traumatically on a woman than widowers,

altering forever the way the widow is perceived, and consequently affecting her self-image.

The author portrays the widow's world in *Ifa Lenkululeko* as a hybrid space informed by forces of tradition and modernity. These forces meet and contest with one another, providing a rich tapestry on Daisy's widowhood. Despite the fact that the setting of the novel is urban, traditional widowhood rites must be performed. Daisy is expected to formally and openly show her grief and sorrow for her dead husband. She is expected to mourn her husband in a way that will indicate that she is innocent of his death. These traditional rites and mourning practices are in direct conflict with her religious beliefs as a Christian. She is not prepared to abandon her religious convictions just because she is instructed by her in-laws to do so. Daisy's behaviour is viewed by her in-laws as disrespectful, and she has to be punished for that.

Daisy's plight is further exacerbated by the conflict over her husband's inheritance. Her in-laws demand that they be given a share of it. While she is psychologically and emotionally drained and traumatized by this pernicious state of affairs, Daisy has yet to fight her in-laws in court over this inheritance. With her winning the court battle and also not observing the traditional rites, she constantly receives unending curses from her in-laws. Daisy confronts and extricates herself from the patriarchal structures that confine her in widowhood, structures that seek to exclude and marginalize her in society. Daisy sees many opportunities opening up for her after she receives her inheritance. Unfortunately for her, she chooses the path that leads to her doom, the kind of disaster which shows she is naïve.

Conversely in this novel, Buthelezi's infidelity is not questioned because he is a man. His disloyalty to his wife does not receive as much attention as Daisy's supposed 'loose behaviour' does. Such an imbalance in the portrayal of characters according to their sex demonstrates the author's stereotypical attitude towards women. In a patriarchal society, Buthelezi's behaviour is 'acceptable'. A man's infidelity is not commented on nor viewed as inappropriate, as would be the case for a woman, as exemplified by Daisy. One may argue that the author wishes to maintain the status quo in this novel by not challenging such discourses of women's subordination.

The development of the plot in this novel posits negative stereotypes towards women. It would have been interesting to see how the events would have unfolded had the main character, unlike Daisy, been a male. Thus, Shange's novel highlights the societal perceptions of widows as vulnerable and powerless, especially when it comes to making their own decisions.

Conversely, the novel *Umshado* portrays Tholakele searching for a new role in society that will allow her to be free of traditional norms and restrictions. This new role will place her on the same level as men. *Umshado* also offers a new possibility to a woman's question on marriage. "Why marriage? What kind of marriage do I want?" Tholakele seems to be interested in male companionship which necessarily results in sexual intercourse. Her behaviour poses a number of questions according to patriarchal stereotypes: Is sexual freedom enough to procure happiness? Is it not that a woman keeps giving of herself without any tangible returns, thus succumbing to a new form of sexual slavery? How far is Tholakele's supposed freedom from promiscuity? Would motherhood be a form of entrapment, or the real crowning glory of a woman's life? Is society prepared to accept this sort of behaviour by Tholakele? Most probably not in a patriarchal society.

From a patriarchal point of view, Tholakele's behaviour is unacceptable. Such character portrayal of Tholakele demonstrates a patriarchal stereotyping on the part of the author. Daisy's search for sexual freedom and independence is judged negatively because she is a woman. The author here firmly supports the traditional morality in this novel by the choice of language she uses which reinforces the traditional value system, i.e., a woman cannot play around with her life-giving faculty. Women such as Tholakele are beautiful figures that are, however, rotten to the core. From a feminist point of view, were Tholakele a man, the end of this novel would not have resulted in disaster.

This novel shows the differences in attitudes and in the language used between men and women through dialogue. While women were kept quasi-slaves by patriarchy which imposed a strict control over their sexuality and reproductive faculty, they now enjoy a new freedom in their relationships. What used to be 'open hunting season' only for men has now become possible for women as well, if they have the independence of character, the financial appeal, and the beauty and winning ways to attract men. All that

Tholakele seems to demand is that she should be allowed to do whatever men do, and behave freely as men do. Tholakele's behaviour is negatively perceived because she is a woman, while Bhekani's actions are not negatively portrayed. In a patriarchal society, Bhekani's infidelity is viewed as a norm and there is no shame in it. The difference in the portrayal of characters shows the dichotomy between men and women in this novel.

