

**University of KwaZulu-Natal**

**Challenging patriarchal normativity: Southern African  
women writers' constructions of women's concerns, needs,  
changing identities, agency and solidarity**

**by**

**Clemence Rubaya (213574315)**

**A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy in English Studies, School of Arts (Howard College),  
College of Humanities, UKZN, Republic of South Africa.**

**2021**

**Supervisor: Professor Priya Narismulu**

## **ANTI-PLAGIARISM DECLARATION**

Plagiarism is the presentation of work that has been copied in whole or in part from another person's work, or from any other source such as published books, periodicals, internet, newspapers, films, television and even verbally without due acknowledgement in the text. Plagiarism is considered a contravention of Rule 9(e) (i)(ff) of the UKZN Student Disciplinary Rules Handbook (2004). I understand that all sources must be referenced in the text as well as in the bibliography. Direct quotes from other sources must be in quotation marks and paraphrased ideas must be acknowledged. I have read, understood and accept what is constituted as plagiarism. I understand that any violation of the above will be dealt with according to the UKZN plagiarism policy. Plagiarism is the presentation of work that has been copied in whole or in part from another person's work, or from any other source such as published books, periodicals, internet, newspapers, films, television and even verbally without *due acknowledgement* in the text. Plagiarism is considered a contravention of Rule 9(e) (i)(ff) of the UKZN Student Disciplinary Rules Handbook (2004). For more detailed information on plagiarism see the [PLAGIARISM POLICY AND PROCEDURES Ref CO/05/0412/09. http://ssse.ukzn.ac.za/Libraries/Documents/UKZN\\_Plagiarism\\_Policy.sflb.ashx](http://ssse.ukzn.ac.za/Libraries/Documents/UKZN_Plagiarism_Policy.sflb.ashx)

## **DECLARATION**

I, Clemence Rubaya (213574315), declare that:

- i. The research reported in this dissertation, except where otherwise indicated, and is my original work.
- ii. This dissertation has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.
- iii. This dissertation does not contain other persons' data, pictures, graphs or other information, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other persons

- iv. This dissertation does not contain other persons' writing, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other researchers. Where other written sources have been quoted, then:
  - a. their words have been re-written, but the general information attributed to them has been referenced;
  - b. where their exact words have been used, their writing has been placed inside quotation marks, and referenced.
- v. Where I have reproduced a publication of which I am an author, co-author or editor, I have indicated in detail which part of the publication was actually written by myself alone and have fully referenced such publications.
- vi. This dissertation does not contain text, graphics or tables copied and pasted from the Internet, unless specifically acknowledged, and the source being detailed in the dissertation and in the Reference section.

Signature...



Date..... 4 July 2021

## **Abstract**

This thesis explores literary representations of African women challenging the oppressiveness of patriarchal normativity that has and continues to undermine and destroy the quality of women's lives the world over, by persistently oppressing them and denying them equal rights, freedoms and opportunities. Contesting patriarchal normativity is critical to addressing the discrimination and oppression experienced by women, and understanding how they seek to emancipate themselves, to enjoy their rights to respect, dignity and fulfilling lives, as full members of the society to which they belong. African women have played important roles in surviving and challenging a range of interlocking patriarchal systems. They have tackled the imperatives of transforming the oppressive structures that hinder peace and development in many societies. To address his topic, the researcher adopted an interpretive content analysis of feminist literature from Southern Africa, and reviewed a range of secondary literature to support the study. Lauretta Ngcobo's *And They Didn't Die* and Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* are the primary texts selected for study. The research indicates the power and resilience of a range of women in struggles against colonial/apartheid/capitalist patriarchy that have intersected to compound the abuse and tyranny experienced by African women. Dangarembga and Ngcobo's powerful representations of African women in their novels afford deep insights into the critical roles of African women in ensuring family and community survival, and challenging the assumptions embedded in patriarchal thinking. Drawing on the inspiring leadership of the authors, the study challenges more men to get involved in the feminist struggle against patriarchal normativity and oppressive systems, because all women, children, men, families, communities, societies, our continent, and the world benefit from gender empowerment and justice, and the full integration of women. The thesis also addresses the value and strength of women's (and men's) solidarity in challenging these oppressive systems.

## **Key words:**

Patriarchal normativity; gender; African feminism; women's solidarity; women's empowerment

## **Dedication**

To my dear departed mother whose remarkable strength to confront a cruel world saw her irrepressibly bring up five children single-handed, against all odds, teaching them important life values: to fight for one another (which we have tried to do).

Lynnette, my loving wife and friend, and our three daughters: Tanyaradzwa, Tinotenda and Tawananyasha, the women who fill my world, help me become a better human being, a responsible caring father to you my daughters and selfless loving husband to you Lynnette. We can only achieve much more if we bind in love, mutual trust, respect and openness.

To all the women in the world, whose lives many men have harmed, never give up but face the world with courage and pride in who you are, allowing no man to take charge of your lives. You have but one life: live it!

And to the men, all the madness stops once we all take responsibility to refuse inherited patriarchal falsehoods handed down to us which have wounded our women. Creating a better tomorrow for us all cannot be postponed...it starts with you and me (Ephesians 5:28)

## Acknowledgements

I thank the Almighty for the gift of life and carrying me this far. Without you, Lord, this would not have been possible.

I extend my greatest tribute to my supervisor, Prof. Priya Narismulu, for her patient guidance that helped me grow throughout this treatise. The knowledge gulf was, more often, quite shocking yet you never gave up on me as your student, challenging me with invaluable constructive criticism and comments that jogged my mind and helped firm my understanding of many things I would not otherwise have understood with better clarity as I do today. Thank you Prof. and may you be blessed.

Dr. Elda Hungwe, profound gratitude to you my sister for proofreading my work and helpful tips you unselfishly shared. Words fail me but I thank you so much. Dr. Gift Gwindingwe, you came on the very last day for moral support. The journey was getting lonelier but you volunteered to come and proofread a chapter, thanks my great friend. Dr. Pious Tshuma, your phone calls from a distance were important in building confidence my brother.

I feel greatly indebted to you my young brother, Admire, for the financial support. Selfless as always, you never tired of assisting. Looking back all those years when our mother left you under my care, a vulnerable Grade 5 child, who would have thought that you would provide the monetary support to help me at my lowest financial ebb! Words fail me. Thank you bamnin.

My wife, mai Tanya, thank you for pushing me on, always cheerful and encouraging when the chips were down. I will remember to share the cooking like you said I should once this is over. Thanks mancube wangu, my greatest friend.

And to all those whose names may not appear on paper but contributed to this thesis, believe me, I value all your input. Thank you friends.

# Contents

<b>Anti-Plagiarism Declaration .....</b>	<b>i</b>
<b>Abstract .....</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>Dedication.....</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>Acknowledgements.....</b>	<b>v</b>

## Chapter 1: Introduction

<b>1.1 Introduction, selected texts, motivation, questions guiding the study</b>	
<b>1</b>	
<b>1.1.2 Rationale for study</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>1.1.3 Questions Guiding the Study</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>1.1.4 Objectives of the study</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>1.2 Contextualising the research study</b>	
<b>25</b>	
<b>1.3 Organisation of the study</b>	<b>32</b>

## **Chapter 2: The intersectionality of systems of oppression** **35**

<b>2.0 Introduction</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>2.1 Conceptualising patriarchy, colonialism, and capitalism in the oppression</b>	
<b>of African women</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>2.2 Approaches to the Study and Research Methods</b>	<b>74</b>
<b>2.3 Theoretical Framework</b>	<b>80</b>

<b>Chapter 3: The contradictions between African women’s concerns and needs and the expectations of patriarchal normativity</b>	<b>92</b>
<b>3.0 Introduction</b>	<b>92</b>
<b>3.1 An overview of women’s needs and concerns in <i>And They Didn’t Die</i></b>	<b>99</b>
<b>3.1.1 Novel form and the representations of African women’s concerns with survival in <i>And They Didn’t Die</i></b>	<b>101</b>
<b>3.1.2 The role of women’s education in raising consciousness about oppression</b>	<b>116</b>
<b>3.1.3 Dislocation and (un)belonging: representations of African women’s concerns with land hunger, dispossession and displacement</b>	<b>124</b>
<b>3.1.4 Apartheid neglect of African women’s concerns and priorities</b>	<b>130</b>
<b>3.1.5 African women’s concerns with apartheid appropriation of African labour</b>	<b>133</b>
<b>3.1.6 Apartheid, women and sexual exploitation</b>	<b>144</b>
<b>3.1.7 African patriarchy and the oppression of women</b>	<b>148</b>
<b>3.1.7.1 African patriarchy, women’s decision-making powers and reproductive health</b>	<b>151</b>
<b>3.1.8 Apartheid and the dislocation of African marriages</b>	<b>156</b>
<b>3.1.9 Sisterarchy: the dilemma and paradox of women reinforcing patriarchal oppression of fellow women in <i>And They Didn’t Die</i></b>	<b>160</b>
<b>3.1.9.1 White women as conduits of racial oppression: un-naming, re-naming and identity issues</b>	<b>167</b>
<b>3.1.10 Sisterarchy: African women and class exploitation in ATDD</b>	<b>175</b>
<b>3.2. Representations of women’s concerns and needs in Dangarembga’s <i>Nervous Conditions</i></b>	<b>177</b>
<b>3.2.1 African women and the burden of coloniality</b>	<b>179</b>
<b>3.2.2 Patriarchal hierarchies and the predicament of marginality in <i>Nervous</i></b>	

<i>Conditions</i>	181
<b>3.2.3 Patriarchal hierarchies and the predicament of preferential treatment reserved for the boy child in <i>Nervous Conditions</i></b>	193
<b>3.2.4 African patriarchy and women’s education: their aspirations and frustrations</b>	195
<b>3.2.5 Women’s complicity with systems of oppression: how patriarchal normativity turns some women into agents of oppression in <i>Nervous Conditions</i></b>	205
<b>3.2.6 Representations of the impact of economic and class inequalities on poor women’s lives</b>	215
<b>3.2.7 Conclusion</b>	218
<b>Chapter 4: African women’s resistance, emerging identities and the impact of their changing roles in challenging patriarchal normativity</b>	219
<b>4.0 Introduction</b>	219
<b>4.1 Re-imagining and reconfiguring African women’s identities in <i>And They Didn’t Die</i></b>	220
<b>4.1.2 Ngcobo’s portrayal of African women’s political activism and their identities as defenders of their communities</b>	228
<b>4.1.2.1 Women and political leadership</b>	
<b>4.1.3 Portrayal of the triumph of African women’s unity and solidarity in <i>And They Didn’t Die</i></b>	231
<b>4.1.4 The complementarity of women and men in <i>And They Didn’t Die</i></b>	246
<b>4.1.5 Changing women, the agency of voice and their sources of power</b>	252
<b>4.1.6 African women’s strategies of claiming belonging and space in apartheid South</b>	

<b>Africa</b>	<b>267</b>
<b>4.2 African women’s resistance in <i>Nervous Conditions</i></b>	<b>271</b>
<b>4.2.1 Exposing and confronting gendered systems of oppression through the novel form in <i>Nervous Conditions</i></b>	<b>272</b>
<b>4.2.2 The paradox of education as an agent of women’s liberation</b>	<b>275</b>
<b>4.2.3 Girl children standing up to patriarchy</b>	<b>283</b>
<b>4.2.4 Some perspectives on the portrayal of speech, voice, muted voices and women’s power of articulation in <i>Nervous Conditions</i></b>	<b>289</b>
<b>4.2.5 Women rejecting patriarchal views about chastity and wifhood.</b>	<b>294</b>
<b>4.2.6 Conclusion</b>	<b>305</b>
<b>Chapter 5: Conclusion</b>	<b>307</b>
<b>5.1 Introduction</b>	<b>307</b>
<b>5.2 Overarching Research Findings, Research Strengths and Research Limitations</b>	<b>310</b>
<b>5.3 Possible solutions to some challenges confronting women discussed in the research</b>	<b>314</b>
<b>5.4 Significant contributions of the research to scholarship</b>	<b>318</b>
<b>5.5 Implications of the study</b>	<b>321</b>
<b>5.6 Conceptual/Methodological Limitations of Study</b>	<b>324</b>
<b>5.7 Some recommendations arising from the study</b>	<b>325</b>

<b>References</b>	<b>326</b>
<b>Primary texts</b>	<b>326</b>
<b>Secondary texts</b>	<b>326</b>

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Introduction, selected texts, motivation, questions guiding the study

This thesis is an interpretive analysis of literary representations of African women challenging various misrepresentations and erroneous patriarchal values, practices, stereotypes and assumptions about women (and men), rooted in patriarchal normativity, that have undermined women's lives and livelihoods. It uses African feminist perspectives to explore literary portrayals of African women's powerful responses to various forms of inequalities. It examines the extent to which the characters are depicted as behaving and acting in ways that contradict and challenge patriarchal normativity and its oppressive systems that have promoted male privilege, while denying women agency and equality with men (Obbo, 1986; Uwakweh, 1995; Ifechelobi, 2014). The ultimate aim of the study is to contribute towards understanding issues of the emancipation of women which are critical to the success of any nation (Lorentzen, 2014).

Women have a lot to offer to society, and humanity in its entirety stands to lose if women continue to suffer marginalisation and/or exclusion (Kimmel, 2005). Both men and women's lives "will be better if women have more freedom and better jobs and work" (Kimmel, 2005:107). Thus, it is critical to challenge diverse systems of privilege and forms of tyranny that seek to restrain women's agency, construct them as inferior to men and undermine their lives, livelihoods and contribution to the good of humanity. "Emerging literature has... started to reveal that... women are challenging the dominance of men and are making inroads in previously male-dominated professions" and other areas where they have, historically, faced exclusion and marginalisation (Maunganidze, 2020:3). The impact of African women's resistance to patriarchal normativity (and its construction of womanhood) on their conditions and relations with both men and women will also come under scrutiny in the analysis.

In any given society, the possession of power and the freedom of people to be at liberty to lead their lives and make their own choices and decisions in all areas of life is a basic human right

that is critical to “reduce unmet needs” (Sougou, Bassoum, Faye & Leye, 2020:1). Unfortunately, many women have, for long, confronted the prospect of being denied such autonomy and continue to suffer from leading lives where their agency is restrained as they are controlled and ‘governed by others’ (*United Nations Population Fund*, 2021). Plenty of evidence has shown “underestimation of the power of South African women” (O’Brien, 1994:147), just as Zimbabwean women, like women in different parts of the world, have also endured being undermined and looked down on. Historically, women’s voices have been silenced in many critical areas of life: they “have not been allowed the chance or space to articulate their thoughts, fears and hopes on the subjects of labour, reproduction, child-bearing and sexuality” (Obbo, 1986:1). In contrast, men’s voices have not been muted, both in the private and public social spaces where women’s voices have been muzzled. Men have possessed unjust power to speak on behalf of women, control their lives and make choices for them, as if women were incapable of making own choices (McFadden, 1999). Silencing women’s voices in areas of their own reproductive and productive capacities, as Obbo highlights above, underlines how society has promoted men’s privileges while devising strategies and tactics to strip women of “the ‘subjectness’ of experience, wants, needs, and desires” (Johnson, 2014:188). Men’s continuing control of women whom they treat as the other should be challenged because these seemingly ‘others’ are opinions and full human beings whose rights should be asserted. Men’s control over women’s lives has not only harmed the lives of many women and produced much misery, but has also masked women’s critical roles in life: “[t]he [critical] role of South African women in society ... [as was seen in the liberation struggle] is all encompassing and inherently proactive” (O’Brien, 1994:147). Therefore, the fact that women’s power and roles continue to be restricted, under-estimated and under-valued, exposes the extent of the prejudice and discrimination against women in society which should be challenged. Limiting women’s power, agency and freedom is unjust, particularly for African families, because “the survival of poor families... on the [African] continent depends largely on the strategies adopted by women” (Aina, 1998:71). It is because of crucial roles played by women that many children have survived, gone to school and received important life values. Therefore, all oppressive systems that undermine women and marginalise their interests and concerns should be challenged. As Johnson has asserted, “[t]he depth of brutishness we see in the world today is not what human life needs to be about” (2014:72).

The socially-constructed gender division of labour and roles between women and men has been partly responsible for perpetuating the marginalization of women. Gender roles and identities have been used to divide people by patriarchal structures, and they have also been misconstrued, particularly by some men, as implying “a relationship of separation” and difference between women and men (Razavi and Miller, 1995:16). By focusing on what women and men do, many men have often failed to realise the “social connectedness” and equality between women and men (Kabeer, 1992:14). They have derived their views and assumptions about women from unfair social systems and values that have, unjustifiably, treated women and their roles as if they were inferior to men (hooks, 1984; Johnson, 2014). The tyranny of socially-constructed “discrimination and oppression [experienced by women may have] narrowed or limited their proficiencies and aptitudes” by denying them opportunities to compete and excel in various areas of life (Dickson and Louis, 2018:1). Owing to socially-constructed ideas about what it means to be a woman and a man, historically, women’s productive and reproductive capacities have been unfairly brought under men’s control. It is patriarchal normativity that has produced and continues to perpetuate such grave and horrible exploitation and injustice against women. Patriarchal normativity (which is examined in greater detail later) has been produced by patriarchy’s socially-constructed complex system of ideas, expectations, rules, customs and practices which have been continued over time, resulting in them being treated as the norm and the rule of life in various areas of life, as if they could not be questioned (Razavi and Miller, 1995; Johnson, 2014; Napikoski, 2019). As a consequence of patriarchal normativity, the social construction of women’s position and roles in society has “generally suffer[ed] from a lack of recognition and value” (Sougou, Bassoum, Faye & Leye, 2020: 5). Thus, patriarchal normativity has been very oppressive to women (hooks, 1984) by denying them “a positive identity and fulfilment of self” (Ifechelobi, 2014:20). Even today, it continues to reduce women’s rights and limit their opportunities in life (Aina, 1998; Mama, 2001). Therefore, it needs to be challenged for women to exercise their full rights as citizens and in all the roles they choose or need to play in their lives.

In response to the diverse forms of oppression, abuse, exploitation and discrimination confronted by women, feminism has developed as a “movement that seeks to protect and promote the

interests of women... [It contends that] the interests of women [and their needs] are an integral part of human rights” that cannot be ignored or trivialised (Ifechelobi, 2014:17). Feminists from various parts of the world have exposed and contested the manner in which “patriarchal norms [continue to] contribute to the relegation of women to the background” (Ifechelobi, 2014:19). Mama has raised serious concerns regarding the way “contemporary patriarchies in Africa constrain women and prevent them from realising potential beyond their traditional roles as hard-working income-generating wives and mothers” (2001:59). This underscores the need for the oppressiveness of patriarchal normativity to be challenged if women are to lead more fulfilling lives. This is what feminism seeks to do. Although there “is not one but many [feminist] theories or perspectives” (Tong, 1989:2), what is interesting is that

[t]he goals, values, and ideals of feminism remain the same across regions - i.e. liberating the society from dehumanization and repairing the loss of fundamental human rights - even though women are separated as much by class, ethnicity, religion, and other social situations as by geography (Aina, 1998:84).

Feminist fictional literature, particularly by women, has been playing a pivotal role in negotiating women’s rights and advancing their interests. It has increasingly been questioning the wrong and misguided representations of women, womanhood and femininity, particularly by male writers, and rewriting women’s position in society. Feminist scholars have questioned how representations of women in men’s literary works often make omissions on the real needs and concerns most important to women (Abraham, 1999). According to Chikonzo and Chifamba, one notable misrepresentation of women in literature by men has been the tendency “to undermine the agency of women in society” (2018:119, citing Bhabha 1994). Catherine Lee has challenged such misrepresentations, underlining that on the contrary,

[a]gency, activism and organisation have been central and constant themes in women’s and gender history. Both separately and in combination, they constitute a valuable analytical framework for the study of women’s lives, cultural and experience in past societies by foregrounding and articulating the historical challenges made to patriarchy, social structures and the status quo (2017:1).

This view does not only challenge misrepresentations of women in men's literature but also establishes that men can only write from the outside on issues that concern women since patriarchal socialisation situates men at odds with women (Bell-Scott, 1994).

The negation of women in fiction by men has been influenced by patriarchal assumptions. Feminist scholars and writers have objected to the actual and literary mistreatment of women and "the conditions of women, saying that women have the rights to participate with men in all aspects of life" (Kadhim, 2018:228). Ronquist has challenged literary works that revolve around highlighting "patriarchal ideals with a strong male hero, a wicked female witch and submissive young female" (2015:1). In Africa, many feminist scholars such as Rudo Gaidzanwa (in her ground-breaking socioliterary study of the representations of women in Zimbabwean literature), Amina Mama, Lauretta Ngcobo, Yvonne Vera, Tsitsi Dangarembga, and many others, have all questioned the marginal position of women in society and in literature. Ngcobo has criticized the way women continue to struggle "to gain admission into the greater society", an injustice that has prompted many women writers to challenge socially-constructed marginalisation of women in their own literature (1985:85). Flora Nwapa's analysis of the role of women in literature by African men, two decades ago, made her remark: "How do African literary texts project women? A few of them have tried to project an objective image of women, an image that actually reflects the reality of women's role in society" (1998:91). She has further argued that "in African literature, there have been female portraits of sorts presented by men from their own points of view, leading one to conclude that there is a difference between the African male writer and his female counterpart" (1998:92). The foregoing arguments provoked my interest in examining the extent to which selected women writers have adopted a 'revisionist' approach in their depictions of women. The aim of the study is to assess the extent to which selected women writers have produced gender critical literature that does not affirm patriarchal normativity but challenges the social construction of gender identity, the marginal status and positions reserved for women in society, and shows women participating (alongside men) in society as full members. I intend to demonstrate that women-authored literature from Southern Africa carries important messages that society can learn from (as it grapples with gender injustice, inclusivity and the empowerment of women) through its portrayal of women "as full woman-beings who take up their rightful positions in the society" (Nwapa, 1998:91).

African feminists have contended that not all literature respects and advances women. Some have questioned “literature on African women... [that has] generally measured quality of life principally by educational level, access to paid employment, and access to modern amenities such as hospitals, transportation, pipe-borne water, and schools” (Aina, 1998:74). They have argued that concentrating on women’s access to some of the above amenities has failed to address whether women have accessed improved conditions through their husbands and fathers or through their own efforts. For many women, accessing “better life styles and higher social status through their husbands” (Aina, 1998:74) remains valueless without changes being seen in areas where they have been oppressed: access to and ownership of land, political and economic positions, access to health, abolition of child marriages, having voice and equal recognition with men, gaining due recognition for their critical roles as women, recognition for their roles in the liberation struggle and many other areas (Aina, 1998). These views express the need for expanded understanding of women’s empowerment and liberation in line with the

1975 World Conference of the International Women’s Year at Mexico City, and the United Nations Decade for Women (1976 - 1985), [that] gave expression to the major preoccupations of women around the world: improved educational and employment opportunities; equality in political and social participation; and increased health and welfare services (Razavi and Miller, 1995:2).

Clearly, women need to be able to participate fully and not be marginalised or excluded in virtually all areas of social life that make life more fulfilling. This is what this study analyses in the selected texts.

The focal texts of the study are Lauretta Ngcobo’s *And They Didn’t Die* (1999) and Tsitsi Dangarembga’s *Nervous Conditions* (1988). The two feminist writers who herald from South Africa and Zimbabwe, respectively, fictionalise African women’s lived realities that have derived from their colonial/apartheid and African patriarchal experiences. The novels provide carefully contextualised understanding of the historical challenges that confronted Southern African women and made their lives hard and difficult. They show how patriarchal structures intersected with the social, material and political realities produced by the colonial/apartheid periods of the two countries to undermine the lives and livelihoods of African women. The

colonial/apartheid experiences of African women and men are easily understood through these novels as these are familiar stories of what Southern African women and men went through. Thus, the real historical contexts of Zimbabwe's settler colonialism and South Africa's apartheid system provide verisimilitude for the narratives and enable the writers to confront and engage with discourses of race, class and gender in a manner that provides a counter narrative to patriarchal normativity and its views of women as passive subordinates who lack agency. Both accounts demonstrate the resilience of rural African women caught between the demands of intersecting systems of domination. That the rural women characters' voices and agency were not fragmented and submerged by the combined aggression of different systems of oppression is highly significant because these are historical periods associated with acute repression of African women (and men). The capacity of women characters to challenge oppressive systems demonstrates what Catherine Lee has defined as "the recovery of women's historical practice from obscurity" (2017:831). In spite of patriarchal ideology's association of women with passivity, weakness and desire to affirm men's needs, these novels have been purposively selected because their representation of women and their needs (as addressed from Chapter Two) exposes these as myths rooted in patriarchal ideology's attempts to mask and cover up women's true identities. The two writers have created powerful gender sensitive literature that depicts the power of women's aspirations to transform systems of power that seek to undermine them. These are important characteristics of these novels that resonate well with the objectives of the study, making the texts an important inclusion to the study.

Ngcobo and Dangarembga are seasoned African feminist writers in Southern Africa who have received global acclaim for these selected novels. Ngcobo is a stalwart of South Africa's resistance against apartheid as she was a political activist. Her novel, *And They Didn't Die* (ATDD), which is her second, is an enactment of the apartheid discourses of South Africa. Apartheid, a political system of governance, rooted in 'separateness' and discrimination, was introduced in 1948 by the white Nationalist Party. The novel revolves around the atrocious colonial/apartheid epoch and the impact of colonial/apartheid laws on the lives of African people, particularly African women who were dumped in the drought-prone rural reserves that colonial/apartheid had created: "[t]he boundaries of [African] reserves were fixed by two pieces of legislation, the 1913 Natives' Land Act and the 1936 Native Trust and Land Bill" (Lodge,

1983:261). The ultimate aim of the segregation policies that created these African reserves was to parcel out good, arable and productive land to the white population. It was also designed to “restrict the growth of African squatting on ‘white-owned’ farmland” (Lodge, 1983:261). Harsh conditions obtained in these reserves which could not provide the subsistence needs of the rural Africans who were crowded on barren land, hardly suitable for cultivation. Thus, there was a constant “threat of starvation in the reserves” (Lodge, 1983:7). This reflects the precariousness of African lives during colonialism/apartheid, not only in South Africa, but most parts of colonial Africa. Landlessness was a serious concern during the colonial/apartheid period: “For example, in 1943, a government commission found that in the Transkei nearly ten per cent of the households within the territory were landless, and in three typical districts nearly half of the population had no cattle” (1983:8). As a consequence of the increasing difficulties in the rural areas, difficulties created by loss of land and cattle, large numbers of African people were forced off the land. Due to the frustrated aspirations of African men and women, the apartheid period was marked by many “popular upheavals” and “a general wave of unrest” (Lodge, 1983:7). The novel deals with these issues where women mobilised resistance against the oppressiveness of apartheid structures. The historical period that the novel covers

was a period of unprecedented activity by African women in political organization as well as in more spontaneous forms of protest. On occasions such movements were exclusively female and could be characterized by an appetite for confrontation qualitatively sharper than that usually displayed by those in which men predominated (Lodge, 1983:139).

The above historical context is necessary in response to Lodge’s observation that rural African women’s mobilization and political agency (that Ngcobo deals with), just like “[t]he history of formal political organisations and the more inchoate resistance groups in South Africa is not easy to understand without some familiarity with local situations and the conditions arising from them” (Lodge, 1983:6). Thus, to offer an appreciation of the issues that Ngcobo’s narrative deals with, these scholarly analyses illuminate the historical period that Ngcobo’s narrative explores creatively.

In writing her novel, Ngcobo represents the role of African women in the struggle for the transformation of the colonial politics of the land for the benefit of the disadvantaged African community. The protagonist of Ngcobo's story is Jezile, a young woman married to Siyalo, whose hopes for motherhood are dented by the apartheid authority whose capitalist attitudes denied husband and wife chance to stay together because men were forced to leave their homes and work in towns for white people while wives were expected to stay in the rural areas. Women could not visit their husbands without apartheid authorization and needed passes to travel. Caught between the intersections of a brutal apartheid system whose policies pushed Africans off their ancestral lands and restricted African women freedom of movement to visit their husbands in town, and an African patriarchal system that demanded that wives be reproductive and productive, Ngcobo creates a context for readers to examine the various oppressive challenges that African women confronted and dealt with to survive. All space was affected and controlled by the presence of apartheid authority and the African traditional customs and these systems denied African women substantive power. This presents the context that Ngcobo seizes to dramatize poor rural African women as central figures with the capacity to resist not only the brutality of apartheid policies, but African patriarchy's construction of women and its exclusionary attitudes against women. Through her portrayal of the agency and unity demonstrated by poor rural women characters (and their men), Ngcobo critiques, in powerful ways, both apartheid's race based control and silencing and the suffocating oppression of various layers patriarchal normativity suffered by black South African women. Issues of women's unity, solidarity and self-organization against their oppressions, in spite of their poverty and circumstances, are highlighted in this novel, making it an important inclusion as these are concerns at the heart of this current study.

Dangarembga's award winning novel, *Nervous Conditions* (NC), is equally important to this study as it shifts focus from South Africa as a setting, to representations of Zimbabwean (formerly Rhodesian) women's responses to their experiences of patriarchal and colonial oppression. Zimbabwe's colonial system drew many similarities with South Africa's apartheid organisation. *Nervous Conditions* is Dangarembga's first novel which she wrote while a student

at university. The narrative is told through the eyes of a rural girl child narrator, Tambudzai, who is from a poor family background where patriarchal values are evident in the unequal treatment between her and Nhamo, her brother. This provides Dangarembga a platform to examine how women's needs and concerns have been ignored by African patriarchy as the family battles to survive the economic hardships brought about by settler colonialism. In spite of all that, Tambudzai navigated the various social pressures to achieve her dreams. Like Ngcobo's novel above, this narrative chronicles a story of the experiences of many African women during colonial rule where women's experiences of deprivation and abuse stemmed from women's gender position within patriarchy and the colonial policies of the day that complicated and worsened women's experiences by driving families to arid pieces of land. She represents African women as entrapped between different hegemonies: African patriarchy, colonialism/apartheid and class differentiation. The fact that the novel is alive to issues of women's subjugation by various social hegemonies that have interlocked within women's lives and their intra-gender relations makes it central to this study. As June Purvis has observed, such a plot "provides a useful way of thinking about the multiple forms of simultaneous domination experienced by women" (2018:51). Despite women's conditions of entrapment, some women characters like Lucia and Tambudzai still manage to break free from the oppressive and '*nervous conditions*' created for women. This elicits the novel's counter cultural consciousness which underscores the aims of the current study. In her review of this novel (in the *Southern African Review of Books* that is given as a preface to the novel), Treva Broughton views Dangarembga's text as "a hopeful book, both in its sense of impending change... and in the scope and subtlety of its critique of gender relations within and beyond the boundaries of race and class" (1988:i). What makes the novel 'a hopeful book' is that it depicts girl children and young women fighting to break free from the clutches of their oppression. They are not deterred by their ages or conditions to assume voices to speak up and openly challenge patriarchal normativity. Their defiance which is examined in chapter three gives hope to feminist struggles for equality, making the novel important to the objectives of the study.

The synopses of the two novels given above show both writers repositioning women through powerful portrayals of their resilience and protests against oppressive conditions and prejudices

against them. Particularly important is that the protagonists of both stories are rural women who, in spite of their conditions of want and privation, exhibit great power to confront their various challenges. In spite of the novels' rural settings, the stories have a universal appeal because "it could be anywhere" in the world (Daymond, 1992:93). Both novels assess rural women's position and the options that were open to them within the oppressive structural hierarchies created by colonial/apartheid and patriarchal systems. They expose rural women's difficult but courageous lives in the face of intersecting systems of oppression. Ngcobo has described her story (in an interview with Daymond) as one that is not "about the famous political figures or the wide political landscape. I write about the little lives; the stories that have come to me are about ordinary people" (Daymond, 1992:86). Like Dangarembga, she adopts a rural setting and focuses on poor rural African women's powerful refusal to accept subordinate roles in life. Both depict rural women acting outside the limits that have been imposed by patriarchal normativity and intersecting systems of privilege, and the impact of that resistance on their conditions.

Writing from the perspective of rural African women by Ngcobo and Dangarembga is significant. Literary critics in South Africa have pointed out that "Black writers of fiction in English have ... neglected the plight of rural people" (Daymond, 2004:143) by writing about African protest against apartheid (before Ngcobo's pioneering work) "from an urban perspective" (Daymond, 2004:144). Therefore, what makes Ngcobo and Dangarembga's novels important is their inclusion of the rural perspective where rural African women are the protagonists of their stories. Daymond has described Ngcobo as "a pioneering writer both in taking rural women as her subject matter and in the subtlety of her approach" (1998:247). Thus, the fact that both novels focus on rural women as protagonists makes them powerful African feminist novels. Writing from the perspective of rural women is also crucial given that the "[m]ajority of the women in Africa live in the rural area" (Nwapa, 1998:95). The novels' representations of African women resisting oppression affirm Aina's argument that "[t]he African woman is... traditionally equipped with tools for challenging repressive traditions, depending on her own personal ingenuity" (1998:75).

Both feminist writers took up writing as a means of exposing and challenging the oppressiveness of women's lived realities, with Ngcobo pointing out that "it's only now that I realise consciously that I have [always] written about a girl rather than a boy" (Daymond, 1992:93). Ngcobo has defined her writing as "a great mixture of fiction and reality - it's really a holdall... writing should be experience that's been ingested, internalised, and then comes out refined" (1992:86). She views literature as fictionalised human experience that draws on historical events. The advantage of fiction is that it "enables a novelist to undertake a revisioning of the past" (Daymond, 2004:139) and re-inscribe the past's many misrepresentations. Similarly, "[w]hat distinguishes Dangarembga is her centralisation of burning issues concerning the freedom of women in Zimbabwe's patriarchal socio-economic and political milieu" (Chikafa-Chipiro, 2020:445). Both writers raise important questions on many pertinent issues of social justice, dialogue and transformation in their exposure of African women's powerful responses to the gross human rights abuses that they have historically endured as a result of white colonial/apartheid prejudices and the discriminations embedded within African patriarchy, some of which are continuing even today.

The challenges faced by women which are represented in the two novels reflect that in Southern Africa, as in many other parts of the continent, the continued state of abuse and exploitation confronted by many women has been a consequence of many factors. According to Aidoo, "[t]hree major historical factors have influenced the position of the African woman today: indigenous African societal patterns; the conquest of the continent by Europe; and the apparent lack of vision, or courage, in the leadership of the postcolonial period" (1998:42). This suggests an overlap and intersectionality of different factors and systems of privilege in producing the inferior status and position that African women continue to grapple with. Nnaemeka has summed up that African women have had to deal with a "complex web of issues" that are difficult to untangle (1998:5). The broad title selected for this thesis reflects the difficulties of moulding issues that African feminism deals with "into an easily digestible ball of pounded yam" (1998:5). Aidoo's argument above shows that the oppressions confronted by contemporary African women are "inextricably linked to our past as a continent - our diverse precolonial contexts, the burden of slavery, colonialism, and globalization" (Wanyeki, 2017:3). Wanyeki's views highlight the

connection and inseparability between different forms of tyranny in the oppression of African women.

However, in spite of the diverse systems of oppression that have undermined women's agency, this study examines Ngcobo and Dangarembga's representations of African women's great capacity to resist diverse systems of oppression and construct new identities for themselves that contradict patriarchal normativity. There are many examples of African women's resistance activities against systems of oppression in real life in Southern Africa. The women's fight for their rights dates back several centuries as highlighted by Abraham's argument about how African women have waged "lengthy and often bitter struggles against systematic exclusion and silencing particularly in white dominated, male defined... spaces" (1999:i). Further afield, "the Egyptian feminists like Huda Sharaawi in the '20s [are on record], organising an occupation of the Egyptian parliament" (Mama, 2001:59). This shows that women have not always allowed themselves to be abused and taken for granted. Their powerful responses to different forms of tyranny have been quite remarkable. One would expect the acute violence, indignities and atrocities suffered by women at the hands of oppressive systems of domination to "be enough to make the African woman want to fold her arms, keel over, and just die" (Aidoo, 1998:48). However, history has shown the resilience of the African woman who is "doing anything *but* that. She is still pushing" and struggling for her rights (Aidoo, 1998:48). This reflects the power of African women's resistance which is often overlooked and this is what motivated this study. In South Africa, "[a]s early as 1912, women became visible in political affairs" (O'Brien, 1994:150). In 1943, the African National Congress (ANC) recognised the critical political role played by women in the political struggle and "offered full membership to women and automatic inclusion in the newly formed ANC Women's League" (O'Brien 1994:151). Thus, history has show that the position of the African woman has not been that of a passive and weak being as patriarchal normativity has sought to imagine. South African women also participated in the Sharpeville demonstrations and were victims alongside men in the resultant shootings (Qunta, 1987). This is clear testimony of South African women's active involvement in the liberation struggle of their country. Thus, history challenges patriarchal normativity and its assumptions of women which have associated women with weakness and passivity. Women's critical liberation role in challenging apartheid oppression is represented in ATDD as this study demonstrates in

Chapter Three. “Regardless of whether their [women’s] motivation stemmed from a desire to defy racist injustice or precipitated in reaction to the already intolerable pressure of their duties as women, it is clear that women did not adopt a passive role in defiance campaigns” (O’Brien, 1994:150). O’Brien’s views are a fundamental pointer to the various misrepresentations of women that are embedded in patriarchal normativity. Such distortions require interrogation.

In Zimbabwe, Nehanda, an icon who has been synonymous with the country’s liberation history, is a good example of women’s active roles in the fight against colonial injustice in the country. Based on the many recorded examples of women’s fearlessness and resilience in fighting for their rights and national independence in various African countries, Aidoo has stated:

many women stayed in the forefront of the agitation for independence. Some, like General Muthoni (of the Mau Mau Rebellion) became guerrilla leaders whom the enemy feared even more than the male insurgents. Others, like Mrs. Ramsome-Kuti of Western Nigeria, were mainly nationalists of bourgeois and petit-bourgeois backgrounds (1998:41).

Mama has also referred to a long list of

confident and radical ... [feminist] ancestors [who] include many African, Asian, Latin American, Middle Eastern, European and American women of all colours and creeds, past and present. Among my favourites are the Egyptian feminists like Huda Sharaawi in the ’20s, organising an occupation of the Egyptian parliament, the anti-war suffragettes and suffragists fighting for the vote in England in the same era, the early African-American heroines like Sojourner Truth, and for that matter, the women freedom fighters all over the African continent (2001:59).

The above evidence demonstrates the emptiness of assumptions rooted in patriarchal normativity that have often attempted to mask women’s humanity and under represent them as weak and passive (Ostergaard, 1994; Namulondo, 2010). Therefore, there is need to challenge all the values, prejudices and erroneous assumptions about women that have been rooted in patriarchal normativity as these have promoted male privilege while misrepresenting and undermining women.

There is so much change in the world today that reveals improvements in the conditions of women as a result of actions of women who have dared resist patriarchal normativity. Indeed, at the time of carrying out this research, evidence shows the world has witnessed many notable improvements in the conditions of women today (socially, economically, politically and in health

areas) compared to a hundred years ago (Johnson, 2014; Kimari et al, 2014). The global pursuit of peace and justice for women has been illustrated by the constitutions adopted by various countries that reflect the United Nations goal of transforming exploitative gender relations and bridging the gender gap (Bunch, 2012). For instance, the Zimbabwean Constitution reflects this UN promotion of the elimination of gender disparity and fostering of gender justice as it states: “Every woman has full and equal dignity of the person with men and this includes equal opportunities in political, economic and social activities” (*Chapter 4 section 80 Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment (No. 20) Act 2013*). Such constitutional provisions indicate attempts to foster women’s empowerment in line with the many UN promulgations and policies to protect the rights of women as stated by the Millennium Development Goal number three and many other joint programmes for gender equality. Lorentzen (writing for the UNFPA) has noted that across the world the conditions of women did improve, as evident in the “tremendous advances in the rights and well-being of women and girls [in various spheres of their life]... including health, education, political participation, and income” (2014:12). Writing from Zimbabwe, Worden seemed to share the same view:

Around the world today, enormous strides for women’s rights have been made on many fronts: domestic violence legislation, girls’ education, recognition of the value of women’s work, and the dynamic growth of the women’s rights movement (2012:1).

This shows the impact of activism, responsible global agencies, and responsive governance. On the African continent, African feminist

activism has resulted in notable progress in gender-responsive policy formulation, legislative reforms, and program and project design. The activism has also led to [women’s] greater participation in political and decision-making processes throughout the continent (Kimari et al, 2014:1).

However, despite all these recent improvements in the conditions of women compared to a hundred years ago, many challenges remain. According to Johnson, although “much has changed in women’s position over the last hundred years” as illustrated by many progress reports in various countries (particularly in many of the developed countries), all those “highly publicized progress reports... [are] an illusion of fundamental change” (2014:15). To start with, it cannot be denied that “[t]hese changes [improvements] have, to be sure, been extremely uneven, in terms of geography, social class, and many other factors” (Lorentzen, 2014:12). There are many

women, particularly in underdeveloped countries, who continue to endure oppression in spite of all this. Many parts of the world, such as Southern Africa, still lag behind in gender equality when compared to more industrialised countries, as their women continue to confront various forms of oppression. In most postcolonial African nations, African women have largely remained the “poorest of the poor, the least literate, the most exploited, and the most marginalized of all” (McFadden, 1990:8). This is a concerning issue which implies that “[d]espite the modest gains made by African women in the struggles for gender equity so much more still needs to be done” (Kimari et al, 2014:8). The ongoing oppressions that continue to plague the lives of African women require us to situate the oppression of women as a critical concern at a time the world is seized with human rights issues. As long as the conditions of many women, particularly poor women, remain deplorable in most countries, then, a lot more still needs to be done to address the persisting oppression of women. There is need to intensify the struggle rather than be ‘lulled into a false sense of security through tokenism’ that does not leave all women empowered and free (Aidoo,1998:48). Therefore, this study seeks to challenge patriarchal normativity and the intersecting systems of oppression that have continued to drive the oppression of women. This is done through analysis of selected texts from Southern Africa, by feminist women.

### **1.1.2 Rationale for study**

The motivation for undertaking this study was the desire to explore representations of the ways in which African women challenge and refuse assumptions that have been associated with women and womanhood by oppressive patriarchal values, practices, stereotypes and other intersecting oppressions that have historically undermined women’s identities, needs, lives and livelihoods. The study explores how the selected texts grapple with creating positive women identities and affirm the feminist aims of moving women away from the marginal statuses and identities that have produced much suffering for women (hooks 1984; Aina, 1998; Mama 2012). Negative identities and subordinate positions are harmful to women and their aspirations and do not only go against the grain of human rights and the pursuit of peace and justice (Aina 1998; Mama 2012; Worden, 2012) but cripple women’s potential in life. Thus, the rationale for carrying out this study is to contribute towards understanding issues of the emancipation of women by examining how they are portrayed struggling to gain freedom and making meaningful

contribution towards improving the quality of life for themselves, fellow women, their children and the men around them.

Issues of women's agency, identity, their belonging or displacement in society are critical human rights issues that cannot be trivialized. They have been central concerns among feminists for long (Beauvoir, 1963, hooks, 1984, Uwakweh, 1998; Wanyeki, 2017). As highlighted earlier, Kimmel has argued that women have a lot to offer to society and both men and women's lives "will be better if women have more freedom and better jobs and work" (2005:107). This speaks to the need to transform oppressive values, prejudices and assumptions that have undervalued women and their contributions. This justifies this study's interest in examining representations of women mobilising and organising themselves to challenge social structures that undermine their needs and concerns. The study will explore the impact of their resistance on the lives of other women and men. Exploring representations of the transformative impact of women's actions and resistance in the lives of both women and men may inspire men currently opposed to women's emancipation to realise how whole communities benefit from women's empowerment.

Today, the world is confronted by many challenges that men cannot and have not solved. As Aidoo has shown, if men "alone could save us, they would have done so by now. But instead, every decade brings us grimmer realities. It is high time African women moved onto center stage, with or without anyone's encouragement" (1998:48). This reflects why oppressive systems that undermine women and deny them agency should be challenged and resisted. This thesis, will attempt to analyse literary depictions of African women's strategies to survive the challenges imposed by intersecting systems of domination that have historically oppressed them as their strategies can assist the world as it grapples with the various crises it faces. It cannot be denied that women in Africa have contributed immensely to the continent's struggles against various challenges including against colonialism. Therefore, "[i]t is indeed imperative to examine different women's heroic and quotidian struggles today as a way of understanding, and perhaps strategizing over, their ability to exact more influence on Africa's complex political space" and other challenges confronting the continent and the world (Kimari et al, 2014:2-3).

Examination of representations of women's agency through an analysis of women's literature is a justified response to criticisms levelled against men's literature that has often been accused of representing women to reflect ideas embedded within patriarchal normativity, resulting in the marginalisation, misrepresentation and distortion of women's needs and identities (Bell-Scott, 1994; Primorac, 2003; Kaarsholm, 2005). Abraham has argued that "[a] culture of oppression can be converted into one of liberation only when the oppressed take some action to create an alternative for themselves" (1999:5). This is her contention for women writers to (re)write women's experiences from women's own perspectives to ensure women are not spoken for by men and (mis)represented in ways that reinforce patriarchal thought. The rationale for exploring women's issues from the narrative viewpoint of women is further provided by Carol-Boyce Davies who has argued that women's issues are more authentic if examined through the creative energies of women writers because their works carry the authority of experience as opposed to those by men (1986). As Mitchell has commented, the "shift to women's writing brings with it a shift in emphasis from the negative hermeneutic of ideological unmasking to a positive hermeneutic whose aim is the recovery and cultivation of women's culture" (Mitchell, 2011:407). This makes women's feminist literature, which is the basis of this research, worthwhile study that offers space for analysis of women's creative resistance and re-creation of reality and experiences that could have been misrepresented (Bell-Scott, 1994). To transform oppressive gender relations and identities that have been perpetrated by patriarchal promotion of men and by intersecting systems of oppression, there is need for women's counter narratives that resist the relegation of most women to secondary status (Mitchell, 2011). Namulondo (citing Chimalum) has added: "in order to contest the dominant rituals and patriarchal structures that control women's lives, better imaginaries are needed in the African scene" to counter men's depictions of women in ways that negate them (2010:2). This further justifies this study's focus on feminist literature by women writers. Chikonzo and Chifamba have equated women's literary stories of resistance against oppressive systems and diverse forms of tyranny and exploitation to a "process of recuperating the voice and agency of oppressed subjects... [and] a process of displaying agency and intellectual authority (hegemony) over one's actions" (2018:118-119). Thus, literature authored by women is an important avenue to advancing women's concerns. These views situate the current study as worthwhile since it locates women's literary art at the centre of its enquiry to achieve social transformation.