In *Ngizyazisa Ngomtanami*, written by Msimang, a male, Nguzunga, the main character, is portrayed as a weak husband from a patriarchal point of view because he realises his mistake of not listening to his wife. From a feminist point of view, Nguzunga is portrayed as a transformed man who reveals the flaws and failures of the patriarchal system. Msimang portrays MaZondi, Nguzunga's wife, as wishing to be acknowledged for her intellect and contribution. When Nguzunga is arrested for attacking his brother, Jakobe, he realises his mistake and acknowledges that MaZondi had been right all along, and should have been listened to and taken seriously.

*Ngizyazisa Ngomtanami* points out the failures of the patriarchal system. Msimang exposes these failures in a subtle manner, so that inattentive readers may not be able to observe his didacticism. Nguzunga's actions of not taking notice of his wife almost proves costly to his family. This play shows a woman's maturity in opposing stereotypes in a patriarchal system. MaZondi challenges these ridiculous stereotypes in an overused manner while exposing their weaknesses. Men such as Nguzunga, in a patriarchal society, always trust their own judgment, no matter the outcome. They believe in their own abilities and are not ready 'to stoop so low' as to listen to other peoples' ideas, especially those of their wives. This is characteristic of men in a male-dominated society. The irony here is that, it is men who, after realizing their errors, remember the advice of their wives. Men such as Nguzunga believe that a woman's mind thinks slowly just like that of a child, and that is the reason he even threatens to beat her when she tries to advise him. In a male-dominated society, a woman's voice is never taken seriously. Nguzunga's actions show his cowardice because he can never engage his wife in a meaningful and serious conversation such as this one; instead, he resorts to violence. Many feminists believe that men in a patriarchal system believe that the abuse of this system is their God-given privilege and nobody can take that away from them.

It is clear in this play that men allow women to be in charge only in domestic matters. MaZondi fights for the recognition of her rights as the mother of their missing child. In other words, she expects Nguzunga to consult her in whatever decision he is thinking of taking, because she is also an important member of the family. It is not his child, as Nguzunga puts it, but their child, therefore the decision about the child must involve both of them. MaZondi insists on being recognized, acknowledged, and respected, doing away with predictions on the fate of their child. Ironically, at the end of the play, it is Nguzunga who acknowledges that MaZondi had been right all along, and should have been heeded.

The play reveals that women are economically powerless, and, since wealth and politics are inextricably intertwined, MaZondi appears to have no political power at all. This is the situation that many Zulu literary texts reveal. The absence of political and economic power in the household is the result of the culture within the Zulu society. For this reason, in the chosen texts, women come out strong against such conservative assumptions of male domination over females and are not afraid to voice their opinions. Sibiya (1990: 56) believes that, even if women may make attempts to reach their highest potential in various aspects of life, there will always be attempts to discourage them. This play presents a clear example of the attitudes of traditional male characters and their perceptions of the role that women are supposed to play within the family. Nguzunga represents the patriarchal attitudes that men have towards women.

In *Ngiwafunge Amabomvu*, written by Molefe, a male, from a patriarchal point of view, King Mgidi is portrayed as a weak king. He is weak because he does not observe the Zulu customs as shown in the discussion. This is because he takes a decision about Thulisile and Zaba that is contrary to what everybody is expecting. He allows Thulisile and Zaba to get married and he even builds them a home inside his palace, elevating Zaba to his highest confidante. From a feminist point of view, King Mgidi is a hero. He is a transformed character who likes to see women making their decisions regarding whom to marry. The author indicates that men may also be transformed, especially when it comes to women's emancipation.

*Ngiwafunge AmaBomvu* is a throwback to olden times: a world in which women must accept marrying according to traditional customs that have existed for centuries. In this



play, the author presents Thulisile as the main character, around whom the events revolve. This play portrays Thulisile in her young age as she prepares herself to fulfil her life function: to become the faithful companion to a man, and to transform her sexuality into a life-giving gift to the husband's family, to her children and society. It becomes clear in the play that one should not and cannot dictate to a girl's heart, because love is like a thunderbolt that strikes without warning.

King Mgidi wishes to enforce the traditional customs and powers 'supposedly' bestowed upon him to marry Thulisile against her will. AmaBomvu people are so used to this traditional custom that is exercised by the king that they accept it unquestioningly. The people have lived under these traditional customs for many centuries and they are not about to give up their ways simply because of Thulisile's stubbornness. The injustice in this whole arrangement is that the girl's feelings and wishes are not taken into account. Her choice of a life partner does not even enter the equation because nothing must detract from the king's instructions.