The rationale for the study's exclusive interest in literature by black African women writers from Southern Africa is premised on the view that black women have ranked amongst the most disadvantaged of any society as products of different oppressive hegemonies (Griffin, 2009). Feminist literature by black women writers "comes out of lengthy and often bitter struggles against systematic exclusion and silencing" (McFadden, 1999: ii). This study's text selection is influenced by the Stand Point Theory (SPT) which argues for research that starts from the viewpoint of the disadvantaged people of any society. The SPT claims that "research starting from the lives of women... racial minorities and the poor provides a less false view of the world than does typical academic research that comes from an advantaged perspective" (Griffin, 2009:428). Its argument is that, "when people speak from the opposite sides of power relations, the perspective from the lives of the less powerful can provide a more objective view than the perspective from the lives of the more powerful" (Harding, 1991: 269). Though this claim is debatable, its major strength is its advocacy for research that is not exclusionary but rather inclusive of the often ignored voices from the edge. This underpins this study's general view that literature that liberates "must proceed from the consciousness of the oppressed themselves, since the necessary liberation of the mind can never be accomplished for the victim by anyone but... herself" (Metcalf, 1989:15). Griffin has also stated that "those in captivity have a decidedly different perspective on the meaning of chains, laws... and punishment than do their captors who participate in the same 'reality'" (2009:442). Basing on that, literature by both men and European white women on African women would be fraught with possible omissions, gaps and partial truths since it, regrettably, speaks from the outside on matters concerning African women who have suffered the hegemonic grip of both patriarchy and racism.

Ngcobo and Dangarembga's novels are the important core of this study because their representations of African women portray their agency, as they challenge and resist the "social structures and institutions that had tended to ignore, exclude, disadvantage or penalise them" (Lee, 2017:832). In both novels, there are many women characters who challenge oppressive social structures and their agency and ability to organise themselves underscore what Margaret Archer has called "the primacy of practice" which she argues is fundamental if women are to transform oppressive social structures (2000:8).

Literature is valuable because it occupies a very special place in society of transforming oppressive relations and awakening the oppressor and the oppressed people's consciousness to different forms of oppression and exploitation as a tool for achieving social justice. This is highlighted by Kaarsholm:

While there is no doubt that literature and writers may work to transmit ideology and help keep people's minds in bounds, they are also important in building democratic potentials from below, and in destabilizing powerfully established structures of mental authoritarianism- be they racist, colonial, patriarchal, traditional, the result of wartime intimidation, or imposed by an authoritarian post-colonial state (2005:4).

This gives literature a special place in any society as it can be used in the transformation of gender relations. Although it has historically ranked alongside many segments of the superstructure such as religion, education, the media, family, and other sites of hegemony that men have abused to perpetuate systems of domination (Kendie, 2006), feminist scholars have argued that, literature has also assumed greater importance especially in gender studies, as writers have used it as a crucial vehicle for social analysis that can be deployed to redress gender imbalances (Chikonzo and Chifamba, 2018; Primorac, 1993). Brooke has recognised this fundamental role that literature plays and has challenged women writers to redefine women outside patriarchal definitions and limitations as she has argued that "[f]or women to experience themselves as second-class citizens... [would] be to mistakenly identify ourselves with the external images available to others in the social world, rather than with the internal experience" (2013:50). This shows the role women's literature can play to rescue women's identities from patriarchal normativity's misrepresentations (by defining women's concerns and needs from a women's perspective). This is why Ngcobo's and Dangarembga's have been selected for this study because their representations of women challenge the gender roles and identities rooted in patriarchal normativity. Thus, these texts are important inclusion to the study as they are sites of women's struggle for equal representation and creation of democratic societies.

As a man who has benefitted from the patriarchal promotion of male privilege and might have (un)wittingly contributed towards the abuse of women in life, my interest in this study is justified because I have to assume responsibility for any role in that oppression and exploitation and

participate in feminist efforts to liberate women. Men cannot continue to keep quiet and be bystanders when women are denied their rights by our silences, our participation and complicity with values of social systems that disadvantage women.

Another rationale for the focus of this study is that, in spite of the many improvements that are evident in the conditions of women in society today, many social systems of domination have remained intact as seen in how capitalism and imperialism continue to rise. Indeed, women's conditions have improved more than at any other period in history but the issue of the oppression of women still holds so much credence today as it did decades ago in spite of these improvements. It cannot be denied that today, many African women are speaking up in matters that relate to their gender identities and roles. Speaking up reflects an important act that challenges patriarchal normativity which has sought to silence their voices and expect their complicity with norms that undermine them. From a global perspective, the efforts of feminist scholars and activists have borne fruit because women's rights are now guaranteed and enshrined in most countries' constitutions, with the United Nations Women entity having been established and dedicated to championing women's empowerment among UN member states. The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against women (CEDAW) which was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1979 and many other programmes and policies have paved way for men's role in gender equality and help them realise the need to transform exploitative gender relations. Similar and other legislations across different nations have created room for improvements in women's conditions at the workplace where they have begun to receive equal pay for equal work, and there has been promotion of women's entry into the education system including entry into colleges, universities and professions formerly reserved for men and closed to them (Lorentzen, 2014). These recent improvements have signalled a break from the oppressive past. All these improvements have shown that "for the first time the potential exists to challenge patriarchy in a serious and sustained way" (Johnson, 2014:18). However, as indicated above, the struggle has to continue till women everywhere have been freed. Aidoo has cited Adeleye-Fayemi's call upon African women "to intensify our struggle... [against oppressive systems] instead of letting ourselves be 'lulled into a false sense of security through tokenism and processes of defeminization, which in most cases are prerequisites for performing certain functions'" (Aidoo,1998:48). According to Bisi Adeleye-Fayemi African

women today should continue struggling till they gain “access to policy-making positions, legal reforms, equal rights in education, employment and credit facilities” (1992:176) all of which are critical in their empowerment. All these views provide justification for the study.

The various gains in the woman situation are the fruits of long protracted struggle from feminist activists and scholars spanning many decades. The period from 1975 to 1985, commonly referred to as the UN Decade for Women, has been one where the world’s focus has been acutely drawn to policies and issues unfairly impacting women. Through various world conferences on women such as the Mexico City Conference (1975) attended by 133 governments, the Copenhagen women’s conference (1980) attended by 145 countries and most notably, the Beijing Conference of 1995, the UN has made strides in the fight for the recognition of the equality of all human beings by member countries and states (Bunch, 2012). It was the UN World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995 in particular, attended by one hundred and eighty nine countries, more than seventeen thousand participants as well as more than ten thousand other accredited representatives, which marked a significant turning point in the agenda for women’s empowerment. “An explosion of activity followed in the [late] 1990s as women’s groups and human rights organizations began to document abuses [against women] and demand changes on a wide range of issues” (Bunch, 2012:36). Today, so many women work outside the home, earn equal salaries with men and enjoy leadership positions in organisations. The recent past has even witnessed many women assuming positions of political power in their countries, including great women leaders such as Margaret Thatcher, Indira Gandhi, Angel Merkel, and Sanna Marin, the prime Minister of Finland at thirty four, among many others. Though these constitutional provisions and efforts to address gender injustice are noteworthy, the question is whether this can be counted as sufficient because patriarchal attitudes still persist in the home and at work places. Thus, much more still needs to be done.

Men’s physical violence against women, their sexual harassment and many other acts of abuse continue to be exposed on television, in newspaper cartoons, on social media like WhatsApp platforms and popular culture. “After a decade of considerable progress on recognition and adoption of measures around women’s rights, the new century has brought ever-growing signs of

backlash against these gains” and the major handicap is that the “long-standing patriarchal structures and attitudes [have] proved challenging” (Bunch, 2012:37). As long as patriarchal abuse continues to characterise women’s lives as a constant element both in life and in literature, issues relating to the oppression and marginalisation of women and the search for women’s empowerment remain topical. Eleanor Roosevelt’s remarks at the United Nations of 1958 (as cited by Black) affirm that we need not ignore the harassment of women in those

small places, close to home- so close and so small that they do not appear on any map of the world... [because even if they seem small and insignificant, yet] they are the world of the individual person... [Unless human] rights have meaning there, they will have little meaning anywhere (Black, 1999:190).

This justifies this study on how two Southern African feminist writers have challenged patriarchal normativity.

Besides the above, regardless of various changes that have taken place in society, the oppression of a majority of women has continued to rise today via capitalism, imperialism, and other oppressive systems of privilege (Mama, 2001). This suggests that systems of oppression have evolved and changed form, from the traditional patriarchy. Class and racial inequalities continue to widen and white domination of global politics has remained entrenched resulting in many African women persisting to suffer subjugation and marginalisation. Growing inequalities between the North and the South are also another threat to ideas of women empowerment (Bayu, 2019). This reflects a continual of the past colonial system whose racial attitudes in the past complicated African women’s already undermined positions. This frames issues of women’s empowerment and gender equality as critical issues that continue to require research attention even today. All this further justifies this current study.

### **1.1.3 Questions Guiding the Study**

This study is informed by the following key questions:

1. How do the portrayals of women in the selected texts address the concerns and needs of women and to what extent are women's changing roles and identities represented as challenging patriarchal normativity and other intersecting systems of privilege?
2. How are women represented in the selected texts as agents in the construction of women's changing identities and what resistance and survival strategies, if any, do the characters employ to overcome various forms of oppression?
3. To what extent does women's resistance to oppressive systems in the selected literary texts impact on the women's conditions and their relations with both men and women?

#### **1.1.4 Objectives of the study**

The central objective of this research is to establish the extent to which feminist women writers challenge patriarchal normativity and intersecting systems of oppression in their representations of women characters. This objective has two parts. The first is to examine African women writers' representations of the needs and concerns of women characters in the novels and how their needs contradict what patriarchal normativity has set out for women. This is critical to understand issues of social injustice against women perpetrated by different systems of privilege that have denied most of them their rights. The second objective is to examine portrayal of women's changing identities, women's solidarity as well as representations of women characters as powerful agents capable of undertaking diverse forms of resistance against patriarchal normativity and the intersecting systems of domination that seek to undermine them. It is critical to analyse examine the women writers' portrayals of the emerging actions and identities of women in order to understand the characters and actions of women acting beyond patriarchal norms, and the impact of their agency in improving the quality of life for women, children (and men).

#### **1.2 Contextualising the research study**

The historical oppression of women by men has been well documented by numerous feminist scholars who have exposed how women's subordinate position and roles have been produced by the hierarchical social structuring of society along patriarchal gender lines and other intersecting oppressions that have invested domination and control on men (hooks, 1984; Johnson, 2014; Mama, 2014; Lee, 2017). Given the prevalence of the oppression of women across different societies and cultures, many feminist scholars have concluded that no society is exempted from a history of keeping its women down and oppressing them (Nienabar, 2018; Mama, 2001). For: "virtually all cultures... have a history of treating women badly" (Narismulu, 1999:72). This means that no honest men can pretend to be oblivious to the oppression of women because "[t]he evidence of women's oppression is everywhere" (Johnson, 2014:200).

Despite the reality of great inequalities between humanity, most men continue to assume an air of pretence and obliviousness to the oppression of women (Johnson, 2014). Most have taken their privileges for granted as they have never assumed responsibility, even by questioning their own privileged status in relation to women. However, Johnson has challenged men to ask why "[i]t is women, after all, who clean most people's houses, who learn to take feces, urine, garbage, dirt, roaches, rats, and vomit in their stride" (Johnson, 2014:185). Such questions help expose how the inequalities between women and men inflict so much harm and unhappiness on women who have faced and continue to face exclusion and marginalisation. "Domination is an ill, not because of some abstract moral principle but because of a concrete moral fact: it makes people unhappy. Domination makes impossible the most essential and felicitous element in life: trusting mutual affection" (French, 1985:509). French's argument underscores that the idea of dominating other people destroys the quality of life by creating conflicts and distancing people from one another. hooks has provided more fundamental insight on the pain and injustice produced by marginalisation as she says: "To be in the margin is to be part of the whole but outside the main body" (1984:i). This captures marginalisation as inhibiting someone the freedoms one should have while allowing others the same privileges. Cudd has also viewed the marginalisation of women as a serious form of oppression (2005). She has defined oppression as "a harm through which persons are systematically and unfairly or unjustly constrained, burdened, or reduced by any of several forces" (2005:21). Her 'group condition' concept has shown that

oppression does not necessarily target an individual but that the force of social mores and practices target whole groups of persons and individuals with membership in a group (2005). This poses a serious question on society's sense of justice when human intervention has been responsible for denying women equal treatment and creating all this oppression. There is, therefore, need to confront the various social mores and practises of diverse systems that have produced oppression for women.

There are various ways that feminists have shown the manner in which a majority of women have been oppressed and exploited. In Southern Africa, as in many parts of the world, women have not had equal power with men in marriages (Mutume, 2005). For instance,

[i]n precolonial Zimbabwe as well as in colonial Rhodesia, the woman was regarded as a permanent minor, first her father's ward, then her husband's... she could never own property. The situation was so bad that in 1982 a conscientious and sensitive ZANU (PF) government (in Zimbabwe) attempted a corrective measure by passing the Legal Age of Majority Act (Aidoo, 1998:43).

That is a clear demonstration of women being disadvantaged in society. Apart from that, men have also historically enjoyed child custody rights, an entitlement derived from patriarchal assumptions. Such patriarchal hijacks and entitlements have even included men's control over lineage (Narismulu, 1999). It was because of such entitlements that many African women suffered oppression in education as Dangarembga highlights in *Nervous Conditions*. African feminists have exposed how "educational policies in Africa have never been democratic" but tilted to advantage men (Aidoo, 1998:44). They have rightfully accused society's structural and other forms of inequalities of holding back women's rights and limiting their chances and opportunities in life while encouraging "in men a sense of entitlement in relation to women- to be tended to and taken care of, deferred to and supported no matter how badly they might behave" (Johnson, 2014:30).

The oppression of women has taken many forms: brutalization through physical violence, cultural repression, sexual exploitation and structural oppression by men, all of which have

produced uneven playing fields and burdened women (hooks, 1984). Battered images of women on television and in newspapers have spoken about men's violence against women. Many of them have faced hunger and deprivation. Speaking particularly about the oppression of African women two decades ago, Aidoo summed up and affirmed the widespread nature of their oppression which she pointed out as

evident about the majority of the African women... from the Cape of Good Hope to Cairo: they live in the rural areas and the urban shanties of the continent; they have had only the most minimal education or none at all; they are married, monogamously or polygamously; they have had between two and six children; they are involved in peasant farming and petty trading; their lives are ruled locally by men who speak in languages they do not understand and from abroad by alien men who speak languages they have no hope of understanding (1998:48).

What her views have underscored (as have done those of many other feminists) is how the oppression of women pervades different areas of life. Other ways in which women have been marginalised and situated 'outside the main body' have been revealed through actions of many men who have often made decisions that have affected women without even bothering to consult them (Offen, 2018). Not being consulted and being decided for by men are stark examples of unfair treatment of women where they are treated as if they are absent or do not matter or lack the capacity to make own decisions. By making decisions that affect women, men have denied women the chance to live their lives the way they might have wanted. The marginalisation and exclusion endured by women has not just been in the home as wide evidence of institutionalized and pervasive oppression has also been noted in various areas of social, educational, economic and political life where a majority of women continue to "face inequality and discrimination" (Walby, 1990:201; Napikoski, 2019). In other words, the oppression of women is a continuing challenge that demands research attention. What follows is a general analysis of how African feminists have exposed the different ways in which the oppression of African women has been produced and has panned out in different facets of life.

**Core concepts:** The following concepts underpin this study and this is what they mean in the context of this study:

**Patriarchy:** This is an ancient, near-universal (if differing) socially-constructed ideology that has promoted male privilege and interests while marginalising women by creating gender roles, expectations and inequalities between men and women on the basis of biological differences between them. Within patriarchy, biological difference is the primary reason for situating men and women at odds with one another but outside biological differences, men and women are the same and should be equal. Therefore, patriarchy has abused natural biological differences to construct a social system of gender which has promoted its assumptions and influenced social thinking towards a worldview where women are treated as if they are inferior to men and are subordinated to them. Lerner has defined patriarchy as “an institutionalized form of male dominance over women and children, both within the family and in society in general” (1986:239). Thus, patriarchy has entrenched men’s privileges in all areas of life, undermining women’s lives and livelihoods. What makes any society patriarchal is the extent to which it promotes male privilege: “A society is patriarchal to the degree that it promotes male privilege by being *male dominated, male identified, and male centered*” (Johnson, 2014:6). The values of patriarchy revolve around men being in control. Patriarchy has encouraged men’s obsessions with control of women (treating them as the “other”) which men often exercise and abuse, based on their claims to having authority “to define what is best for women without consulting them” (Offen, 2018:35), or respecting their autonomy (even when living in constitutional democracies that fought long battles for basic human rights, like Zimbabwe and South Africa). To keep women under control, many men have often used violence against women but act as if violence does not exist (Johnson, 2014). Patriarchy is an unfair system which socialises men and women to “behave, think, and aspire differently because they have been taught to think of masculinity and femininity in ways which condition difference” (Sultana, 2011:10). For instance, “qualities such as... caring, vulnerability, a readiness to negotiate and compromise, emotional expressiveness, and intuitive and other nonlinear ways of thinking are all undervalued *and* culturally associated with women and femininity” (Johnson, 2014:7). Such stereotypes, if continued over time, serve to entrench patriarchy’s notion of men’s superiority over women.

However, stereotypes are far removed from reality because women and men are only different in physiology and nothing else. Thus, patriarchy has been perpetuated by false webs of beliefs, customs, norms and practices that are socially constituted and draw from socialisation. Use of force and coercion within patriarchy has left many women without options but to comply with patriarchal expectations. Therefore, both women and men, in different ways, have participated in perpetuating patriarchal ideas whose (irrational) logic is the promotion of unearned male privilege while most women suffer disadvantage and are under-privileged.

**Gender:** This refers to socially and culturally constructed views about what it means to be a woman or man, with patriarchy identifying the roles of men and women as based on biological differences (Meena, 1992) and biological attributes (Kimmel, 2008). Patriarchy has situated gender as a site of women and men's structural relationships of inequality within economic, political, social structures as well as in households (Meena, 1992). In other words, biological differences between women and men have been abused to produce different roles and statuses, to reinforce and justify the prejudice and discrimination patriarchy metes out against women. Patriarchy has constructed the gender system to promote men above women and at the expense of women. This means that gender is not natural, but a social construction that has been produced by human intervention basing on people's biological attributes. The differential social construction of the roles of women and men has been used to shape 'acceptable' and 'unacceptable' behaviours for each gender: "Individuals learn and internalise gender-related attributes and roles from families and friends, in schools, communities, religious and cultural institutions" (Lorentzen, 2014:15).

**The oppression of women:** This is the widespread undermining and marginalisation of women's interests by subordinating women to men. Oppression "is a system of social inequality through which one group is positioned to dominate and benefit from the exploitation and subordination of another" (Johnson, 2014:23). This suggests that a group cannot oppress itself but is oppressed by another group situated at odds with it: "a category of people cannot oppress themselves" (2014:23). The oppression of women is a fundamental social injustice that has been produced by various factors: patriarchy, racism, class, among others. White middle-class feminism initially restricted the marginalisation of women to gender oppression. However, the theory of

intersectionality has exposed the interactions of many forms of oppression based on race, class and others to oppress women. The theory of intersectionality “emerged in the late 1970s and was further developed in the 1990s in the works of Kimberle Crenshaw (1993) and Patricia Hill-Collins (2000) which challenged and further demonstrated the limitations of gender as a singular analytical category and entry point of analysis” (Bunjun, 2010, 116). Postcolonial feminism has demonstrated that the oppression of women has been produced by various factors, implying that women have not had homogenous experiences of oppression as some have been exposed to more forms of oppression and tyranny than others.

**Complicity (with patriarchal oppression):** This is when women conform to expected patterns of behaviour and do not challenge oppression but remain silent in the midst of violence perpetrated against women, Their silence and inaction are platforms that allow oppression to continue. Women may not oppress others but complicity means they act in ways that inflict injury and perpetuate oppression. According to hooks, the oppression of women has been “perpetuated by institutional and social structures; by the individuals [men] who dominate, exploit or oppress; and by the victims [women] themselves who are socialized to behave in ways that make them act in complicity with the status quo” (1984:43). Similarly, Johnson argues that victims “can inflict injury on themselves and suffer from their position in society” (Johnson 2014:23). Thus, complicity means any act that perpetuates the oppressive status quo.

**Feminism:** is a women’s movement that seeks social transformation by rejecting and challenging women’s oppression by patriarchy and other intersecting systems of privilege that promote male privilege.

Feminism, put simply, refers to the ongoing struggle to free women from centuries of oppression, exploitation and marginalisation in all the vast majority of known human societies. It is a call to end patriarchy and to expose, deconstruct and eradicate all the myriad, personal, social, economic and political practices, habits and assumptions that sustain gender inequality and injustice around the world” (Mama, 2012:3).

Feminism provides an analytical and intellectual framework that helps us understand how the oppression of women operates. Women’s experiences of oppression have not been similar, and as different women challenge the terms of their own oppression, feminism has assumed different

labels: “African feminists have and continue to contend and define African feminist thought for ourselves at the junction of praxis” (Mama, 2012:3). This study adopts African Feminism because the novels being studied are by African feminists. African feminists have embraced the concept of intersectionality which helps them establish African women’s experiences of oppression where “gender works not as an isolatable variable, but through its pervasive interconnections with class, ethnicity, clan, religious, race, sexuality and nation. In the same way, these other dimensions of social order also work through gender” (Mama, 2014). By placing gender at the centre of its enquiry and showing how it intersects with other systems of privilege to undermine women, intersectional feminism explains women’s oppression through an analysis of patriarchy and its consequences, as well as the role of other intersecting oppressions, and this is key in seeking gender justice. Feminism seeks to create “an equitable world, a world in which women and men can be at once equal and different, a world free of male privilege and male hierarchy and authority over women” (Offen, 2018:41). Feminism’s historical developments show that it has been marked by diverse perspectives including “liberal, radical, Marxist/socialist, psychoanalytic, care-focused, existentialist... ecofeminist” that have attempted to explain the oppression and marginalisation of women (Tong, 2014:1). Initially, Western feminist ideas, which dominated the conceptualization of the prejudices against women, depicted gender as the ultimate oppression. Third World feminists from Africa, Asia and Latin America “began to challenge white hegemonic feminism’s omissions, exclusions and silences regarding their concerns, issues and struggles” since they were oppressed by other forms of oppression besides gender (Bunjun, 2018:119). This saw postcolonial feminism shifting its paradigms from Western feminists’ narrow focus on gender only to a broader and richer postcolonial perspective that is opposed to all forms of oppression that undermine women

**Solidarity:** This is the idea where women unite and bond against the various systems of privilege that undermine their livelihoods even if they may not be directly affected by that oppression themselves. This marks accommodation of diversity among women and recognition that even if women’s sites of oppression are different, there are ways in which they are all related. Oppression remains oppression even if the sources of oppression are different and alliances and solidarity between women makes their struggles multifaceted (Mama, 2001). Solidarity is the idea of identifying and standing firm with those suffering oppression and does

not mean sameness of sources of oppression and so “one does not need to eradicate differences in order to create solidarity” (Bunjun, 2010:120). Women’s solidarity develops when women cease to omit and trivialise other forms of oppression that burden other women, including racial and class prejudices.