The play does not constitute a traditional 'initiation journey' narrative that leads the girl through trials and tribulations to a purification that prepares her for the usual outcome of marriage. However, one might interpret the play as pilgrimage towards a place in which women are free to make personal choices without being forced by considerations of traditions and customs which prejudice against women. The decision to choose whom to marry lies entirely with the woman.

Zaba offers the promise of love and subsequently marriage, while Mgidi uses traditional means to marry Thulisile. The role played by Thulisile in this play is very clear. She does not wish to entertain the idea of being 'given away' to a man she does not love. To her, King Mgidi is a stranger. She believes that this traditional custom dehumanizes people and detracts from the needs of the heart. To her thinking, this tradition should be abolished because it has caused more harm than good in the lives of many women. Thulisile's refusal to marry the king shows how determined she is, even when she faces death as a consequence of her actions. Thulisile insists that, even were the king the only male left in this world, she would not marry him.

The play constitutes a call for a change of attitude towards some traditional customs. It becomes clear that this traditional custom does not give a woman the freedom to choose her marriage partner. While it may be understood that parents tend to interfere in the girl's choice of a life partner, supposedly for her own good, when this interference becomes institutionalized, governed by the state, the person of a woman is completely disregarded and trampled upon: she is 'bought and sold' as a soulless baby-making machine who has no value once her productive cycle ceases.

The play shows that women are discriminated against and oppressed, unable to choose freely the way to run their own lives, and to decide on what to do with their sexuality. This is a political factor in the sense that it involves 'power-structured' relationships and arrangements whereby one group is controlled by the other. In our societies, sex and class marginalize women. Social status is determined solely by males, and the loss of males entails the loss of status, since a woman without a man cannot expect to maintain her place in a society in which domestic and reproductive functions are assigned to her. Men see women, in a polygamous marriage, as chattels, sex objects, and slaves (Gumede, 2002:74). Women seem to recognize their fate and to acknowledge that they have no escape because they are minimized by the economic and traditional customs that have forced them into their present situation. Thulisile is not interested in following this dehumanizing tradition.

Both plays, *Ngiyazisa Ngomtanami* and *Ngiwafunge AmaBomvu*, depict the flaws and failures of the patriarchal system. Both Nguzunga and King Mgidi acknowledge their mistake of not heeding their female counterpart's advice. The supporting evidence for these plays may also be found in the novel *Uvalo Lwezinhlonzi* (1956) by Ngubane. Ngubane's novel may be seen as an implicit criticism of the patriarchal system. At the same time, within Zulu society then and now, Ngubane's novel touches on continuing difficulties confronting many young women.

In *Uvalo Lwezinhlonzi*, for instance, a young woman, Bajwayele, rather than a young man, is the subject of the author's concern. Whereas most authors in the 1950s depicted tradition as idyllic, Ngubane shows that life was changing, even in the rural areas. Already in the fifties, women were discovering the right to their own bodies and accepting the guidance of their hearts (Gumede, 2011:43). Ngubane's point is that

patriarchy required radical adaptation to changed circumstances; his satiric mode exposes its failures as exemplified by the study.

It is important at this stage to summarize the impact patriarchy has had on the lives of women as evidenced in the analysis of the chosen texts. This is important because patriarchy, as the root cause of women's subordination, indirectly forms the theoretical basis of the study. Throughout the years, patriarchy has traditionally had the effect of developing and even controlling many authors' views and ideas when portraying female characters in literary texts. To this end, many authors seem happy to maintain this subordination of women in their texts treating it as though completely normal.

There is a tremendous contrast between the situations of forced love, as illustrated by Thulisile in *Ngiwafunge AmaBomvu*, and free love as illustrated by Daisy in *Ifa Lenkululeko*. The abuses of the first system, which are abuses of patriarchy and custom, cannot be tolerated by Thulisile. The claim of absolute freedom in a sexual relationship as advocated by Daisy is disapproved by the author, because in a patriarchal society, Daisy's actions and behaviour are unacceptable.