### **1.3 Organisation of the study**

This thesis is divided into four (4) chapters. The researcher examines *And They Didn’t Die* by Lauretta Ngcobo and *Nervous Conditions* by Tsitsi Dangarembga to understand how they represent the lives of a range of African women and their attempts to deal with the challenges imposed by patriarchal normativity in the women’s bid for survival, freedom from hunger, empowerment,...autonomy and agency.

#### **Chapter 1: Introduction**

The first chapter introduced the study by mapping the area of focus, the contextual framework and an overview of the whole study. It addresses the research questions and objectives that inform the study. The study is located in feminist theoretical discourses, largely African Feminism.

#### **Chapter 2: The intersectionality of systems of oppression**

The chapter examines African feminist views regarding the oppressiveness of different systems of oppression that have worked together to undermine women’s lives and livelihoods. The approach to the study, the research methodology, and the theoretical framework that underpins the study are explained. The study is located in feminist theoretical discourses, largely African Feminism.

#### **Chapter 3: The contradictions between African women’s concerns and needs, and the expectations of patriarchal normativity**

This chapter deals with Dangarembga and Ngcobo’s representations of the various ways in which the concerns, desires and needs of African women contrast with what patriarchal normativity and other intersecting systems of oppression expect of women. The differences and

conflicts between women's real needs and the imagined and constructed needs rooted in patriarchal normativity and intersecting systems of oppression help expose the cruelty of systems of oppression that have undermined women from realising their aspirations, needs and concerns.

#### **Chapter 4: African women's resistance, emerging identities and the impact of their changing roles in challenging patriarchal normativity**

This chapter explores the African women characters' resistance against oppressive systems that undermine them by trivialising and misrepresenting their needs and concerns. Various ways in which the women challenge oppressive systems and assume control of their lives are explored. Along with how the women's actions impact on their lives and the men, and contribute to the survival of families and communities. The power of women's solidarity as a transformational agent in reconstructing their identities will also be examined, to understand the impact of the collective.

#### **Chapter 5: Conclusion**

The chapter concludes the study with a synthesis of the findings, the research strengths and limitations. It examines the contributions this research seeks to make to scholarship and the implications that can be drawn from it. Possible solutions to some of the challenges raised in the study are suggested. The chapter also proposes ways of reducing the methodological limitations of the research. Recommendations that arise from the study that may influence future research are also made.

## CHAPTER 2

### The intersectionality of systems of oppression

**2.0 Introduction** The exclusion, abuse and oppression that many women continue to suffer cannot be attributed to a single system but several that have operated within and alongside each other, particularly in the lives of African women, who have endured the impact of more forms of oppression and abuse than other women. This chapter examines some of these oppressive systems that have undermined African women's rights and chances in life.

### 2.1 Conceptualising patriarchy, colonialism, and capitalism in the oppression of African women

Many contradictions have emerged regarding the origins of the subordinate position that African women continue to grapple with. On one hand feminists like Kamene Okonjo (1976), Zulu Sofola (1998) have argued that the African women's subordinate position and status were produced by colonialism. African nationalism in postcolonial Africa has underscored this view as it has often invoked a "yearning for an African past" that has often been idealized and looked at with nostalgia (Daymond, 1998:256). The fundamental argument advanced by such attempts at valorizing the African past has been to blame colonial invasion and conquest of Africa which, according to Sofola, brought "male-centred systems of authority and governance" (1998:61). Sofola's views affirm Okonjo's argument where she has asserted that "[t]he [precolonial] African woman has not been inactive, irrelevant and silent. Rather, African tradition has seen the wisdom of a healthy social organization where all its citizens are seen to be vital channels for a healthy and harmonious society" (1976:45). However, contrary to the views above are African feminists such as Olabisi Aina who have argued that even if "the traditional African system provided some degree of security for the female members, there existed some form of oppression within that very system" (1998:69). Aina has demonstrated how the dictates of African patriarchal customs and culture have also conflicted with the needs and interests of African women (1998). Thus, if anything, colonialism merely worsened African women's experiences of oppression, rather than being the origin of it. This latter argument is the one that this thesis subscribes to.

Some African feminists have illustrated that the subordination of African women has, in part, been “due to inhibitory traditions” of African patriarchal structures that have “set the stage for the subordination of women” and provided a platform for other diverse systems of privilege to oppress them (Aina, 1998:70). Thus, despite various African-centred discourses where colonialism, imperialism and racism have been condemned as very oppressive of Africans, particularly African women, many African feminists have maintained and insisted that African customary structures can never be absolved for being oppressive to African women (Ngcobo, 1992; Aina, 1998; Daymond, 1998; Mama, 2001). “Traditionally, Zimbabwe [like many other African countries] is a patriarchal society where women have always been subdued under men” (Maunganidze, 2020:6). This means that “the battle for women’s emancipation and their access to equal treatment and opportunities is in many ways strangled” by patriarchy, and not just racism or capitalism (Nyakudya and Chinouriri, 2018:81). Therefore, understanding patriarchy becomes fundamental so as to have full understanding of how the oppression of women has come about.

Many different definitions for the word patriarchy have been provided (Maseno and Kilonzo, 2011). In very simple terms, patriarchy can be defined as “a social and ideological construct which considers men (who are the patriarchs) as superior to women” (Rawat, 2014:43). According to Maseno and Kilonzo, the word ‘patriarchy’ “derives from the Latin ‘Patriarchia’ which means rule of the father” (2011:45). The definitions above show hierarchy as a characteristic embedded within the notion of patriarchy where men are ranked above women. However, the definitions given above are narrow. A broader definition of patriarchy has been provided by Jones: “it refers to the web of economic, political, social and religious regulations that enforces the domination of women by men throughout the ages” (2000:77). This definition suggests that women’s experiences of being dominated and restricted by men has been socially constructed and ‘enforced. It also shows that men’s domination has covered virtually all critical life-enriching areas of life: political, economic, social, cultural, religious and many other spheres. Men’s dominance over women has

had a long history and stretches across national and cultural boundaries touching

various facets of life. As such patriarchy invokes a sense of the enormity of the struggle ahead by identifying the enormity of the history [of oppression] that has bound women for centuries (Maseno and Kilonzo, 2011:45).

Walby has defined patriarchy as “a system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women” (1990:20). Her definition situates patriarchy as an institutionalized system of exploitative social, political, economic and even reproductive relations that have sustained men’s hold on power and control over women. Thus, patriarchy, as “a system of social relations” (Walby, 1990:20), has attempted to set men up in society as well as promote their authority and control over women in various areas of life while expecting women to be submissive and to accept an inferior identity (Amanor-Wilks, 2009; Tamale, 2004). The narrative of the historical oppression and domination of women by men within patriarchal structures has been well documented by famous Euro-american feminist scholars such as Virginia Woolf, Simone de Beauvoir, Annette Kolodny and others who have drawn attention to, and challenged the horrible conditions of women in society. They have all shown how patriarchy has provoked an acute sense of social injustice by setting “up man as the positive and woman as a negative, second sex or other” (Aliman, 2010:6).

To broaden understanding of the patriarchal system, Johnson has provided a three-fold definition that enlarges our conceptualisation of how patriarchy has victimised women: “A society is patriarchal to the degree that it promotes male privilege by being *male dominated*, *male identified*, and *male centered*” (2014:5). He highlights patriarchy’s “core principles... [which are] male dominance, male identification, male centeredness, and the masculine obsession with control” (Johnson, 2014:224). His definition underlines three important characteristics of patriarchy: men are expected to *dominate* women and have control of various spaces of social and economic life; human life and survival are linked to or *identified* with men and, lastly, patriarchy locates men and manhood as a central reference point on what it means to be human. This systemic domination of men is not limited to the familial space but cuts across other areas of life. Therefore, men’s dominant position in the gender hierarchy has been quite systematic and maintained by various segments of the superstructure like family, religion, education, state and

others (Kendie, 2006). Even literature as an element of that superstructure has strived to situate men and their actions as the points of reference. Thus, in summary, patriarchy is systemic, explaining why it has been “theorized to be largely captured across various structures including the modes of production; relations in paid work, relations in cultural institutions, and relations in the state” (Karam and Afioumi, 2015:17310). This means patriarchy is founded on ideas of inequality between women and men and that these ideas cover all kinds of relations between the two groups. Thus, in short, patriarchy is obsessed with the placement of women and men in a hierarchy where women and womanhood are devalued.

Patriarchy has been based on abuse of natural biological differences between women and men to normatively produce different expectations, experiences and roles for them. Both women and men are expected to internalize and conform to the specific social roles and expectations for their group. Its ideology “revolves around two concepts - femininity and masculinity - that encourage us to think about men and women as different kinds of people” (Johnson, 2014:80). Within patriarchy, femininity, which is a devalued trait, has been associated with women and womanhood. In sharp contrast, masculinity is associated with men and manhood. Within patriarchy, “core cultural ideas about what is considered good, desirable, preferable, or normal are culturally associated with how we think about men, manhood, and masculinity” (Johnson, 2014:7). For instance, various human “qualities such as control, strength, competitiveness, toughness, coolness under pressure, logic, forcefulness, rationality, autonomy, self-sufficiency” and other such positive characteristics have all been culturally described and identified with masculinity and manhood (Johnson, 2014:7). Patriarchy has depicted women as inferior to men by creating different expectations and roles for them, which have been undervalued when compared to those created for men: “Culturally, Zimbabwean [and South African] males view themselves as breadwinners and heads of households whilst females [women] are taught to be obedient and submissive housekeepers” (Maunganidze, 2020:6). Therefore, patriarchy has imposed many limitations on women and undermined their potential by denying them equal space as men to articulate their concerns and needs. In her analysis of privileges enjoyed by men and the mistreatment of women in society two decades ago, O’Connell condemned the abject condition endured by women who have been pushed into subservience by patriarchal ideology. She has underscored that “to be born female comes perilously close to being born less than

human” (1994:53). This parallels bell hooks’ exposure of the unfair treatment of women, observing that “to be female is synonymous with weakness, passivity, and the will to nourish and affirm the lives of others” (hooks, 1984:126). Thus, owing to patriarchy’s male centredness, women have historically had their “own distinctive roles to play in the life of the community” which, even if very important and essential to human needs, were regarded as less important simply because they were different from those allotted to men (Sofola, 1998:52-53). Feminists do not generally challenge that women and men are biologically different. However, most feminists have asserted that “[s]exual differences and similarities, as well as sex roles, [should] enhance sexual autonomy and cooperation between women and men, rather than promote polarization and fragmentation” (Steady, 1987:8). In other words, it is possible for the two sexes to be different biologically but equal in rights and privileges (Offen, 2018). Feminists have also contended that ideas around which femininity and masculinity are framed “do not describe most people as they actually are” (Johnson, 2014:80). They view ideas of masculinity and femininity as mere cultural constructs that have been socially abused to create sets of ideas about what is expected of women and men as well as outlining the terms of their relationships with each other and amongst themselves (Johnson, 2014). It is absurd that patriarchy has attempted to essentialise natural differences in biology to produce different roles, expectations and lived experiences that separate women from men and give them different rights. Certain foods, types of dressing, walking or sitting have been permissible with men but not with women. What provokes indignation and condemnation is the fact that it is patriarchal normativity, in the first place, that defines roles for women, limiting and refusing them freedom to choose their own destinies but then, paradoxically, proceeds to devalue the same identities and roles it expects women to hold. This creates some kind of entrapment for women because they are not accorded freedom to determine for themselves who they want to be but at the same time, a feeling is imposed on them to hate who they are and aspire to be more like men (which they are not allowed to do). One wonders what is wrong with identities such as motherhood that is naturally identifiable with women, and many other human identities and qualities such as cooperation, humility and many other human characteristics that have been devalued simply because they have been associated with women and womanhood. Consequently, feminist scholars and activists have argued that “there is good reason to limit the male population’s opportunities to harm others [women and children]” (Johnson, 2014:147). This is achieved by challenging

patriarchal normativity and its repressive tactics that have made many women comply with the patriarchal agenda that refuses them freedom to determine for themselves what they want to be or to enjoy their identities as women. There can never be justice at the price of womanliness and women should not be assessed in relation to men but live their own distinct lives (Offen, 2018). Therefore, this study attempts to examine portrayal of women resting the limitations imposed by patriarchal normativity.

Because of patriarchal devaluation of roles associated with women and womanhood, many men have remained reluctant to share in those domestic chores associated with women like childcare responsibilities, “cleaning up, watching, soothing, worrying... being constantly on call, and generally keeping track of who is where and doing what” and other such tasks, demonstrating how, within patriarchy, women continue to be burdened under many chores men do not want to engage in (Johnson, 2014:186). Dangarembga represents and tackles these issues in her novel that is a focus of this study. Though patriarchy has identified positive qualities with men and accorded men a higher status than women, at the headship of families and as breadwinners who should hold decision-making power in the home (Rosenthal and Marshall, 1986), feminists have argued that situating men only as self-sufficient and as breadwinners (among many characteristics) misrepresents women in the African setup (and globally) as it ignores the reality on the ground where many women have been and continue not to depend on men but are self-sufficient and the breadwinners of their families. Therefore, in spite of what patriarchy expects of men and women, the reality is generally quite contradictory. Women’s assumption of the breadwinner’s role in many South African homes (as in many African homes in Zimbabwe and elsewhere) has been known and acknowledged by feminist research, media and writing for decades: “For a range of reasons South African fathers have had very little to do with the lives of their children... [since it is] the mother (or grandmother) [who] takes primary responsibility for all aspects of the family’s welfare” (Narismulu, 1999:72). Considering all this, it is clear that patriarchal normativity should be challenged because it is full of gross claims and misrepresentations. Through its ideas about femininity and masculinity, patriarchal normativity has handicapped most women’s potential not only in the domestic sphere but the public realm which it has “defined as the purview of men” (Vance, 2017:31). Thus, this research seeks to show Ngcobo and Dangarembga’s representations of women that challenge such patriarchal

notions regarding women. It also shows how their works affirm feminists' arguments that all those identities that have been associated with men should not be monopolized by men since many African women, as represented in the selected texts, have also assumed the roles successfully despite patriarchal normativity and its strategies of undermining women and their capabilities (Tamale, 2004; O'Brien, 1994).

In order to exclude and marginalise women, patriarchy has, as alluded to earlier, produced a gender system with a set of expectations and roles for women and men. This means the term 'gender' requires defining. "Gender refers to socially constructed attributes and roles associated with being male or female. These attributes and roles define what is expected, allowed and valued in women and men" (Lorentzen. 2014:15). Clearly, gender is a social construct. Gender roles and expectations can be exemplified through expectations that patriarchy has had for girls in Southern Africa: "[w]ithin the Zimbabwean setup, marriage is the desired destination for most women" (Maunganidze, 2020:6; Chireshe and Chireshe, 2010). Nwapa has also highlighted the same challenge that many African women continue to grapple with: "[m]any are uneducated, and there are not too many alternatives to being married and having children. The most natural thing for the rural woman is to marry and procreate" (1998:95). Thus, in Southern Africa, as in other parts of the world, patriarchy has historically undermined girls and women's aspirations beyond marriage, by presenting marriage as the ultimate achievement (Uwakweh, 1998), at the expense of other life-enriching pursuits. This is very oppressive and it will be particularly interesting to examine how Dangarembga challenges entrenched patriarchal views about the value of marriage and education in her representation of Tambudzai and Lucia, young women who were not weighed down by societal pressure to get married. Similarly, it will be interesting to analyse Ngcobo's depiction of the potential of young women such as Gaba, Nomawa, Jezile, who managed to survive on their own, outside marriage, without help from husbands. Through such representations, the study seeks to highlight the injustice of the gender system which lies in its underlying principles which seem to suggest that by being women, women are not able to perform roles and duties that patriarchal normativity has defined as men's roles. The study is informed by feminist ideas that have shown that in sharp contrast to patriarchal normativity's erroneous assumption, "African women have proved their ability in all spheres" (Daymond,

1992:94). This is what the study seeks to explore in the discussion of how patriarchal normativity has grossly misrepresented women.

Feminist analyses of history claim that society was not always patriarchal and oppressive of its women, but that gender inequities have been socially-produced (Lerner, 1986; Napikoski, 2019). They have argued that many centuries ago, the patriarchal system upset the original social organization and rationale for dividing society along sex differences (Napikoski, 2019). (In her informing work, *The Creation of Patriarchy*,) Gerda Lerner has explored the origins of men's dominance over women (1986). The compelling arguments she has raised trace the development of patriarchy to the second millennium. She is cited by Napikoski as underlining that "male dominance was not always a feature of human society" (2019:1). Basing on the grand historical framework provided by Lerner on the history of humankind and patriarchy, Napikoski has asserted that at the beginning, the social organization that divided society along lines of differences in sex was very noble as the desire was to share roles and responsibilities and not to oppress one another (2019). The idea was to help maintain order in society so that men and women could live together in harmony, abiding by these rules laid down for society's good in its productive life (Napikoski, 2019; Lerner, 1986). Today, when male privileges and the disempowerment of women have become so entrenched and an everyday occurrence due to "thousands of years of patriarchal history, it is easy to slide into the belief that things have always been this way" (Johnson, 2014:227). Patriarchal values have been produced over time and have continued to evolve and Hasel has stated that beliefs and values rooted in tradition have "a tendency to grow over long periods of time, thus accumulating more and more details and aspects that were not originally part of God's Word and [the original] plan" (2020:28). Thus, as societies have evolved over time, new ideas and ways of social organisation have taken root and today we have a patriarchal model that has subjected most of the world's women to so much misery by relegating them to the position of other (Johnson, 2014). As highlighted earlier, gender inequalities have been visible in the structures that have allowed men to enjoy unearned privileges and entitlements denied women (Mama, 2012; Nnaemeka, 1998). This leaves no doubt that patriarchal promotion of male privilege has produced men's power at structural level where they "have held primary positions of authority in politics, religion, in the military and education... [while] women have clearly had differentiated status and roles from men" (Coltri,

2017:13). All of this discrimination has derived from socially-constructed patriarchal ideas of femininity and masculinity.

Many feminists have exposed the emptiness of patriarchal assumptions that have sought “to think of masculinity and femininity in ways which condition difference” (Sultana, 2011:10; Lovren, 2011). They have identified and challenged various beliefs, values, stereotypes, patriarchal normativity and all practices and thoughts rooted in patriarchy that have, unjustifiably, elevated men and manhood while creating hate and prejudices against women and womanhood. After all, in many parts of rural Southern Africa, women’s agricultural productivity has been quite evident. Some women have raised children single-handed, sending them to school, out of necessity competing with men in many areas of life and even accomplishing far more than many men have been able to. Feminist discourses are, therefore, justified to contest assumptions that want to suggest that

only men are masculine. It is easy to think that only men are bearers of what are perceived as masculine traits or masculine behaviours. Masculinities are not necessarily connected to men only; women can also practise female masculinities (Lovren, 2011:112).

Strong, de Vault, Suid and Reynolds (citing a study carried out by Margaret Mead among the Arapesh and Mundugumor people of New Guinea) have affirmed the above views as their study established that

many, if not all of the personality traits which we have called masculine or feminine are as lightly linked to sex as the clothing, the manners, and the form of head-dress that a society at a given period assigns to either sex.... The evidence is overwhelmingly in favour of social conditioning (1983:52).

What this illustrates is the need to challenge the oppressiveness of patriarchal normativity and its socially produced assumptions regarding women and men. According to Sultana, “those so-called ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’ qualities are human qualities and not specific to either men or women” (2011:15). This confirms the foregoing argument that “[i]t is possible for a woman to live out her masculine side (the *animus*) and at the same time be her own feminine self (the *anima*)” (Coltri, 2017:12). Therefore, refusing women equality with men on the grounds of society’s association of masculinity with men is surely a contradiction of reality that should be

challenged as this study seeks to do. This is why radical libertarian feminists have argued that “[m]en should be permitted to explore their feminine dimensions; and women, their masculine ones. No human being should be forbidden the sense of wholeness that comes from combining his or her masculine and feminine sides” (Tong, 2014:2). All these views underline why patriarchal normativity should be challenged because it has imposed (and continues to impose) limitations on women and men, distancing and alienating women and men from each other, basing all this on unfounded facts that derive from the figment and creation of men’s mind. In the literary texts being studied, Ngcobo and Dangarembga depict these issues and powerfully challenge patriarchal normativity by representing many women characters exhibiting characteristics that patriarchy has sought to identify with men.

Owing to patriarchal normativity’s socially-imposed tag of ‘inferior’ status on women, a majority of women have also endured many misrepresentations and under-representations in literature, particularly fiction by men. In many literary texts by men, patriarchy’s history of male centeredness has meant that “the focus of attention [in these literary texts] is primarily on men and boys and what they do” (Johnson, 2014:10). A lot of written literature in the past was primarily about men and by men, masking the roles of women. In South Africa:

[t]here seems to be a myth surrounding the nature of South African women’s participation in the struggle against apartheid. It is one which erroneously assumes that women, who must undertake almost complete responsibility for the welfare and survival of their families, are so limited by being passive, nurturing and motherly that they cannot at the same time be powerful, independent and politically active (O’Brien, 1994:147).

Ngcobo’s novel, *ATDD*, challenges such narrow representation of women. A pertinent question that African feminists have posed is why the restrictive literary portrayal of women “seldom allows for any role other than those of wife and mother” as if women cannot be much more (Lockett, 1988:35). Gender differentiation has, therefore, been grossly unfair to women and severely impacted them: “the fact that women were conditioned to do only specific duties have put limitations to self-development” (Mbuende, 1990:19). This is why this thesis intends to show how the selected contemporary African feminist women writers have been writing back, shifting the literary focus from men to women, and challenging notions of women as inferior to men.

Thus, the overall aim is to analyse the selected feminist texts' response to patriarchy's organization of life around exclusionary politics by repositioning women.

Drawing from the above, it becomes very clear that patriarchal normativity has been established by patriarchy's principle (of inequalities between women and men) which provided "generation after generation with a lens through which to perceive, interpret, and shape what is taken to be real" (Johnson, 2014:224). These views have been literally in every social structure: at home, in the school, at work, at church and everywhere and this was a cunning way of naturalising the oppression women so that it could be viewed as legitimate. Because patriarchal ideology has, for long, fueled men's sense of superiority over women and has become so "woven into the fabric of everyday life," today many men seem reluctant to accept that patriarchal relations have been brought about by human intervention and are not God-ordained (Johnson, 2014:60). Patriarchal normativity has forced upon the woman to learn to fit into a subordinate status and "to subordinate her needs and interests... to accept lesser occupations... [and] to endure being ignored" among many forms of oppression (Johnson, 2014:176). This illustrates efforts towards legitimizing unjust ideas that have denied women the fullness of their identities and sense of citizenship. It also reveals how patriarchal normativity has inducted women into a culture of viewing women and womanhood as inferior to men and manhood. As a result of this unfair socially-produced mindset, many men have lived their lives around obsession with control of the other, drawing on patriarchal ideology to oppress the women around them and to keep them locked out from equal opportunities (Johnson, 2014).

Women's complicity with patriarchal normativity has often not been looked at in context. Their complicity with oppressiveness has often been mistaken as women's acceptance of subordinate roles when it has not been that. What is clear, however, is that women's complicity has been produced and consolidated by modes of thinking, practices and myths that sought to legitimate and consolidate patriarchy's ideas of men as the dominant group (Kendie, 2006). Historically, various strategies such as stereotyping, labelling, verbal bashing and many others have been deployed to rein in 'rebellious' women and establish women's conformity. Other strategies used to make women comply with patriarchy's demands have included use of different forms of violence and other repressive tactics. All repression entails "the threat of force, the knowledge

that surveilled and repressed subjects apprehend if they step out of line they will suffer violent fates” (Barkawi, 2016:204). In other words, patriarchal normativity has placed a burden to conform on the citizens where “stepping out of expected gender norms and roles- becomes subject to violence” (Abrahamyan, Mammadova & Tskhvariavilli, 2019:49). Violence has been viewed as “a significant factor in [men’s] masculine identity and a crucial factor in the functioning of patriarchy” (Abrahamyan, Mammadova & Tskhvaraishvilli, 2019:50). Thus, to secure women’s complicity in this relationship of domination of the other, many men have exposed women to diverse forms of tyranny and violence including physical, emotional and sexual battery. Use of coercive force within patriarchy reflects intolerance for dissent and most oppressed women have ended up complying with the terms of their oppression so as to escape victimisation and maximise life options (Kandiyoti, 1998). In this way, patriarchal normativity has pressured women to accede to abnormal patriarchal beliefs, assumptions, prejudices and values that have sought to distance them from their own needs and concerns and not to challenge these beliefs. The violence produced by patriarchal normativity has left women with little choice but to support its thinking so as to escape punishment. In this way, patriarchal normativity has served as men’s psychological weaponry in supporting their claims to dominance and the authority to “define what is best for women without consulting them” (Offen, 2018:35). Even today, “[p]atriarchal societies continue to socialize women and activists to be ashamed about male violations against themselves and to maintain silence” (Narismulu, 2012:72). The foregoing arguments address patriarchy’s control mechanisms. Thus, like other systems of domination and privilege, patriarchy has encouraged those dominated “to go along, to ratify privilege as legitimate, and to refrain from challenging the status quo” (Johnson, 2014:189). Men have often become quite hostile to women who may threaten or challenge their power as Dangarembga depicts in *Nervous Conditions* through Babamukuru’s relations with the women around him, like Lucia and Nyasha. Use of violence has been a strategy to block women from accessing equal power and opportunities, ensuring that men continue holding on to their patriarchal power and privileges and that the patriarchal order is maintained (Eisler, 2000). Such an oppressive system cannot be allowed to continue holding women captive: there is need to challenge patriarchy and patriarchal normativity. Thus, defiant actions by the women are important to challenge patriarchal normativity. Any behaviour by women that disrupts oppressive social expectations

“even in the smallest way can affect taken-for-granted assumptions that underlie social reality” (Johnson, 2014:241). This is what the thesis explores in its examination of the selected texts.

However, African feminists have pointed out that “when men become the sole focus, there is the tendency of having the conception of men as the enemy” something that few radical feminists have done (Maseno and Kilonzo, 2011:46). Not all men are oppressive:

The fact that one man betrays and brutalizes you does not mean that another will do the same. There should be interdependence and some measure of understanding which blossoms to mutual respect and equality... because the lives of a man and a woman are interdependent (Nwapa, 1998:98).

Jell-Bahlsen has pointed out that “in real life, the contributions of women and men are known to be complementary in creation, procreation, and ensuring of human existence” (1998:103). Thus, inasmuch as many men have exploited and abused women, women and men still need each other and should face their challenges together. African feminists have argued that the “African woman writer has a great responsibility now and in the future” to exploit certain values embedded in African tradition that focus on the potential for “mutual support”, “understanding”, “sharing” “respect” of the other between women and men as a way of challenging oppressive ideas rooted in patriarchal normativity that have sought to divide women and men (Nwapa, 1998:98). They argue that even African men have a role to play to ensure solidarity and peaceful co-existence between women and men. The idea is to transform society and show that women and men need each other and that they should not view each other as enemies (Maseno & Kilonzo, 2011; Johnson, 2014). Many African feminists have, therefore, contested that instead of focusing on the roles of individual men in inflicting pain on women, it is also critical that definitions of patriarchy do not “overlook the broad institution and cultural forces that harm women quite apart from the intentions of individual men” (Maseno and Kilonzo, 2011:46). This implies exposing the system itself to scrutiny rather than individuals in it who mere go along with what is expected of them. It also means that it is what the patriarchal system expects of women and men (and regards as the norm even if it is not) which has been the basis of so much suffering for many women (and should be challenged in the portrayal of both women and men).

Men's actions which inflict harm on women derive from what patriarchy expects them to do, explaining why patriarchal normativity, which is embedded in various structures and systems of life, has been regarded as the basis of "the fundamental injustice of social institutions" that women continue to grapple with (Cudd, 2005:20). That is why it is critical to challenge it, rather than focusing more on individual oppressive men.

The broader picture that feminism envisages reveals women and men participating against life's challenges and crises together. This is achieved by replacing the binaried social landscape with a more gender just social structure. hooks has called men 'comrades in struggle' (1984), showing the great potential for peaceful co-existence. She has suggested that the "time has come for women active in feminist movement to develop new strategies for including men in the struggle against sexism" (1984:72). In other words, men cannot be bystanders and spectators while women fight for justice and equal representation. This is because men are also affected by the affairs of women, as "companions, fathers, colleagues- individuals with concerns about the well-being of the women and girls in their lives" (Lorentzen, 2014:23). hooks has underscored the same view as she has stated that even if "men are not exploited or oppressed by sexism, but there are ways in which they suffer as a result of it" (hooks, 1984:72). Men should, therefore, assume responsibility for their role in the oppression of women: as "the primary agents for maintaining and supporting sexism and sexist oppression... [men ought to] assume responsibility for transforming their consciousness" (1984:81). The portrayal of women and men working together in confronting oppressive systems, which Ngcobo and Dangarembga highlight in their texts, is a powerful way of challenging patriarchal normativity. Women and men's solidarity underpins how the two groups belong together, in spite of what patriarchal normativity suggests:

[e]ach gender constitutes the critical half that makes the human whole. Neither sex is totally complete in itself to constitute a unit by itself. Each has and needs a complement, despite the possession of unique features of its own (Steady, 1987:8).

This underscores that women and men should live together peacefully, respecting each other's rights. Any portrayal of potential solidarity between women and men against systems of oppression in the selected texts challenges patriarchal normativity that has constructed a binaried

view of women and men. The potential for mutuality and complementarity is what Dangarembga and Ngcobo's texts attempt to demonstrate in their portrayal of the relations between African women and men.

There are many other ways through which the myths that surround ideas about femininity and masculinity have been revealed in real life:

Men and women often appear and behave in ways that do not fit [those] masculine and feminine expectations but without anyone making an issue of it. With children, for example, women may be assertive and powerful and men may be emotionally expressive and tender without inviting criticism that they're being insufficiently feminine or masculine (Johnson, 2014:87).

This tendency by both men and women to instinctively and naturally behave in ways that contradict patriarchal normativity is important. It reveals the limitations of all ideologies behind legitimating assumptions about femininity and masculinity. It further shows that it is human intervention that has produced ideas of separateness. Therefore, no sex or gender can be first and another second because "in essence, where things began and are determined, both genders are equal before the Supreme Essence" (Sofola, 1998:52).

Though it is undeniable that patriarchy has seriously compromised women's agency and undermined their lives, African feminists have aptly asserted that it is not the sole system of oppression that women are battling. They have contended that focusing on patriarchy as the singular oppressive system "deflects attention from the effects of racism, heterosexism, ageism etc on the lives of women" (Maseno and Kilonzo, 2011:46). They have argued that various intersecting systems of oppression have worked within and alongside patriarchy to undermine African women's interests and needs. This broadens the scope of our understanding of how the oppression of African women has panned out. Such views explain African feminists' rejection of Western feminist definitions of the oppression of women that have tended towards restricting the examinations of the oppression of women to patriarchal gender analyses at the expense of other forms of tyranny (Mama, 2012; Bunjun, 2010; Sandoval, 2003; Aina, 1998; hooks, 1984). The paragraphs below examine how the oppression of African women has also been produced by colonial and capitalist forces.

In Africa, prominent feminist scholars including Mama Amina, Mary Kolawole, Pauline Uwakweh, Olabisi Aina, Tamale Sylvia, Oyewumi Oyeronke and Patricia McFadden, among many others, have shifted discussions of patriarchy as the single oppressive system, broadening our understanding of how other systems of domination have intersected with patriarchy to marginalise and oppress women. Oppressive systems of domination that have intersected with patriarchy to produce a range of injustices against women include colonialism, capitalism, racism, neo-colonialism, and many others that worsened African women's experiences of patriarchal oppression and burden (Crenshaw, 1993; Ogundipe-Leslie, 1994; Mama 2001; Tamale, 2004; ). According to Aina, the oppressive "traditional African structure set the stage for the subordination of women under capitalist imperialism, both structures interacting in a complex way to further oppress African women" (1998:70). Thus, patriarchy has not been the only oppression.

To begin with, African feminists have pointed out that African women's experiences of oppression due to the African traditional model of patriarchy were complicated and worsened by the development and imposition of colonialism and the diverse forms of tyranny that accompanied it (Narismulu, 2012). "Coloniality is a system of dominance justified by classifications of race, encompassing all control of sexual access, collective authority, labor, subjectivity/ inter-subjectivity and the production of knowledge within these relations" (Abrahamyan, Mammadova and Tskhvariashvili, 2019:49). This reveals colonialism as a system whose ideas of privilege and domination derive from racial differences that are abused to regulate different experiences for the citizens. The colonial rule was ushered in by the European invasion and conquest of Africa in the nineteenth century for mineral and other resource exploitation. Some modernists have wrongly claimed that colonialism benefited African women by raising "the living and educational standards of African women and ultimately freeing women from the drudgery of farm labor and the oppression embedded in African customs" (Aina, 1998:73). However, such claims can never mask its disastrous impact on the lives of African people, particularly women.

The cataclysmic impact of colonialism on the lives of African women and men's lives is well documented (Fanon, 1963; Shava, 2012; Adhikari, 2013). History records Africa's colonisation

by powerful imperial European nations in the 19<sup>th</sup> century who divided and parcelled out the continent into colonies they exploited for resource exploitation and other benefits (Fanon, 1963). Their superior military power allowed them to establish political, fiscal and judicial systems. The subjugation and exploitation of a country for one's benefit is the definition of colonialism adopted in this study. Frantz Fanon has defined colonialism as a system where "the foreigner coming from another country imposed his rule by means of guns and machines" (1963:31). South Africa and Zimbabwe confronted British colonialism and its white supremacist policies in the nineteenth century. In 1948, the white colonizers in South Africa introduced apartheid, a system of political governance that imposed racial classification of people as well as sought to "regulate the population using received notions of racial difference" (Adhikari, 2013:13). Colonialism and apartheid played prominent roles in Zimbabwe and South Africa in producing cruel racial bigotry and in moulding ideas of separateness between white and black (Adhikari, 2013). Apartheid/colonialism's political system of domination caused so much havoc on the African people and their livelihoods as the following paragraphs show.

The onset of colonial occupation and racial supremacist ideology in Southern Africa dates back to the period of

Dutch colonization of the Cape.... British colonialism expanded from its Cape colonial base into the subcontinent in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century under the twin influences of the 'scramble for Africa' and the development of large-scale mining in Southern Africa (Adhikari, 2013:12).

The marauding colonizers barged onto the African scene and pillaged it for their selfish gain, disrespecting the African people already on the land. "The colonial period did not help women... [but] meant unmitigated suffering" (Aidoo, 1998:44) for the women who were already burdened by African patriarchal structures. They acutely felt colonial oppression through a number of ways: the land policies pushed Africans into very poor areas which could hardly support life and were breeding grounds for so much poverty; the introduction of paid labour changed the traditional African ways of production; exclusionary labour recruitment policies took African men into the mines, farms and cities to work for exploitative white men, leaving women doing

all the domestic chores on the home front where their critical labour was unremunerated, and many others. Many literary texts such as Ngcobo's *And They Didn't Die* (1999), Yvonne Vera's *Without a Name* (1994) and many others all depict the ruthlessness of the European colonizers in their treatment of the African people. They have particularly emblematised how the marauding European invaders plundered and forcibly pushed the African population from fertile and productive land to rocky, sandy areas. The impoverished racially defined residential areas where many Africans find themselves today, in which survival has been extremely difficult for both African women and men, were a creation of the Europeans who shunted Africans to areas that were not only overcrowded but unfit for human habitation (Shava, 2012). Banana has described the Rhodesian (now Zimbabwe) experience in the following terms:

The Africans were expelled from their choice land and through a system of land segregation were confined to areas of poor soils and unreliable rainfall. For example, the first reserves allocated to the Ndebele people in the early 1890s, Gwaai and Shangaan, were so barren, remote and uninhabitable that they were better described as 'cemeteries', not homes (Banana, 1989: 31).

The presence of the soldier and police (in the new colonial state) who spoke the language of force in a colonial set up coerced the dominated African people to 'respect' the established order as highlighted by Fanon: "the policeman and the soldier, by their immediate presence and their frequent and direct action maintain[ed] contact with the native and advise[d] him by means of rifle-butts and napalm not to budge" (1963:29). Therefore, the white colonizer used military power and through coercion, *his* colonial hegemony was established.

Parallels can be drawn between colonialism and patriarchy. Both systems have been perpetuated by use of coercion and revolved around unfair claims of superiority by certain members of society and their domination of the other. Thus, a "core element" that links these systems of domination is the concept of control of the other and the fear that this control produces in the minds of those controlled (Johnson, 2014). Those who coerced others within patriarchy and colonialism were almost always men. While patriarchy has promoted male privilege, colonial imperialism was aimed at promoting ideas of white racial supremacy and the exclusion of the

non-white. Respect for colonial order, enforced by the armed policemen and soldiers, served “to create around the exploited person an atmosphere of submission and inhibition which lightens the task of policing considerably” (Fanon, 1963:29). Thus, the subordinated people ended up complying with the terms of their subordination because the use of force left them little freedom for dissent. Through military might the colonial powers dispossessed the African people of their fertile land and shunted into poor overcrowded pieces of land and poverty. In this way, Africans were excluded from crucial economic activities that could have improved their conditions of life.

Colonialism in Southern Africa created inequalities between whites and blacks, with white men at the top of the racial organisation. The fact that power was vested in the hands of men - albeit white men - exposes colonialism as a different kind of patriarchy - colonial patriarchy - which operated at a macro-level of society where white male masculinity dominated all other masculinities. The subordination of African men underpins the point that men are also unequal even amongst themselves as some have faced subordination by other men. Through loss of land and displacement, African people’s belonging to the land of birth was severely threatened. In South Africa, Cosmas Desmond has described the poor treatment of African people by the white colonizers in the displacement and relocation of the Africans in his book *The Discarded People* (1971). The title of the book underlines the ugliness of the apartheid system’s abuse and neglect of African people who were banished to arid resettlement areas that could hardly support survival. Desmond’s book exposed the apartheid South African government’s forced removal and resettlement of Africans from what they called “‘black spots’ in white areas” to barren, desolate and remote areas set aside as “homelands” (Freeman 1973:344).

Colonial conquest led to African people being dispossessed of their land and to being displaced. Denying African people their land rights meant denying them the means of survival. Colonial displacement of African people seemed blind to the fact that land is a crucial factor that enables people to be productive and survive. Banishing people from fertile to unproductive land is akin to closure of living space for them because the African people received no compensation for the lost land and livelihoods.

To entrench colonialism, various laws were passed. In Zimbabwe, such laws included the Land Apportionment Act of 1930, the Native Land Husbandry Act of 1951 and many others. These

laws treated African people as strangers in their country of birth. The colonial policies and laws in Zimbabwe, just like in South Africa, produced inequalities and created exclusionary physical boundaries for the white people. In South Africa, some of the catastrophic laws included the Native Reserve Location Act of 1902, the Natives Land Act of 1913, the Slums Clearance Act of 1934 which “enabled municipalities to forcibly remove people who were settled in areas that were considered to be slums”, the notorious Group Areas Act (No:41) of 1950 which “permitted the government to establish separate residential areas based on race”, the Natives Resettlement Act of 1954 “which gave the government power to remove African land owners and tenants with legal rights in urban freehold areas,” the Black Communities Development Act (N0: 4) of 1984 which “allowed the government, at its discretion, to revoke areas that were previously classified as established for settlement” and many others (*South African History Online*, 2016). All these laws passed by the invading colonial forces were an excuse to legitimize the systematic dispossession of African people and affirming white people’s hold over African way of life. These legislations did not only dislodge African people from fertile and productive land that had been theirs before colonial invasion but also denied them rights to own land in urban areas. All this severely limited African people’s rights and agency. Thus, the apartheid/colonial legislations which created space for white people excluded African people - both women and men - and threatened them with death. Sofola has argued that another serious impact of colonialism was that it destroyed the healthy dual system of governance that had existed in most African societies and eroded whatever little power that African women had had (1998):

dislodged African men from their previous positions of power, [and] the African men would in turn grab whatever was left of power by dislodging their female counterparts from their own positions of power. As a result, the male managed to carve out a niche in the new dispensation and within it managed to maintain a continuous link with his essence, thus ensuring a stronger sense of self. This demotion of African womanhood has produced the contemporary African women who are to a large extent disoriented, weakened, and rendered ineffective and irrelevant (1998:52).

Thus, her view is that, colonialism reshaped African patriarchy and worsened African women’s conditions.

What the impact of colonialism shown above illustrates is that, in as much as African patriarchy is a critical system of domination that requires analysis in the examination of the abuse and marginalisation of African women, we still cannot ignore “the importance of [colonialism, imperialism] class and race... in configuring gender relations” (Mama, 2001:63). Eyayu Bayu has underscored a similar view as she has stated:

Third World feminism considers gender discrimination neither the sole nor perhaps the primary locus of oppression of Third World women. According to them, other types of oppression like racism and economic exploitation also [need] to be defeated (2019:54).

Thus, postcolonial feminists are not fighting against patriarchal gender oppression only but against all forms of oppression that have intersected with it to undermine and marginalize women, including colonialism. African feminists argue that the different systems of privilege are inseparable (Mama, 2012). This locates the postcolonial African feminist’s call for “a much more integrative approach to the understanding of the multiple systems of oppression” and how they have worked within and alongside each other to oppress, exploit and abuse women (Chukukere, 1998:134).

It is of critical significance that colonialism as a system of domination maintained the same patriarchal attitudes and prejudices. This explains why “[c]entral to contemporary feminist debates is a growing recognition that sexism, racism, and class exploitation relate in a dialectical way to subjugate women across societies and ethnic groups” (Aina, 1998:66). Analyses of the oppression of women need to analyse the links between different systems of oppression if a true account of the oppression of women is to be produced. Although different systems of privilege and domination have often been viewed as patriarchy’s support systems, this study argues that they are actually forms of patriarchy since male domination and privilege remains a constant invariable in all of them. For instance, colonialism in Africa was a form of patriarchy as it reflected the same “underlying factor in patriarchy [which] is power and status” held by men (Ifechelobi, 2014:18). In colonialism, it was white men who dominated over everyone else, white

women, African women and men. This shows how patriarchy has continued to evolve (or rather, worsen) through colonialism, as it adopted new forms of dominating, exploiting and repressing many more millions of people, and vast lands and resources. This underscores the evolving nature of patriarchy, that has simply varied “in time and space; it changes over time, and is inflected by class, race, ethnic, religious and global imperial relationships” (Wanyeki, 2017:2). The inter-relationships between patriarchy and other systems of oppression imply that, in order to challenge patriarchy effectively, then, the other systems of oppression that have intersected with patriarchy and inflected it should also be challenged (African Feminist Forum, 2006). Such a conceptualisation of how different systems of oppression have worked as support systems for patriarchy provides the framework within which to express the totality of exploitative relations which have affected African women (Wanyeki, 2017; African Feminist Forum, 2006).

Walby raised two important points that help address other layers in this conceptualization of patriarchy, in her argument that there are:

two main forms of patriarchy: public patriarchy and private patriarchy. Where private patriarchy contributes to gender inequalities within the home, public patriarchy preserves and perpetuates these inequalities in employment, education, organizations and government (1990:20).

This construction of public patriarchy indicates that not just the domestic sphere, or even the social spheres, but the whole state infrastructure is guilty of upholding patriarchal values and norms, where women are not accorded equal treatment with men, resulting in the creation of uneven access and distribution of resources, wealth and privileges.

What is critical to note is that although patriarchy might have assumed many shapes and forms in different societies at different times in history- whether it is white patriarchy, colonial patriarchy, African patriarchy, heteropatriarchy, traditional patriarchy or modern patriarchy, it has always retained its principal character: the promotion of male privilege. This underscores hooks’ argument (citing Clause 111 of ‘The Redstocking Manifesto’):

We identify the agents of our oppression as men. Male supremacy is the oldest,

most basic form of domination. All other forms of exploitation and oppression (racism, capitalism, imperialism, etc) are extensions of male supremacy (1984:68).

These views mark a critical departure from earlier white hegemonic feminist's misrepresentations of gender relations, where women have been erroneously portrayed as if all are oppressed only along patriarchal gender lines, ignoring the impact of other intersecting systems of oppressions in some women's lives (Nnaemeka, 1998; Sandoval, 2003; Bunjun, 2010).

The impact of white colonial patriarchy in Africa was experienced differently by different social groups. To begin with, colonial patriarchy created colonial states where "the dominant structure of power, control and domination" (Moser, 1993:191) was in the hands of white men who were the most privileged group. Needless to say, both African women and men were disempowered within colonial patriarchy. The subordination of African men within colonial patriarchy demonstrates that men have never been equal within patriarchy even if all "men as a group benefit from the association of masculinity and privilege and hold greater power than women" (Lorentzen, 2014:17). Napikoski has affirmed this view: "In patriarchy [and colonialism], there is also a hierarchy among the men" (2019:3). Thus, even if men are expected, by patriarchal normativity, to hold power in relation to women, some endure subordination. This portends the existence of different forms of (men's) masculinities where white hegemonic masculinity has dominated and marginalised other 'masculinities'. Consequently, "[w]e can no longer speak about masculinity as if all men wear the same masculine clothes" (Lorentzen, 2011:112). Some men have endured disempowerment within patriarchy but their plight is often overlooked. Johnson has further explained this issue:

[o]ne of the trickiest paradoxes is that although patriarchy privileges men, many if not most men do not *feel* privileged, powerful, or in control of much of anything, especially at work. To judge from what many men say about their lives, they often feel victimized, deprived, put down, disposable, and trapped (2014:160).

This is one aspect within gender studies that has received less attention. However, both Ngcobo and Dangarembga deal with this issue in their novels.