The Zulu family is patrilineal, with descent and property being transferred through the male line. The family is patriarchal, with the authority invested in the male household head. It is also monogamous, at least in the enforcement of the rule that the wife has sexual relations only with her husband. The common double standard allows men far greater sexual freedom than women. Within such an institution, particularly when the woman has no employment outside the house, and no economic independence, women are the possessions (chattels) of their husbands, and their objects of pleasure (Gray, 2013:50). In patriarchal societies, women are treated as sex objects by men (victims of abuse). The literary narrative portrays socio-historical conditions which cause women to face such brutal treatment. The postulation here is that men's behaviour is consistent with the way they are socialized in patriarchal societies. Society takes serious offence to seeing women of 'loose morals' but not men. Negative stereotypes of women persist in spite of the trouble that women have to tolerate in order to bring societal change and development.

I conclude that sexist language in the four chosen literary texts seriously undermines the power of women. This is clearly observed in the analysis of these texts. Feminism has developed, through its own internal dialectic, a political language about gender that refuses the fixed and trans-historical definitions of masculinity and femininity in the dominant culture. Lazar (2007: 141-164) articulating her feminist discourse praxis argues that:

The aim of feminist critical discourses is to show up the complex, subtle, and sometimes not so subtle, ways in which frequently taken for granted gendered assumptions and hegemonic power relations that are discursively produced, sustained, negotiated, and challenged in different contexts and communities. Such an interest is not merely an academic de-construction of texts and talk for its own sake, but comes from an acknowledgement that the issues dealt with have material and phenomenological consequences for groups of women and men in specific communities.

In the analysis of these texts, the origin of women's subjugation and perpetuation of their subordination has been described in various forms. It has become clear that power is still maintained by men through the ideologies of gender inequality. Many men hold fast to their conceived ideology of male domination over women.

The condition of women in the chosen texts is fraught with tensions and oppositions, mostly arising from the organizational structures of many Zulu societies. For example, some Zulu literary texts display great preoccupation with motherhood. At some point, a novel, a short story, or play dramatizes a woman's struggle to conceive for fear of being replaced in her marriage or in an effort to keep her marriage intact. Some authors, both male and female, underline socio-sexual abuses in order to create credible suspense and conflict in their plots.

The result of this research is a wide presentation of the problems and solutions to problems engulfing women in the Zulu society as reflected in Zulu literary texts, and an appreciation of the texts that deal with such problems. In the same way that my selection of books was limited, so too are the results of the study. I, however, hope that they throw some light on a number of themes that are often dealt within anthropological studies, but seldom dealt with, in Zulu literary studies.

I do hope that this research has uncovered some of the ‘silenced’ voices on the portrayal of female characters by both male and female authors. I have tried to help bring about changed attitudes towards women, by both male and female authors, especially in the character portrayal of women. Many Zulu literary authors should begin to realize that women are as important as their male counterparts are. I believe that my research will help many people, especially in the Zulu society, in this period of transformation, to transform. Such change can bring a sense of human dignity and personal integrity to both sexes.

In all these four texts, the woman emerges as the victim. The texts, *Ifa Lenkululeko* and *Umshado*, present a negative portrayal of their female characters, while *Ngiyazisa Ngomtanami* and *Ngiwafunge AmaBomvu* reflect some transformed approach towards the characterization of their female characters. For this reason, I conclude that my hypothesis apropos of the chosen texts is entirely true.

### **8.3 Recommendations**

It would be interesting to conduct fact-finding in some fieldwork in order to elicit ways in which social attitudes are changing towards women, as well as to investigate the notion or belief that young widows are nowadays vulnerable to men who wish to rob them of their inheritance. This would help authors to distance themselves from the concept of fiction which creates its own world, and only remains real within the confines of the book.

The efforts of feminists and gender activists pleading for human rights are beginning to bear fruit. The SADC Protocol on Gender and Development, (2008): ARTICLE 8: (Marriage and Family Rights) states that:

States shall enact and adopt appropriate legislative, administrative and other measures to ensure that women and men enjoy equal rights in marriage and are regarded as equal partners in marriage.