The inequalities between white men and African men within colonial discourses, as highlighted above, have shown how much African masculinities also require liberation from white colonialism. The African men's changed social position within the colonial context underscores colonialism's "world view which believed in the absolute superiority of the [white] human over the [racialised] nonhuman and the subhuman... and the modern or progressive over the traditional or the savage" (Nandy, 1983:5). Colonialism and its racial basis were key drivers of the disempowerment and exclusion of African men: "[w]hen you examine at close quarters the colonial context, it is evident that what parcels out the world is to begin with the fact of belonging to or not belonging to a given race" (Fanon 1963:30-31). African men lost the status they had had in pre-colonial structures and found themselves under-valued together with their African women within the colonial racial hegemony that located white above black, including placing white women above black men. Colonialism treated Black masculinity as secondary to white masculinity, as if African men were "insufficiently masculine" in relation to white men (Johnson, 2014:190). White male masculinity presented itself as the ideal masculinity in colonial Africa as it marginalised and dominated African men, women and children and even elevated the white woman over the non-white during the continent's colonial past. African men have been known to transfer their frustration with their own objectification to the women around them and, in this way, colonialism created a vicious cycle of gender violence (Lorentzen, 2014). African feminists have thus argued that rather than talk about masculinity in the singular, it is necessary to refer to masculinities in the plural because the dominant white masculinity has not only subjugated and marginalized women and children, but men too (Sofola, 1998; Aina, 1998). The condition of African men in racial discourses explains why African feminists on the continent or in the diaspora, like other Third World feminists, challenged "[s]eparatist feminist rhetoric [that has] suggested that all men shared equally in male privilege, that all men reap positive benefits from sexism" (hooks, 1984:73) to rethink their claims. They have criticized such attempts that have masked the reality of the "poor or working class man who has been socialized via sexist

ideology to believe that there are privileges and powers he should possess solely because he is male” when there are none for the subordinated men (hooks, 1984:73). This means that such men should forge alliances with women to fight systems of oppression.

Although African men were oppressed and marginalised under colonial patriarchy, African women’s situation was far worse as they were already burdened under African patriarchy. The oppression of African men also meant that African women experienced further disempowerment through the marginalisation of their men. This is a neglected area in many social analyses, including many gender analyses, not least because few men are aware of this:

The fact that many of the world’s poorest men are also disempowered - albeit in different ways from women - compared to men with more income and better social positions is nearly always left out of gender analyses and discussions but is a central issue in terms of how men view their own sense of power, and whether they view themselves as allies or beneficiaries of gender equality (Lorentzen, 2014:17).

This is a crucial issue that has impacted on women’s lived realities in very serious ways:

Men’s experiences of powerlessness are harmful not only for them but also for the women in their lives. Studies have found, for example, that men’s frustration with their perceived lack of power can lead them to adopt certain behaviors that give them a sense of power over others, including... violence against female partners (Lorentzen, 2014:17).

Many African men have gone on to vent out their anger and frustrations of their own subordination by white men and other men on the hapless bodies and lives of African women, indicating how men’s own inequalities have added to the impact of the oppression confronted by many African women.

However, patriarchy has attempted to cover up men's own inequalities in patriarchy by distracting the majority of men through its homogenizing claims that men are the dominant gender. Being the dominant gender has been a ploy to hide how oppression is pervasive and embraces women and men who should forge alliances against all systems of oppression. This thesis' discussion of marginalized men should not be mistaken as intent on proving men as equally oppressed because women remain the most oppressed social category, whether as individuals or as a collective, and this is because of their position in the gender hierarchy. Although some men may have endured the impact of some oppressions of hierarchical social structures alongside women (as evidenced by the impact of colonialism on beleaguered African women and men), that should not blind us to the reality that throughout history, "women have been exposed more to disadvantage and marginalisation than men" (Coltri, 2017:13). The inequalities between men (whether within racial discourses or African patriarchal structures) are important to this study because of their attendant impact on the lives of women. For instance, Dangarembga portrays these inequalities within African patriarchy through Babamukuru's domineering presence even over his young brother, Jeremiah, and the entirety of his family. The patriarchal paradox where men are unequal has great potential to bolster the feminist struggle for gender equality as it may lead marginalised men to realise how their own subjugation has often been covered up. This may inspire them to join women to challenge the social, political and economic structures that undermine them and their families.

There are important messages that the racialized groups have learnt. The experiences of the most racialized men within colonialism have shown their women "that they have more in common with men of their race and/or class groups than bourgeois white women.... They have had the experiences of struggling with them for a better life" (hooks, 1984:69). This parallels what Connell has asserted: "there are also many situations where groups of men who feel disadvantaged by the existing power structures see their interests as more closely aligned with the women in their communities than with other men" (2005:1809). Though this does not displace the reality that, within colonial discourses, African women, particularly, were the group most affected in the new hierarchical structures that fuelled a sense of inequalities between them

and their men and privileged white women, it also revealed potential for men and women to work together for the good of their families.

Within the new colonial states in Southern Africa and other parts of the continent, colonialism was not the only form of tyranny and exploitation, besides patriarchy, that was confronted by women. Colonialism

was accompanied by diverse structural, coercive and cultural forms of oppression, which has meant that most people in the world, and particularly African women, have experienced many forms of tyranny, including racism, sexism and underdevelopment (Narismulu, 2012:68).

This suggests the relatedness and intersectionality of different forms of oppression. One form of oppression that accompanied colonialism was capitalism. In order to fully exploit and plunder the wealth that Africa had, the colonisers grabbed land, mineral resources and disposed Africans. This produced social classes- which further complicated African women's lives. "Under capitalism, the class that owns or controls the means of producing wealth is the dominant class" (Johnson, 2014:116). Unfortunately for the Africans, colonial/apartheid governments took away land from them and so they neither owned nor controlled the means of production. Colonialism's capitalist structures in Africa saw the white settlers (white male patriarchs) dominating the class hierarchy, with Africans (women and men) systemically and legislatively excluded from control over the means of production. This forced the subordinated African men to sell their labour. The situation was worse for the African women because the colonial labour recruitment policies drew influence from patriarchy and systemic racism in their treatment of African women, who were relegated to the bottom of the exploitative systems.

Capitalism affected African ways of life profoundly. To begin with, it changed the world of work for African women and men by restricting women's participation in paid labour and confining them to the domestic space. As the white colonial/apartheid government made legislation that pushed Africans from their land, and imposed taxes that required people to work in the colonial

capitalist system to pay these taxes, African men became wage earners who left their homes to work in white mines, farms, factories and got absorbed in the world of capitalist work. They were isolated from their spouses, children and their pre-colonial roles in the home. Thus, the colonial intrusion onto the African space and Western domination of global politics re-sculptured and re-defined African men and women's gender relations in a different context, bringing racial politics into play, and new forms of earning a living:

a characteristic feature of colonial... economies was the restructuring of local production systems to produce a male wage worker – female domestic worker couple... it has generally produced the identification of masculinity with the public realm and the money economy and of femininity with domesticity (Connell, 2009:163).

Generally, colonial labour practices locked many African women out of the world of paid work, making them the “reserve labor force for capitalism” (Brooke, 2013:41). Such restrictions on the formal job market did not just take away from women the right to equality with their men, but it also restricted their opportunities to be self-reliant since they had been dumped on unproductive pieces of land. Thus an expectation was placed on them to remain economically dependent on men, as if men were doing women a great favour.

Within the context of colonial capitalism, African women's lives centred on the family, and making a home where they had been forcibly relocated, and eking crops from the barren land so that they might survive (e.g, Desmond, 1971). But their critical labour in the home was not remunerated. Just like life under industrial capitalism, the onset of colonial capitalism in Africa meant that “[m]ale privilege now depended on controlling capital or earning the money that families needed to purchase goods and services in a rapidly expanding market economy” (Johnson, 2014:62). This reveals the complicity of colonial capitalism and racial politics in constructing some of the gender relations of African women and men. The different systems of privilege are closely related and inseparable in their impact on African women. This is why Ratele has argued, “Although it is theoretically possible to separate gender from race, in everyday reality, gender relations and identities cannot easily be disentangled from race relations and identities in the lives of black subjects” (2015:150). There was some kind of ‘feminisation’ of poverty given that African women were largely excluded except from the most marginal and

insecure forms of paid labour, as farm labourers, domestic workers, and cleaners. This view of the colonial state, its policies and social organisation in Southern Africa underpins Mayer's argument that the nation, gender and sexuality are all constructed and that every nation or state embeds culturally-constructed hierarchies and involves exercise of power (2000). Thus, the colonial state was closely related to gender and sexuality as highlighted by McClintock's argument that nations are not merely "[p]hantasmagoria of the mind but are historical practices through which social difference is both invented and performed" (1995:353).

In apartheid South Africa, what made the situation worse for African women was that they were denied mobility in towns without passes, which were linked to employment. This left them with no rights of domicile in the urban centres where their husbands worked:

The development of an industrial economy in South Africa initially affected African men and African women in different ways. Men were required as labour whereas women under a migrant labour system were chiefly responsible for the maintenance of household, taking over more and more of the duties traditionally carried out by men in their capacity as head of the household (Lodge, 1983:151).

This colonial set up reshaped African patriarchal relations and made "a mockery of family life, cutting an impassable chasm between husband and wife" (Bernstein 1978:13). During the colonial period, African women, "although present, were not conceptualized as rightful inhabitants: there was, literally, no urban place a woman, especially black, could comfortably claim as her own" (Primorac, 2003:105). Such colonial structures affected African women more than any other group as it meant that women "occupied the residual and unspecified category of the Other" in the colonial hierarchy (Oyewumi, 2013:122).

Clearly, African women's subordinate class positions within the colonial/apartheid state have not been because of what they have done or not done. It was because the colonial/apartheid/capitalist system was also a patriarchy that differentiated African women from men and refused them mobility and the chance to produce their own material realities, making them economic dependents since they were offered little room to be economically independent.. By so doing,

colonialism affirmed the same oppressive patriarchal tendencies that muted women's voices and agency. This shows how colonialism and capitalism continued to drive patriarchy, reflecting a huge connection between these two systems of privilege and domination. Therefore, "[e]ven though both male and female children of Mother Africa were assailed by the invasion of the male-centered and male-dominated European and Arab cultures, the female suffered the greater damage" (Sofola, 1998:52). This reaffirms how colonialism, imperialism and capitalism have all perpetuated patriarchy, entrenching its inequalities, which worsened the plight of African women by destabilizing their social standing, their material, economic, social, marital, familial security and self-worth. In the end, the African woman became a victim of various systems of domination and privilege that operated simultaneously within and alongside each other: African patriarchy, colonial patriarchy and imperial economics. What has been especially deplorable and shocking about the conspiracy of these different systems of privilege in their neglect of the needs and concerns of the marginalised African women has been their

arrogant freedom to substitute our [the dominant group's] own experience for that of the other, to assume their experience is not important enough to consider, that they need or want only what we let them have, that we are all that really matters. In this way, we see them as estranged from us (rather than us from them or all of us from one another), as 'other', as objects in relation to us as subjects (Johnson, 2014:188).

This reveals that patriarchal normativity has been evident in virtually all systems of privilege which have all unfairly treated women as the nonhuman 'other'. What the argument above underlines is that African patriarchy did not become defunct simply because colonialism subordinated both African women and men. Rather, more forms of exploitation, abuse and oppression were added which worsened the African women's plight. It, therefore, means that, in this study, the notion of challenging patriarchal normativity is broadened to encompass all systems of oppression, including colonialism and its capitalist system which have propped up patriarchy by replaying attitudes of privileging men which have left most women further removed.

The serious impact of colonialism, racism and capitalism in reducing the quality of the lives of racialised women, and particularly black women, has provoked many feminist scholars, including Nnaemeka (1998), Ogundipe-Leslie (1994), Ien Ang (2003), Chandra Mohanty (2003), Sandoval (2003), Adamson (1988) to challenge Eurocentric approaches to studying the oppression of women that have situated patriarchal gender as if it was the singular site of oppression. In search of unity among women, white middle-class feminism had erroneously sought to unite all women under the false impression of a global sisterhood, around claims of common oppression of women (hooks, 1984; Mohanty, 2003; Sandoval, 2003). There is a huge problem with the white middle-class feminist perspective that makes claims of a common oppression and “solidifies gender as the ultimate oppression” (Bunjun, 2010:117) because it ignores other forms of oppression and tyranny that some women have had to deal with.

According to hooks, the

idea of ‘common oppression’ was a false and corrupt platform disguising and mystifying the true nature of women’s varied and complex social reality. Women are divided by sexist attitudes, racism, class privilege, and a host of other prejudices (1984:44).

Views of a ‘common oppression’ have overlooked how some women are plagued by many other forms of oppression that privileged white women have not confronted but which cannot be ignored if an honest analysis of the oppression of women is to be produced (Mohanty, 2003; Bunjun 2010). The different systems of privilege have produced situations and “positions that offer dissimilar power, opportunities, and experiences to [women] members” (Wood, 1997:251). Both Ngcobo and Dangarembga represent these issues in the experiences of their main characters, Jezile and Tambudzai respectively. African feminists, like postcolonial feminists elsewhere, have unmasked the limitations within hegemonic Euro-centric feminism that has confined the oppression of women to patriarchy. Thus, (in their conceptualization of the oppression of women) “[c]ontemporary feminists are therefore seeking a more pluralistic approach that recognizes complexities and differences in women’s life experiences” (Aina, 1998:66; Lorde, 1981). They have demonstrated that the different experiences between white and non-white women, rich and poor women, religious and non-religious women, etc. indicate that in any analysis of women’s lived realities, “one cannot simply merge all women under an unrealistic expectation of sisterhood [on the grounds of a common gender oppression], but

instead recognise and respect the differences that exist as a result of these diversities” (Kolawole, 2011:13).

The reality of women’s heterogeneity of experience highlighted above means that there may be common as well as contrasting experiences of oppression between women. As a consequence of these differences where some women confront more forms of oppression than others, it has been argued that “[p]rivileged feminists have largely been unable to speak to, with and for diverse groups of women because they either do not understand fully the interrelatedness of sex, race, and class oppression or refuse to take this inter-relatedness seriously” (hooks, 1984:14). This is why this study selected literature by African women to study African women’s experiences. Acknowledgement of the differences between different women groups should not be misconstrued as divisive of the feminist struggle. It actually has the potential to unite women by producing a more authentic analysis of how the oppression of women has panned out. Different women’s experiences essentially make feminists “mindful of the multiplicity of perspectives and the need for accommodation” of each other (Nnaemeka, 1998:3). According to Nnaemeka, there is need to “delineate the convergences and affinities as well as tease out the differences and paradoxes for a better understanding” of the way women have been oppressed 1998:3). Thus, differences should not be obliterated. Drawing from all this,

[w]hat emerges from listening to the African women... is not the necessity or desirability of a monolithic, representative political voice, but the eagerness to recognize and promote a common ground while respecting nuances that make the emergence of a monolithic impossible (1998:3).

Recognition and respect for plurality of women’s experiences will help build solidarity among women as this is an inclusive approach to examining and addressing the oppression and marginalisation of women.

Apart from the above, recognition of ways in which different oppressions are related and operate simultaneously in the lives of affected women ensures that individual women’s experiences of oppression cease to be viewed as private and isolated but as related to other systems of oppression apparent in other women’s lives (Hill-Collins, 1990). According to Moraga, such an

approach will solve the “danger [that] lies in ranking the oppressions” as if certain forms of oppression are less important (1979:205). Attitudes of ranking oppressions have often fueled many women’s claims to innocence in inflicting injury to fellow women’s experiences of oppression (Moraga, cited in Bunjun, 2010). Many a woman has been accused of believing “that her own claim of subordination is the most urgent and that she is not implicated in the subordination of other women” (Bunjun, 2010:123). This tendency towards personal justification and vindication in the oppression of other women has been termed the ‘race to innocence’ by Mary Louise Fellows and Sherene Razack (cited by Bunjun, 2010). The challenge with the ‘race to innocence’ is that it leaves the various systems of oppression intact and compromises chances for women’s solidarity. To attain solidarity, there is need for racialised women groups to realise that

[w]hite women are not the only group who must confront racism if Sisterhood [solidarity] is to emerge. Women of color must confront our absorption of white supremacist beliefs, “internalized racism” which may lead us to feel safe-hate, to vent anger and rage at injustice at one another rather than at oppressive forces, to hurt and abuse one another, or to lead one ethnic group to make no effort to communicate with another. Often Asian, Latina, or Native American Indiana groups find they can bond with whites by hating blacks. Black people respond to this by perpetuating racist stereotypes (hooks, 1984:55).

This underscores that *all* women should assume responsibility to challenge systems of domination which seek to divide and undermine their struggle. Solidarity amongst women is critical in the development of a collective political consciousness against the oppressive systems that have produced their marginalisation for years. This solidarity is possible only if all women realise the relatedness of different systems that have oppressed them. Though solidarity among women is fundamental, the search for that solidarity should not deflect attention to the reality that some women have been affected by systems of oppression in more ways than others. This is underscored by hooks: “[w]omen are enriched when we bond with one another but we cannot develop sustaining ties or political solidarity using the model of Sisterhood created by bourgeois women’s liberationists” (1984:45) which ignores the diversity of experiences of oppression by different women and the interactions of different systems of oppression in different women’s lives.

Crenshaw has propounded the theory of intersectionality to help people understand and deal with the different systems of privilege and domination that have intersected in the oppression of women of colour (1993). Her argument is that although there are different forms of oppression based on race, gender, class and other categories of difference as highlighted above, these cannot be separated because they all overlap and are linked in intricate ways. It would be wrong to separate them because their impact is experienced simultaneously. Crenshaw's work tackles "the inadequacy of approaches which separate systems of oppression, isolating and focusing on one, while occluding the others" (1993:1244).

Crenshaw's theory of intersectionality has been used widely in different fields as it offers explanation on how different systems of oppression related to gender, race, class, religion and others intersect in some women's lives. Berger and Guidroz have cited Crenshaw's intersectionality theory and explained that her initial use of the term intersectionality was as a metaphor and that her intention

was simply looking at the ways all of these systems of oppression overlap. But more importantly, how in the process of that structural convergence rhetorical politics and identity politics - based on the idea that systems of subordination do not overlap - would abandon issues and causes and people who actually were affected by overlapping systems of subordination (2009:65).

The advocacy made by hooks (1984), Crenshaw (1993) and Sandoval's (2003) works for the recognition of the impact of the intersectionality of different systems of oppression especially in racialized women's lives emboldened many women feminists contestations of "white hegemonic feminism's omissions, and silences regarding their concerns, issues, and struggles in relation to essentialised notions of the personal is political and sisterhood" (Bunjun, 2010:119).

Drawing from the foregoing argument, it means that to address the oppression of women, it is critical to "situate women within the specificity of their historical and current lived experience politically, and socially as this informs us of not only similarities and differences but also the strengths and struggles among the category 'woman'" (Bunjun, 2010: 119). As suggested above, differences between women's experiences of oppression matter and need not be overlooked or glossed over. This is because these are the sites around which solidarity and alliances can be

forged. They provide information on how inequalities have not only existed between men and women but also between women who have also been “linked together in a variety of unequal relationships” as a result of colonialism, class and others (Oyewumi, 2003:3). This has been quite evident in colonial/apartheid Southern Africa. As a consequence of colonial attitudes, privileged white women often had a role in the abuse of African women in apartheid South Africa and colonial Zimbabwe. “Institutionalised racism, which deprived black women of basic rights and obstructed their access to the public sphere, also involved extensive exploitation by white women advancing their social positions while relying on black women’s labour” (Robbe, 2015:12). Due to colonialism, the gaps between African women and white privileged women (who were part of the group most empowered by apartheid, and which imposed and sustained apartheid) has therefore been enormous. The thesis will examine how Ngcobo and Dangarembga interrogate these issues as they examine issues of women’s emancipation and the potential for solidarity.

Today, the impact of colonialism and capitalism continues to be felt: “[w]ell into the twenty-first century the historical roles of colonial regimes across the African continent continue to impact on initiatives to secure women’s rights” (Narismulu, 2012:72). As a consequence of colonialism, “the remarkable difference is growing between North and South. Women from the North are harvesting the fruits of capitalism and global economy, whereas women from the South are all too often confronted with poverty and terrible labor conditions” (Bayu, 2019:54). Kirkegaard has also shown that the oppression of African women has continued even in the postcolonial dispensation because the

colonial myth... which fed European fantasies, wallets, corporations... [and] in Southern Africa, the ideal of frontier manliness- colonial masculinity- lives on in private as well as public relations. It manifests itself in the continually successful claim to power and authority by men (2007:115).

Neo-colonialism, a kind of ‘refurbished’ colonialism, has continued colonialism’s ideology long after African countries regained political independence. The mentality of dominating others produced by patriarchy, imperialism and colonialism continues today. This is why systems of domination should be challenged; otherwise gaps will continue to widen between women which will in turn weaken their solidarity. Today, one serious impact of all the different systems of

privilege on the lives of women is that “women have been separated from each other, mothers from daughters, white from black, rich from poor, old from young” (Coltri, 2017:11). The gaps and divisions that have separated them have not been produced by the women but by the social systems of privilege. This has divided women and weakened their struggles for equal representation. These gaps that have seen some women gain access to certain privileges denied others, cannot be ignored in the search for social justice, dialogue and transformation (Coltri, 2017). In their novels, Ngcobo and Dangarembga also look at various ways in which patriarchal normativity has transformed some women into its agents who police fellow women’s complicity. This suggests how deep the physical, emotional and psychological impact of patriarchal normativity has been on women, as it has conditioned them to behave and act in ways that have distanced them from their interests and to help entrench an oppressive status quo. Patriarchal normativity’s coercive force to influence women’s patterns of behaviour has given many women little choice but to conform to patriarchy’s hegemonic agenda. Thus, men have not always acted alone in perpetuating patriarchy because patriarchy has, paradoxically, also been perpetuated “by the victims themselves who are socialized to behave in ways that make them act in complicity with the status quo” (hooks, 1984:43). However, as long as women’s complicity is borne out of the use of violence, it cannot be construed as willing consent. Nevertheless, although the “terms of women’s participation differ dramatically from those that shape men’s, but it is participation, nonetheless” (Johnson, 2014:28). Therefore, women should be encouraged to conquer their fears and build solidarity to challenge their common oppression.

The secondary literature has also addressed the views of women being forced to act against their interests by systems of privilege. There is rich evidence of representations of women as accomplices to the patriarchal agenda: In a study of ‘the Shona conception of marriage through traditional bride-welcoming ceremonies, or *kupururudzira muroora*’, Maguraushe and Mukuhlani have examined how women have participated in producing ‘ideal’ wives for men among the Shona people of Zimbabwe. They condemn the fact that “It is women- the sisters and grandmothers of the groom- who teach a bride to be fearful of [and in] marriage. It is women who teach brides to thank their husbands for sex” (Kimari et al, 2014:6). Mama has pointed out that politicians have also conscripted women to serve their agendas:

[r]ecent history has demonstrated clearly that in Africa even the most

undemocratic regimes do not hesitate to involve women. Indeed many of them make particular efforts to mobilize women on their behalf. Women danced on the streets when Mobutu Seseko celebrated women within their traditional roles (2001:60).

Mama addresses some women's complicity in dictatorships and her views reflect a painful paradox of the oppressive systems of dominance that have led many women to participate in their own oppression and erasure. Even today, policies and programmes that seek to transform gender relations continue to face opposition in some countries from women as this reflects how patriarchal socialisation has conditioned their thinking (Ratele, 2015). All these examples underscore how very oppressive the violence embedded in patriarchal normativity has been. If left unchallenged, it will continue to (ab)use women against their common interests. After years of men's domination and their violence against women, many women need to adjust and cope with the changing gender relations and some even remain suspicious of openly supporting such policies lest they face the backlash of patriarchal victimisation. This is why this thesis seeks to examine representations of women as agents who are *capable* of undertaking and *fearlessly* resisting oppression, and who challenge men's multiple forms of domination.

In spite of all the forces of oppression around them, research shows that women have adopted different strategies and coping mechanisms to survive the patriarchal constraints (Kandiyoti, 1998) and limitations imposed by colonialism and capitalism. Kandiyoti has defined these survival strategies and coping mechanisms as 'bargaining' with patriarchy which has shaped women's gendered subjectivity and determined the nature of gender ideology in different contexts (1998). The different strategies and coping mechanisms adopted by women that particularly interest this study are those where women have challenged patriarchal normativity and intersecting systems of oppression to maximise their security and chances of safety within the ruthlessness of patriarchy and the coercive force of other intersecting systems of oppression. It is the strategies that women characters deploy as they negotiate their roles and identities that are the focus of the study. To challenge the continued oppression of women discussed above, the researcher has elected to carry out an interpretive analysis of Ngcobo's *And They Didn't Die* (1999) and Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* (1988).

I have chosen to rely on literature by women and not by men, because literature by men has often been criticised for (mis)representing women and men in ways that have reflected patriarchal thought (Mama, 2014). A major challenge with men's literature in the past, according to feminist women, pertain to how women's identities and roles have often been 'edited' to fit the mould of passivity and domesticity that patriarchal ideology expected of them (Zenenga, 2007). Imposition of restrictions to women even in a story of fiction reveals a heightened sense of repression meted on women in society. While male characters have usually been portrayed with subjectivity, autonomy and free sway to become whatever they chose, hero or villain in early men's literature, women characters have often been confined to playing and re-playing the same limited and uninspiring socially stereotyped roles (Schweickart, 2011). Johnson has underscored this view by observing that: "If you want a story about heroism, moral courage, spiritual transformation, endurance or any of the struggles that give human life its deepest meaning, men and masculinity are usually the terms in which you must see it... [and even] stories that focus on deep bonds of friendship - which men have a much tougher time forming than women do - are far more likely to focus on men than on women" (2014:10). This reveals displacement of women from occupying important roles and positions. Commenting on the impact of the displacement and misrepresentations of women evident in early literature by men, Patrocinio Schweickart says that

male characters were at the very least more interesting than women to the authors who invented them.... I would rather have been Hamlet than Ophelia, Tom Jones instead of Sophia Western and perhaps, despite Dostovoesky's intention, Raskolnikov not Sonia (2011:447).

Schweickart challenges discriminatory ideas in men's literature that have promoted maleness while marginalising women and womanhood, which she has blamed on the patriarchal thinking of male writers that created women characters who entrenched patriarchal thinking by negating women and undermining them. She has questioned male writers' integrity in such representations which have portrayed male characters as more interesting characters with the autonomy and freedom to roam the world while women were conversely constructed in ways

that limited their freedoms and undermined their agency through the roles women in these stories. Such displacement of women in life (and literature) led Mary Wollstonecraft to challenge women to resist their negation in her book *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*:

women [need] to stand up for their rights and not allow their male-dominated society to define what it means to be a woman. Women themselves must take the lead and articulate who they are, and what role they can and will play in society. Most importantly, they must reject the patriarchal assumptions that women are inferior to men (cited by Aliman, 2010:3).

This is an early feminist's call on women writers to revise such misrepresentations of women and construct women with the strength or courage that invites appreciation and transcends patriarchal stereotypes and attitudes that have reined in their desires to be whoever they want to be. Many early African feminist women writers were inspired by the need to challenge the misrepresentations suffered by African women in the construction of their woman characters. According to Nnaemeka, this is what inspired one of the early women writers, Nwapa:

Flora Nwapa notes that she was inspired by the strong, powerful, socially relevant women who were part of the landscape of Igboland where she grew up and to whom she paid homage in her works by reinscribing them in African literature after a long history of marginalization by Nigerian male writers (1998:13).

These issues, concerns, debates, and views raised in this literature review will inform my analysis of the novels.

My selection of Ngcobo and Dangarembga's novels has also been influenced by African feminists' contestations against misrepresentations of African women by white-authored and male-authored literature that has been accused of defining African women's experiences on European or patriarchal terms: Until recently, the literature about Africa was largely shaped by the ideas of Europeans

who have invented their own images of Africa. These notions and images of African peoples, societies, institutions, religious beliefs, and artistic expressions were really concerned not with African identities, but with cultural samples related to European theories, European history, and European political and economic interests and ideas"

(Jell-Bahlsen, 1998:102).

This marks a refusal by African feminists to be other defined or to write conventional literature that derives only from European and patriarchal experiences, viewpoints and ideologies. This underlines the intention of this study which is based on literature by Southern African women writers who challenge patriarchal normativity and its misrepresentations of women.

## **2.2 Approaches to the Study and Research Methods**

To address the concerns that underlie this study, the researcher adopted an interpretive content analysis of two purposively sampled feminist Southern African literary works: Laretta Ngcobo's *And They Didn't Die* (1999) and Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* (1988). Existing literature was also reviewed from published secondary texts and articles to help conceptualise how the oppression of women has been conceived. The novels have been purposively selected for study because both represent women's resistance to their conditions of oppression, depicting their agency to challenge oppressive normative behaviours and this resonates well with the stated objectives of the study.

Content analysis as an approach to research study, is based on written material that already exists and as a research methodology, its major strength is that it allows "detailed description of a phenomenon" (Mugenda and Mugenda, 2003:174). Providing room for detailed description of concerns under study is fundamental because it, in turn, allows a number of analytic techniques that include textual analysis to be employed in the construction of particular realities (Vanderstoep and Johnston, 2009). This is important to this study where findings are presented and analysed in the narrative form. Critics have, however, pointed out as a weakness of content analysis that it is "difficult to ascertain the validity of the data" since the data already pre-exists in written form before the research is carried out (Mugenda and Mugenda, 2003:174). Related to that, critics have also argued that the data collected through content analysis might have lost currency by the time of study since the information is already pre-recorded and a lot could have happened to transform the situation (Mugenda and Mugenda, 2003). In response, many literary scholars have underlined the quintessential role that literature inhabits in any society. Kaarsholm, for instance, has stated:

literature and writers may work to transmit ideology and... are also important in building democratic potentials from below, and in destabilizing powerfully established structures of mental authoritarianism- be they racist, colonial, patriarchal, traditional, the result of wartime intimidation, or imposed by an authoritarian post-colonial state (2005:4).

The oppression of women is not an issue that has lost its currency but a continuing challenge that society still grapples with. Given this study's interest in the representations of women characters who challenge oppressive social structures that disadvantage women and their capacity to transform oppressive gender relations, it means that literature can be a crucial vehicle for social analysis since these issues are portrayed in literature. It has also been argued that representations made in literature can effectively be deployed to examine and redress gender imbalances and this justifies this study's approach to study (Chikonzo and Chifamba, 2018; Primorac, 1993). The two novels represent real historical periods and the issues are pertinent to society today. The power of literature lies in that real life experiences influence its writing. Literary art has been viewed "as the product of a particular milieu, sometimes embodying a society's most deeply held convictions, sometimes questioning these values, sometimes disguising an artist's own ambivalence with regard to these matters, but never disengaged from the claims of time or social order" (Diamond and Edwards, 1988:ix). This underscores Shklovsky's argument, as cited by Berlina, that "The purpose of art is to impart the sensation of things as they are perceived not as they are known" (Berlina, 2016:20). Thus, in this study, the researcher undertakes content analysis of literary texts by black Southern African women writers as an approach to studying emerging identities of women who challenge the values of oppressive systems. Issues of gender equality are very topical today and so content analysis is justified as an approach to study.

The interpretive paradigm has been adopted by this study because it gives the researcher room for his own reader-response to the issues in the primary texts, enabling him to deduce own conclusions from the reading. The interpretive paradigm asserts that: "The text - the words on the page - has been written by the writer, but meaning is always a matter of interpretation" (Schweickart, 2011:458). In order to improve on the reader's quality of interpretation, Vanderstoep and Johnston emphasise the need for the researcher to connect with the views of the community of readers as the validity of content analysis is contingent on the agreement of related

researchers in the field (2009). Thus, to enrich this current study, a recursive literature review of other scholars and secondary works will be continuously integrated throughout the whole study whenever this is required and this is opposed to a dedicated literature review (Ridley, 2015).

This study is not the first to grapple with issues of women's concerns and their needs as many feminists have deliberated about the issues that concern women (Aina, 1998; Chukukere, 1998; Jell-Bahsen, 1998). Jane Parpart has argued that when analysing women's needs and concerns, it is crucial "to differentiate between practical (ie. specific, daily) gender needs and strategic (long-term, empowerment) needs for women" (1995:21). Her categorization of women's needs into two: practical gender needs and strategic needs- does not imply that some needs are more important than others. It is a way of underscoring the potential for the heterogeneity of certain needs, which she has termed 'practical or specific daily needs', which may differ between different women. This heterogeneity of women's practical needs should be appreciated by all women as a fact of life as it underlines the reality that there are different burdens and concerns that weigh on women in different socio-political and economic contexts. African and Third World feminists such as Aina (1998), Chukukere (1998), Nnaemeka (1998) and Mama (2001) for instance, have all highlighted the heterogeneity of the needs of women in the North and those in the South. Owing to this heterogeneity in women's needs and concerns, "Feminists in the South began looking for their own answers to women's developmental problems" and gender-related challenges instead of relying on solutions proffered by those in the North with different needs and understanding of women's challenges (Parpart, 1995:4). Thus, when discussing women's needs, it is essential to have greater sensitivity to the differences in women's socio-political and economic contexts which have produced different 'daily' needs and concerns among them (Connelly et al, 1995). Because women's socio-political and economic circumstances are different, their daily needs and concerns are, therefore, not necessarily the same. For instance, the "African woman today is concerned... with the specific immediate needs of surviving famine, hunger, drought, disease, and war" (Aina, 1998:71). These are not necessarily daily needs for women in developed Western countries where there is relative peace and the health standards are better. This shows how women in different contexts may not have similar immediate needs. However, the strategic needs (long term empowerment needs) of the different women may not be different at all (Parpart, 1995). For instance, the differences of

women's socio-political and economic circumstances notwithstanding, ultimately, all women share long term needs that undergird the feminist struggle: liberation from different forms of tyranny and brutality that have undermined their lives and complicated their livelihoods. Thus, the global need that unites women is the transformation of inequalities imbedded in social structures and organisation.

Because the study's objective is to explore representations of women, the feminist literary theory is adopted to provide a theoretical framework that informs the study's conceptualisation of the oppression of women that is rooted in gender inequalities. Using the feminist framework to analyse the selected texts is critical because it gives deeper insights into and offers an awareness regarding the basic human rights of women who have suffered so much marginalisation. "As a theory of knowledge and an intellectual practice, feminism deconstructs the epistemological foundations of patriarchy and contributes to the emancipation of women as subjects and studies on and about women as critical intellectual engagements" (Mama, 2014:8). This foregrounds the quintessential relevance of the feminist theory to this study. The study particularly adopts the African feminist theory which emphasises the interplay of gender with race, ethnicity, class and other systems of hegemony in undermining women (Weedon, 2002). African Feminism provides a broad-based understanding of the interaction of different factors which have continued to drive patriarchy as well as shape women's experiences of oppressions, their identities and solidarity or divisions. It has established that "women's lives are constructed by multiple, intersecting systems of oppression" (Carastathis, 2014:304). In short, African Feminist approaches struggle for securing women's survival and that of their communities against the oppressions of different systems of domination.

African Feminism rejects ideas that present oppression as a singular process, reflecting Crenshaw's theory of intersectionality. The concerns of this study are framed in the intersectionality of diverse systems of oppression. Intersectionality is a prism and a heuristic that helps conceptualise "the relation between systems of oppression which construct our multiple identities and our social locations in hierarchies of power and privilege" (Carastathis, 2014:304). As an informing concept, intersectionality offers profound analysis and "critique of deeply

entrenched cognitive habits which inform feminist and antiracist thinking about oppression and privilege” (Carastathis, 2014:305). It provides valuable insights that serve as a valuable interpretive framework to enrich literary analysis of the politics of the oppression of women and the intersections of different systems of domination. According to Carastathis, intersectionality may be used for different purposes and intents in a research: as a research method, as a theory or a heuristic to interpret results (2014). At times, “intersectionality may function less as a research method and more as a heuristic to interpret results of quantitative or qualitative research” (2014:308). Thus, it provides latitude to the researcher to use it as one sees fit. In her essay, ‘Mapping the Margins’, Crenshaw has adopted what Carastathis has referred to as “a threefold positive definition of intersectionality” which is important to this study (2014:306). The three levels of intersectionality at which systems of oppression can be examined, according to Crenshaw, relate to: structural intersectionality, political intersectionality and representational intersectionality. By definition, structural intersectionality “refers to the ways in which the location of women of colour at the intersection of race and gender makes our actual experiences of domestic violence, rape and remedial reform qualitatively different than that of white women” (Carastathis, 2014:306). An understanding of structural intersectionality is imperative in the context of the study as it enables us to examine and interpret some of the privileges enjoyed by white women and the prejudices and other exclusions suffered by African people. Structural intersectionality is different from political intersectionality. As Crenshaw puts it, political intersectionality describes the fact that women “are situated within at least two subordinated groups that frequently pursue conflicting political agendas” (1993:1252). This is pertinent to this study because many women characters in the selected texts are portrayed as caught between and challenging African patriarchy and colonial/ apartheid authority. These different systems of privilege ignore “the experiences, needs, or political vision of women” (Crenshaw, 1993:1252). Therefore, political intersectionality provides valuable methodological insights on how to interpret these important issues and understand women’s agency in the face of these brutal systems that intend to deny them the chance for self-determination.

The last sense of intersectionality which illuminates this study is representational intersectionality. This is the most important of them all in this study. Generally, “representational intersectionality concerns the production of images [representations] of women of color drawing

on sexist and racist narratives tropes, as well as the ways that critiques of these representations marginalize or reproduce the objectification of women of color” (Carastathis, 2014:307). In the field of literature, use of the term ‘representational intersectionality’ has broadened to refer to “the theory or methodology used to identify and study these ‘real world’ phenomena of structural, political and representational intersectionality” (Carastathis, 2014:307). Drawing from all this, use of intersectionality to interpret this study is critical. Closely related to that, another importance of adopting intersectionality as a heuristic that informs the interpretation of the novels being studied is that it also captures or accounts for different experiences of people in various social contexts. People may belong to the same social category as African women but with different experiences. Carastathis has defined such differences in experience as “experiential and structural complexity” (2014:307). This insight informs analysis of differences in experience for different women groups. To enrich this study’s examination of different women’s experiential and structural complexities, the study relies on McCall who has identified “three kinds of complexity that intersectionality as a heuristic attempts to grasp and these correspond to three approaches to managing complexity” (2005:1786). These three approaches are: the ‘intracategorical’, ‘intercategorical’ and the ‘anticategorical’ approaches (Carastathis, 2014; McCall, 2005). The intercategorical approach “focuses on the complexity of relationships among multiple social groups within and across analytical categories” (McCall, 2005:1786). This approach provides insights on inequalities between people who belong to different social locations based on racial, class and other factors. This approach is different from the intracategorical approach whose focus is on the differences in experience for people who belong to the same social group. This draws attention to some women who may be marginalized within the same social category. McCall highlights this argument as she notes that “groups located at neglected points of intersections of axes of oppression, are studied through an intracategorical lens in order to reveal the complexity of lived experience of their members” (2005:1774). This is a call for the inclusivity of the experiences of women often neglected. This study embraces these views and the texts selected centre on the experiences of rural women whose remarkable agency in spite of the odds against them is a source of inspiration. The third intersectional approach is the anticategorical approach. This approach “is based on a methodology that deconstructs analytical categories. Social life is considered too irreducibly complex [...] to make fixed categories anything but simplifying social fictions” (Carastathis, 2014:308). Though the three

approaches have a different focus, they all “agree that monistic, single-axis (that is, non-intersectional) approaches fail to capture the complexity of social structures and subjective experiences” (Carastathis, 2014:208). They all claim that “monistic approaches to oppression [those which do not embrace intersectionality] are reductive: they reduce the complex experiences of simultaneous oppressions to simplistic unitary categories”(Carastathis, 2014:308). Thus, this study greatly benefits from these important insights which contradict unitary or additive approaches that have been proposed by some to theorise oppression. Basing on this approach to the study that has been outlined, the findings of the study are presented and analysed in a narrative form from Chapter Two (2) under emerging themes and thematic frames related to the research questions.

### **2.3 Theoretical Framework**

The informing perspective for this study is drawn from African Feminism. Feminism is a theory that has emerged in response to the long history of patriarchal oppression of women and has provided an analytic framework to conceptualise the oppression of women. There are different feminist strands as evidenced by how “[w]omen’s subordination worldwide has been described using various [feminist] analytical frameworks, including biological determinism, liberalism, classical Marxism, radical feminism, and socialist feminism” (Aina, 1998:67). Although these branches of feminism differ in some ways, what is central is that each “of these analytical frameworks” (Aina, 1998:67) opposes the discrimination of women and “seeks to protect and promote the interests of women” (Ifechelobi, 2014:17).

To understand African Feminism (which is central to this study), it is critical to first explain feminism and its goals in general. Various definitions have been offered by different feminists. “In practice, feminism addresses the socio-political and cultural inequities in women’s lives and seeks positive ways of improvement” (Chukukere, 1998:135). According to Aina,

[a]s a political and ideological project, feminism aims at examining and analysing women’s oppression, thereby exposing the dynamics of male domination and female subordination through history. Feminism as an emancipatory project therefore specifically aims at the total liberation of women from the yoke of tradition expropriated in various dimensions in different historical epochs (1998:65).

Therefore, feminism seeks to achieve gender equality, because this is a human right, and feminists focus on challenging all forms of gender oppression, and have identified patriarchy as the source of gender oppression.

From a global perspective, feminism has spanned over centuries and during that time, new insights have continued to reshape its theoretical underpinnings. “Feminists have divided the [feminist] movement’s history into three ‘waves’. The first wave refers to a period of feminist activity during the nineteenth century in the United Kingdom and the United States. Originally, it focused on the promotion of equal contract and property rights for women and the opposition to chattel marriages and ownership of married women and their children by their husbands. Second-wave feminism refers to a period beginning in early 1960s and lasting through the late 1980s. It was a continuation of the earlier phase of feminism and was largely concerned with issues like ending women discrimination” (Freedman, 2003:4) in various facets of life. “Very popular in the second wave was the slogan ‘The Personal is Political’ coined by activist Carol Hamisch, a term that saw women’s cultural and political inequalities as inextricably linked and that encouraged women to understand aspects of personal lives as deeply politicized and reflective of sexist power structures’ (hooks, 1998:2). “Third-wave feminism began in the early 1990s due to perceived failures of the second wave.... It seeks to avoid what it views as the second wave’s essentialist definition of femininity which they feel over-emphasized the experiences of upper middle-class white women” (hooks, 1998:2). The various twists and ‘turns’ in the feminist movement, as Catherine Lee writes, have resulted “in a richer and more complex body of scholarship”(2017:832).

A characteristic apparent in all the feminist waves is that feminists have always sought “the removal of all forms of inequality, domination and oppression through the creation of a just social and economic order, nationally and internationally” (Nnaemeka, 1998:17). Feminism challenges all forms of oppression that entrench patriarchal beliefs, assumptions and control mechanisms which impose restrictions on women and their agency to self-determine, arguing that these undermine women’s full and equal participation with men in various spheres of social life (Offen, 2018).

The reality that women have not always been oppressed in similar ways has given rise to different *feminisms*. Western feminism, African Feminism and many other feminist approaches demonstrate how women have confronted different forms and combinations of patriarchal tyranny. In Nnaemeka's usage of the word "feminism in the plural (feminisms)" she has been "mindful of the multiplicity of perspectives and the need for accommodation" (1998:3). The plurality of feminisms and the absence of "a monolithic, representative political voice" (Nnaemeka, 1998:3) reflects how important it is for women, to accommodate their differences and learn to live successfully with contradictions. Although there are different strands of feminism,

[t]he goals, values, and ideas of feminism remain the same across regions - i.e. liberating the society from dehumanization and repairing the loss of fundamental human rights - even though women are separated as much by class, ethnicity, religion, and other social situations as by geography (Aina, 1998:84).

The existence of various feminisms is actually an advantage as it increases the options open to women in addressing oppression. Consequently, white middle class feminism has been criticized as a narrow hegemonic perspective that excludes the experiences of many women's concerns, particularly women of colour and other "grassroots women [who] have often been left out of [its] feminist agenda" (Aina, 1998:85). Among other things, it has also been criticized for being anti-men and as a theory that "focuses increasingly on... female separateness" (Aina, 1998:76). According to Steady, "for [African] women, the male is not 'the other' but part of the humane same" (1987:7-8). African feminists have argued that any definition of feminism that alienates some members of society, paradoxically, makes feminism narrow and just as oppressive as patriarchy that it criticizes. As a result of that, a lot of people, especially women, who believe in equal rights for both men and women, among them African feminists, have sought to broaden the definition of feminism to ensure that feminism is not portrayed as a discriminatory theory (Aina, 1998). They criticize definitions that may project "feminism as a potential replacement for patriarchy... [but rather as] a tool to create an atmosphere that encourages growth, harmony and co-existence; thus avoiding the dominance of one theory over another" (Moiloa, 2014:8).

Unlike “Western feminism [that] appears to have declared a war against the family” (Aina, 1998:76), African Feminism believes that “the essence of feminism is to rebuild and not to destroy the society itself” (Aina, 1998:85). (Responding to a question in an interview with Hakima in the article, ‘Feminists we Love: Professor Amina Mama’) Mama broadens the conceptualization of feminism by emphasizing that it is more than just a theory: “Feminism is the theory, philosophy, politics and practice of the movement for women’s liberation” (2014). These key words all clarify how feminism should be viewed. Each one of these terms is important in attempts to define feminism. Feminism is more than just a theory. This view moves feminism beyond intellectual theorization to underpin other important aspects such as practice. One can, therefore, argue that while providing a theoretical framework to guide feminist thought and ideas is an important initial step, theory is inadequate without attention to the actual practice. It is important to see women enacting what the theory says, and this is what Ngcobo and Dangarembga portray in their literary texts. Feminist practice can be demonstrated through activist engagements about the ways to transform oppressive social structures. As a theory, feminism provides valuable analytical tools and the intellectual framework to conceptualise the politics surrounding the oppression of women in society. This provides important insights to feminist activists regarding women’s self-organization to challenge, resist and seek the overthrow of patriarchy’s social structures that have invested power on men. In another article, ‘The Challenges of Feminism: Gender, Ethics and Responsible Academic Freedom in African Universities’, Mama has offered deeper conceptualization of feminist theory:

Feminism, put simply, refers to the ongoing struggle to free women from centuries of oppression, exploitation and marginalisation in all the vast majority of known human societies. It is a call to end patriarchy and to expose, deconstruct and eradicate all the myriad personal, social, economic and political practices, habits and assumptions that sustain gender inequality and injustice around the world. Feminism seeks nothing less than the transformation of our institutions, including our knowledge institutions (2012:2).