Although women’s battles are not yet won, many strides have been made to improve their situation. Were authors of Zulu literature sufficiently progressive, they would be abundantly demonstrating this in the portrayal of their female characters, not portraying

female characters only as male appendages. Characters reflected by Msimang (in *Ngiyazisa Ngomtanami*) and Molefe (in *Ngiwafunge AmaBomvu*) are beginning to show resilience, fighting for women's freedom and independence from the tyranny of patriarchy. We need to read of more characters such as Nguzunga and Thulisile. For instance, Thulisile in *Ngiwafunge AmaBomvu* demonstrates bravery in the face of death. With the formation of various concepts of explaining female subordination throughout the years, the field of gender studies with its arguments, has become an invaluable strategy in the struggle for serious equal rights for women. I argue here that Zulu literary texts should more frequently demonstrate these positive strides by women, and not try to maintain the existing entrenched customs in their portrayal of female characters because this has caused far too much pain and suffering for women.

The patriarchal system which is dominant in Southern Africa has ensured the establishment of a remarkable male leadership. From Zulu kings to some contemporary politicians, scholars and religious leaders, male leaders remain largely unchallenged in many spheres of life. These unjust practices have for some time remained unquestioned and accepted as 'our customs'. Such observations are evident in some of the chosen texts, particularly in *Ifa Lenkululeko* and *Umshado*, which were analyzed. Some men try to cling to power even when their thinking and reasoning seems questionable and obsolete. Dlamini, in *Ifa Lenkululeko*, for instance, does not respect Daisy, and similarly in *Ngiyazisa Ngomntanami*, Nguzunga does not heed his wife's advice.

On the other hand, the core of African civilization is expressed in *ubuntu* philosophy which consists of profound respect for nature and all that accompanies it. Tutu, (2004:25) defines *Ubuntu* as:

A person is a person through other persons. None of us comes into the world fully formed. We would not know how to think, or walk, or speak, or behave as human beings unless we learned it from other human beings. We need other human beings in order to be human.

This respect must be based on deep understanding which requires equal and mutual respect between a man and a woman. There is a saying in Zulu that goes: *Kuhlonishwana kabili* 'Respect is reciprocated'. An essential element of this global view is that the feminine voice is as important as the male voice.

Such a patriarchal tradition as revealed in some of the chosen texts demands that women comply with men's desires and wishes. Unfortunately, some women also reinforce men's views by silently accepting the burdens imposed on them because they have been socialized to defer to male authority and remain submissive to their partners and spouses. In patriarchal societies, some women are even afraid to challenge male chauvinism for fear of reprisals in the community. The discriminatory oppression they have been subjected to, has produced negative feelings about themselves: they seem to exist only in relation to men. However, some of the chosen texts reveal that, even in traditional societies such as Ndwedwe, in *Ngizizisa Ngomtanami*, for instance, there exists a woman who is capable of claiming her freedom and her rightful place in society. When men begin to recognize and fully appreciate women, the social order will once more obtain the equilibrium and the harmony necessary for personal growth of all human beings. I argue here that progress for human beings can be measured in the recognition of women as equal in standing to men. In the South African History Online, (SAHO), (1996), Mandela, in the women's day state address, concludes that:

The challenge now, for government, for women, and for men is to seize the opportunities provided by these new formal instruments, so that women can indeed play their meaningful role in transforming our society, in generating sustained economic growth, in reconstruction and development. As we build on this start, we have to ensure that the needs and interests of women inform our policies and the way we implement them.

From this study, one realizes that some authors of Zulu literary texts lack the ability to explore the psychology of their female characters and renders them as flat characters. As a consequence, an in depth analysis shows that women are often treated more as symbols than as individuals with agency. Some authors seem to identify undesirable qualities in modern women in terms of male-female relationships. This statement is true when one observes the portrayal of Tholakele in *Ushado* and Daisy in *Ifa lenkululeko*. Their behaviour becomes questionable because they do not conform to the set norms, values, and standards expected from women in a male-dominated society.

Circumspect traditional authors play down the injustices brought about by the patriarchal system. Inversely, women have been socialized into accepting their inferior status in marriage. An age-old tradition asserts that 'a woman must sometimes be a

fool'. In some texts, readers are never shown that a man must sometimes be a fool to accommodate his female counterpart.

It would be useful to investigate the position of women in various other societies, and compare it with the position and role of women in the Zulu traditional system. Women's subordination results not from their physical make-up, but from social arrangements traceable in history, which may be altered. The need to interrogate gender as a social construct then remains a reservoir to analyze not only literary texts, but to also bring in interdisciplinary lens in understanding patriarchy and its impact on both men and women in society.



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