This emphasises feminism and African Feminism’s vision as rooted in the creation of new gender relations, marked by equality between women and men, where women are no longer subordinated to men or subjected to men’s violence and abuse. This highlights feminism’s desire for the transformation of oppressive patriarchal structures that, for centuries, have exploited,

marginalised and silenced women. In the words of Abeda Sultana, patriarchy should be challenged because its gender system is “the prime obstacle to women’s advancement and development” (2011:1). As a theory, feminism is relevant to this study because its theoretical underpinnings offers tools for critical intellectual engagement of gender based hierarchies (represented in the novels being studied) that hamper “women’s full and equal participation” (Mama, 2012:3). However, the feminist views that are of interest to this study are those advanced by African feminists.

African Feminism is a struggle for the emancipation of women which holds “different positions on feminism” when compared to Western feminists (Nnaemeka, 1998:10). However, even among themselves, African feminists “do not speak with one voice” on many issues (Nnaemeka, 1998:3). The absence of a monolithic voice within African feminism does not affect the ultimate goals of African feminism. African feminists are less preoccupied by the different views and the desire for “the obliteration of difference... [but focus] more on allowing difference to be and in its *being* create the power that energizes *becoming*” (Nnaemeka, 1998:3). African feminists have accommodated their different perspectives: “[w]hat emerges from listening to the African women.... is not the necessity or desirability of a monolithic, representative political voice” (Nnaemeka, 1998:5). This indicates that they focus on the many common features and shared beliefs that promote their struggle while allowing difference to be.

African feminism has been viewed by some as an offshoot of Third-wave feminism, a claim that many African feminists have contradicted. Kolawole has offered an explanation that clarifies this divergence in opinion: “the diversity of women’s experience, and difference have become determinants of feminist orientation” (2002:92). Thus, divergence of opinions owes to the heterogeneity of their experiences. According to Goredema, “[t]here is an understandable misinterpretation which regards African feminism as a part of Third Wave feminism, however, it is within the realm of the Third Wave feminist interpretation that the tensions between race and culture began to appear” (2010:34). Her argument rejects ideas that want to identify African feminism as a brach of Third-wave feminism. What cannot be denied, however, is that African feminism underscores feminist opinions imbedded in “postmodernist feminism, a major aspect of the third wave of feminist theorising, [that] underscores diversity and difference” between

women's contexts, experiences and lived realities (Kolawole, 2002:92). That link between African feminism and post-modernist feminism explains why many have identified African feminism as emanating from Third-wave feminism. However, long before the Third wave, "Egyptian feminists like Huda Sharaawi in the '20s [are on record] organising an occupation of the Egyptian parliament" (Mama, 2001:59). This implies that African feminism predates Third-wave feminism. Ogunjipe-Leslie, Nfah-Abbenyi, Aidoo, and many other African feminists, have, therefore, dismissed ideas of African feminism as an offshoot of the Third-wave feminism since it has existed for millennia - long before academics gave it a name. They have opposed ideas of "Third-wave feminism being applied as a principle for African women" as this means African feminism becomes "interpreted as an ideology that is hinged on Western feminism" (Goredema, 2010:34). Identifying African feminism as an offshoot of Third-wave feminism ignores one of its important goals: underscoring that most African women gender activists focus on the incredible burdens African women bear and have done so for centuries. African feminists want to be defined on their own terms and have identified the following historical periods as more appropriate to define African feminism: pre-colonial, colonial and postcolonial.

The conflicting views raised above should, however, not detract from acknowledging the critical concerns raised by African feminists. We should not lose sight of the material issues embedded in African feminism. African feminism highlights Third-wave feminism's refusal of upper middle-class white women's claims of all women having homogeneity of experience. It argues that some women have faced more forms of oppression than others and that addressing gender oppression should consider the historical and cultural contexts of different women. According to Kolawole, "[t]he failure to consider context accounts for misconceptions of the relevance of feminism in many Black African societies, including the rejection of feminism by some African scholars" (2002:92). In other words, feminism can only be relevant to African women if it is "adapted to cultural exigencies" and acknowledges the differences of African women's situations and contexts (Kolawole, 2002:92). In their conceptualisation of oppression, African feminists have, fundamentally, demonstrated that gender has not been the sole form of oppression. This underscores the imperativeness of acknowledging the heterogeneity of women's gendered contexts. African feminists have therefore contested placing the experiences of privileged white

women at the centre of feminism because it marginalizes the experiences of racialised women for whom racial prejudice has been a serious oppressive factor alongside patriarchy. In the United States, Black women contended that “Discrimination must be reconceptualised in terms of the concrete experiences of Black women” who have faced more forms of tyranny and discrimination than any other group (Carastathis, 2014:306). What this shows is that Third World feminism from non-European women groups, mainly from Africa, Latin America and Asia has subjected Western feminism to anti-racist scrutiny and has shifted feminism’s paradigms to include all women’s experiences of oppression (Bunjun, 2010; Mama, 2012; Baye, 2019). All these various women groups have called for a feminism which is relevant to their own realities where gender is not the ultimate oppression and the only entry point to analyse the oppression of women (Bunjun, 2010). Thus, there have been differences and conflicts in perspective between Third World feminists and Western feminists. African Feminism is a postcolonial feminist perspective that shares most of Third World ideology. However, it should not be viewed as an attack of Western feminism. All it does is provide an African context of the issues that concern African women. “The language of African Feminism is less a response to the language of Western feminism and more a manifestation of the characteristics (balance, connectedness, reciprocity, compromise, etc.) of the African worldview” (Nnaemeka, 1998:9). Drawing from the above,

[a] major flaw of feminist attempts to tame and name the feminist spirit in Africa is their failure to define African feminism *on its own terms* rather than in the context of Western feminisms. Such a contextualization of African feminism argues in effect that African feminism is what Western feminism is not (Nnaemeka, 1998:6).

In other words, African Feminism makes “contextual and situational sense to African women, and their local lived experiences and realities” (Naidu, 2013:147). For instance, in contrast to Western radical feminism, “African feminism neither demotes/ abandons motherhood nor dismisses maternal politics as non-feminist or unfeminist politics” (Nnaemeka, 1998:6). Besides that, “the language of feminist engagement in Africa (collaborate, negotiate, compromise) runs counter to the language of Western feminist scholarship and engagement (challenge, disrupt, deconstruct, blow apart, etc.) - African feminism challenges through negotiation and compromise” (Nnaemeka, 1998:6). Furthermore, it resists Western feminism’s emphasis on

gender oppression at the expense of other forms of tyranny. All these views demonstrate African Feminism's resistance to the inadequacy of Western approaches to examining the oppression of women "which separate systems of oppression, isolating and focusing on one, while occluding the others" (Crenshaw, 1993:1244). Mama has explained how African feminists "have had to fight for our own meaning to be kept alive, as the Western European and North American women have taken it [feminism] up and filled it with their realities" (2001:58). This is a call for African feminists to reject Eurocentric models of the oppression of women that are "restricted to male/female power relations only, ignoring power relations based on race, class, ethnicity, age, nationality and so forth" which are other forms of oppression that have undermined many African women (Steady, 2005:319). Carastathis has argued that the "separability of oppressions [should be contested because it] is premised on centering the essentialized experiences of relatively privileged members of oppressed groups" (Carastathis, 2014:305). Crenshaw has developed her theory of intersectionality to foreground all these views and underscore that different forms of oppression have operated simultaneously within and alongside each other and should not be separated from each other as they are part of marginalised woman's experiences.

The fundamental significance of the intersectionality theory is its recognition of how women "represent diverse groups with different social locations" (Steady, 2005:319). For instance, African women, Latino and Asian women and women from many other locations have all confronted different forms of tyranny.

The concept of intersectionality is now widely embraced within gender and women's studies as a means [of ] addressing the fact that gender works not as an isolatable variable, but through its pervasive interconnections with class, ethnicity, clan, religious, race, sexuality and nation. In the same way, these other dimensions of social order also work through gender (Mama, 2012:3).

Intersectionality recognises that there are multiple forms of oppression and that these are co-constituting as they simultaneously influence many women's lived experiences. An interesting implication drawn from all this is to reject "unitary or additive approaches to theorizing oppression, which privilege a foundational category and either ignore or merely 'add' others to it" (Carastathis, 2014:307). Intersectionality as a theory has enriched feminism by providing

informing axioms to understand how “multiple forms of simultaneous domination” have complicated some women’s lives (Purvis, 2018:51). Therefore, women whose intersecting forms of oppression are different may construct oppression differently because their lived realities are different. Carastathis clarifies how Crenshaw established this view: “In ‘Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex’, Crenshaw demonstrates that ‘boundaries of sex and race discrimination doctrine are defined respectively by white women’s and Black men’s experiences” (2014:306). This illustrates how the experiences of black women regarding racial oppression ‘coincide’ with those of black men because both have suffered racial prejudice. In this instance, these women will be more likely to identify more with the men from their racial category facing a similar racial oppression. Thus, locating gender as the sole site of oppression presupposes that other forms of oppression such as race have been eradicated (Mohanty, 2003).

Postcolonial feminism’s placement of emphasis on race and class as other forms of oppression that should be challenged means a lot of men also benefit from the feminist struggle for equality as they too have faced oppression under these systems of privilege. African feminists have argued that “the male is not ‘the other’ but part of the human same.... Neither sex is totally complete in itself to constitute a unit by itself.” (Steady, 1987:8). Men are not viewed as enemies within African Feminism: “African feminism resists the exclusion of men from women’s issues; on the contrary, it invites men as partners in problem solving and social change” (Nnaemeka, 1998:7-8). These African feminists have, therefore, been unprepared to “jettison what holds them together [simply] because some feminists somewhere have declared such acts ‘unacceptable”” (Nnaemeka, 1998:9). This is a powerful response to many men who have misconstrued feminism as anti-man and as a theory that portends competition for control between men and women. According to Ifechelobi, “African feminism is all about gender inclusion and not alienation” (2014:18). She has gone on to explain that feminist “women are not asking for a total emasculation of men just that men and women should co-habit peacefully in complementary distribution” (2014:18). Offen has further clarified any misconception men might have regarding postcolonial feminism by pointing out that though “Feminism is necessarily pro-woman... it does not follow that it must be anti-man... [Its objective is] to destroy masculinist hierarchy” (Offen, 2018:35). This locates feminism as a theory that benefits all - women and men - and this

study will attempt to analyse how Ngcobo and Dangarembga's texts portray these views in their representation of women's concerns and interests.

The concept of intersectionality is also core to this study because it provides fundamental insights that inform feminism. The focus of this study, on the ways in which African women characters' needs and concerns have been undermined by patriarchal normativity will not ignore the impact of other forms of oppression that have intersected with patriarchy to complicate women's (and some men's) experiences of abuse and oppression. This resonates with the ethics of African Feminism and its "focus on the realization of equality and justice for women in all spheres of life, ending patriarchy and all its practices, transforming all institutions" not just for a few privileged women, but for all women (Mama, 2012:9).

The concept of intersectionality has faced criticism from some sections of white feminists such as Alice Ludvig (2006), Kathryn Russell (2007), among others. Ludvig has argued that "the endlessness of differences seems to be a weak point of intersectional theory" (2006:247). On the other hand, Russell's criticism has revolved on what she has described as intersectionality's failure to resolve "arguments about when and where we can emphasise one factor over another" as well as "analyses about how gender, race, and class are connected" (2007:35). Their criticism contrasts with Ange-Marie Hancock's contentions that have shown that intersectionality may "foster deep political solidarity" as women become more aware of areas of different and common experiences (2011). Though feminists have differed in the "approaches, perspectives and frameworks... [that shape their] explanations and their proposed solutions" to increase and protect women's rights (Bayu, 2019:55), the input of various feminist predecessors cannot be neglected or thrown out as that has informed and shaped contemporary feminists' views and "analys[e]s of male privilege and women's subordination within any given society" (Offen, 2018:35). Such diversity enriches women's conceptualization of the varied ways in which oppression works. There has been enthusiastic uptake of Crenshaw's ideas on intersectionality as it has broadened understanding of the complexities that underlie the oppression of women. This is a call for different women to define their own terms of oppression while acknowledging that other women may be oppressed differently. Areas of solidarity can easily be strengthened within such a broad scope of feminism.

One major strength of using postcolonial African feminists' definitions of feminism in this study is that African Feminism does not ignore how African women have not only suffered from the "patriarchal social structure, but are also victims of racism, neo-colonialism, cultural imperialism, religion, fundamentalist, socioeconomic mechanisms of operation and dictatorial and/or corrupt systems" (Bayu, 2019:56). This broadens conceptualization of how oppression functions in different societies. Bostow has underscored that feminism should focus "on the acceptance of difference (of others and self) rather than reaching equality through sameness" (2016:63). In other words, feminism is strengthened by accommodating diversity:

Such a vision [of feminism], even as it appeals to solidarity among women to combat their common subordination, must also accommodate their actual range of diversity and needs... must be capacious enough to include the needs of women who are married as well as women who are single, women who are mothers as well as women who do not choose motherhood.... It must speak to poor women as well as wealthy women and to women of various ethnic backgrounds and religious persuasions (Offen, 2018:41).

Through solidarity built through acceptance of women's points of similarities and those of difference, feminism reclaims the power of numbers and that of difference which makes it richer in its focus on women's "shared and differential experience as members of the same sex, the childbearing and nurturing sex" (Offen, 2018:40). Many western feminists have already altered their views towards this thinking as Mama pointed out two decades ago:

The constant tirades against 'white feminists' do not have the same strategic relevance as they might have had 20 years ago when we first subjected feminism to anti-racist scrutiny. Since then many Westerners have not only listened to the critiques of African and other so-called third world feminists- they have also re-considered their earlier simplistic paradigms and come up with more complex theories (2001:60).

This reflects the potential for women from different backgrounds, who have been oppressed in different ways, to bond in solidarity and unity around ideas advanced by postcolonial feminism.

The postcolonial African perspective of feminism is important to this study because it ensures that the study does not only examine the experiences of privileged women while excluding those of other marginalized groups. This is particularly critical as both novels have rural women protagonists who also deserve literary focus rather than focusing on stories of the rich and urbane. The study benefits from adopting the African feminist theory and the intersectionality theory as both ensure that there are no “omissions, exclusions and silences regarding [African women’s]... concerns, issues and struggles in relation to essentialised notions of the personal” (Sandoval, 2003:76) which could, otherwise, have been erased or misrepresented by other strands of feminisms such as Western feminism which de-emphasize the impact of race, class and other systems of privilege in conceptualizing the marginalisation of women (Fisher, 2013). The novels that are the focus of this study were written by African feminists and it can only make sense that African Feminism’s theoretical underpinnings are used to examine them. African readership of the thesis will be able to identify with the issues explored here since they resonate with their own experiences. Eurocentric feminism, or any other strand of feminism, are deemed inadequate and limited to examine concerns of African women whose lives have been circumscribed not only by patriarchy but also colonialism, capitalism, racism, neocolonialism and neo-imperial globalization.

In conclusion, African Feminism as a postcolonial feminist movement and perspective that complements rather than competes with other feminist modes is used for this study. Its major strength as this Chapter has shown is its inclusivity of all women’s (and men’s) experiences through its emphasis on an examination of the impact of various systems of privilege that work within and alongside patriarchy to undermine women’s lives and livelihoods.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **The contradictions between African women’s concerns and needs and the expectations of patriarchal normativity**

#### **3.0 Introduction**

Lauretta Ngcobo and Tsitsi Dangarembga are African feminist writers who have commented extensively, in interviews and through their literary works, about African women's concerns, needs, changing identities, agency and solidarity. And both writers have challenged the oppressiveness of patriarchal normativity and intersecting systems of oppression (Moyana, 1988; Ngcobo, 1992; Daymond, 1998, 2004; Financial Gazette, 2020). They have represented, in their literary works, many African women undergoing different forms of struggle to secure their own liberation (and that of other oppressed people) from gender oppression and other intersecting systems of privilege which have historically kept them down and denied them their rights and needs. Dangarembga has described the horrible conditions of the oppressed women (and men): “[i]n repressive societies people are pressed, literally pressed, into narrowness and narrow spaces.... We have been compressed into this narrow range of being” (Financial Gazette, 2020: Dangarembga's interview with Al Jazeera). Her views about the confined space that oppressive systems offer those subordinated reflect the horrible conditions of limited opportunities that women endure within patriarchy and other oppressive systems. As African feminists, Dangarembga and Ngcobo have not only exposed but challenged how African patriarchal normativity and intersecting systems have shrunk the space for dignified and respectful lives for African women whose options in life have been limited. They have identified patriarchal normativity as an evil that ought to be challenged for undermining the quality of women's lives by trivializing their needs, desires and interests while promoting male privilege (Mhako-Mutonhodza, 2018; Napikoski, 2019). Rawaa has cited Warren who has “referred to the hierarchies that were established of contrasting pairs of interests and values according to gender division itself. Female interests were considered as something unimportant, while male interests were considered as something higher” (2018:228). Once some human beings' interests and needs are subordinated, considered inconsequential and insignificant, then society becomes unfair and the architect of oppression.

What particularly qualifies Ngcobo and Dangarembga as African feminist writers is their novels' rootedness on African women's experiences of oppression and struggles against diverse systems of oppression that have intersected in their lives. Nnaemeka has argued:

[t]o meaningfully explain the phenomenon called African feminism, it is not to

Western feminism but rather to the African environment that one must refer. African feminism... has a life of its own that is rooted in the African environment (1998:9).

Her argument situates African feminists as focused on contextualising the experiences of women so as to provide an African perspective on fundamental issues relating to the oppression and liberation of women. African feminism rejects “the negative image [representation] of the African woman [that has been] partly created and promoted by the Western media” (Nnaemeka, 1998:14). These critical issues are what Dangarembga and Ngcobo creatively deal with as their novels offer positive identities of African women where characters such as Tambudzai, Lucia, Nyasha (*Nervous Conditions*), Jezile, Nomawa, Ndondo (*And They Didn't Die*) and many others challenge patriarchal normativity's (and other oppressions') attempts at undermining women and womanhood. Nnaemeka has added that African feminism rejects “the restriction of the definition of feminist struggle to gender issues (gender as sex)... [as it advances ideas of] the complicity of race, class, and other categories of difference in constructing gender” (1998:17). African feminism's broad-based exposure of how different systems of privilege have jointly shrunk the life options open to many women, particularly African women's lives, implies that it is a strand of feminism that champions “the removal of all forms of inequality, domination and oppression through the creation of a just social and economic order, nationally and internationally” (Bhasin and Khan, 1986:12). As African feminists, Ngcobo and Dangarembga have questioned, in their novels, the oppressiveness of patriarchal normativity as well as the tyranny and abuse of colonialism, racism and capitalism which worsened African women's experiences of gender oppression. Interestingly, some of the women characters in their literary works (such as Tambu and Lucia in *Nervous Conditions* and Jezile in *And They Didn't Die*) emerge at the end of the narratives very different individuals. Such representations of women reflect a key goal of African feminism: the liberation of African women. Dangarembga and Ngcobo's representations of women go beyond what Moyana (citing Toril Moi) has described as ‘female writing’ “which simply describes women's experiences” (1994:25). Rather, they engage in feminist criticism which can be understood as “a specific kind of political discourse: a critical and theoretical practice committed to the struggle against patriarchy and sexism, not simply a concern for gender in literature” (Moi, 1986:204). They expose as well as challenge the oppression of

women. Novels that embrace feminist commitment do not “merely describe women’s experiences and leave them there... [but depict] some women who try to protest against their usual socially accepted roles” (Moyana, 1994:26). This is exactly what Ngcobo and Dangarembga, as established feminists, do in their texts selected for study: they show the oppressiveness of patriarchy and other systems of privilege as well as challenge oppression in powerful ways.

Having laid down some ideas about what constitutes feminist fiction, the next task is to demonstrate more clearly how each of the focal writers has embraced African feminist ideology, beginning with Dangarembga before doing the same for Ngcobo. To begin with, Dangarembga has been cited confirming that she does not write her fiction from the Western feminist perspective. She has been cited by Furusa contending that Western feminism is

so alien to the thinking of many black women because it... [derives] from a foreign culture, that they [African women writers] are not even able to assimilate it to the extent where it would give them the initial liberation which... [is] necessary as something to start building on (1996: 9).

She has argued that African feminists should self-define and understand themselves within the context of their own culture. Dangarembga’s *Nervous Conditions* (NC), is an important text which “is significantly feminist” (Moyana, 1994:23) as it addresses issues that undermine women. She is an important African feminist from Zimbabwe whose many literary texts and plays including *She no longer weeps*, *This Mournable body* and others offer a feminist reading by contesting the oppression of women.

On the other hand, Ngcobo, is a South African woman writer and political activist who lived in exile from 1963 till 1994, the year apartheid was ‘defeated’. She was an anti-apartheid activist whose novel, *And they Didn’t Die* (ATDD), has been described as “an attempt to represent her own experiences in the anti-apartheid struggle... [and a] depiction of black women’s resistance

to apartheid and traditionalist notions of patriarchy” (Boswell and Collins-Buthelezi, 2017:2). She has also been described as a writer “[a]gitating against the marginalisation of black women’s voices” (Boswell and Collins-Buthelezi, 2017:3). Such description of Ngcobo’s literature situates her literary work as a resistance story by African women against patriarchy and intersecting systems of oppression. Ngcobo has held many interviews with different people where she has raised profound African feminist sentiments. For instance, “In an interview from March 1993, Ngcobo made clear that she was not only invested in her own entry into South African letters, but in what black South African literary production could do for ‘ordinary people’ (Worsfold, 1995:183). Her commitment towards the transformation of life for ordinary African people is an affirmation of the goals of African feminism. In another earlier interview with Vivan and Hunter, Ngcobo highlighted critical awareness of the intersectional nature of African women’s struggle: “[a] woman is not only black, but at the same time must also submit to her husband, who, being oppressed, will find it necessary to oppress his women” (1993:3). Her focus on the struggles of African women and recognition of the intersectional nature of their struggles underpin why she should be viewed as a writer whose works offer an African feminist reading of African women’s struggles against oppression. Boswell and Collis-Buthelezi have used the very words that Ngcobo used in 1989 when introducing Miriam Tlali’s *Soweto Stories* as befitting descriptors of Ngcobo herself: “[a] South African woman writer in the 1980s is a rare find” (2017:1). Thus, she belongs to that small group of African feminist writers during apartheid, with her novel, *And They Didn’t Die*, being described by African feminists as “arguably the most important feminist novel produced during apartheid” (Boswell and Collins-Buthelezi, 2017:4).

Having given a brief introduction to the two African feminist writers whose literary works are being studied, my next step is to outline the objectives of the current chapter. The chapter is informed by the first research question and objective which focus on Laretta Ngcobo and Tsitsi Dangarembga’s literary portrayals of various (continuing) concerns and needs that Southern African women had during colonialism/apartheid as well as within the African patriarchal structures. The intention is to understand how the representation of women’s needs and concerns in the selected texts conflicts with and challenges the many misconceptions and assumptions about women and men embedded within patriarchal normativity. Exposure of the contradictions

between what patriarchal normativity says about women, men, femininity, masculinity and any other ideas that have driven gender and other oppressions, and what women aspire for and describe as their own true needs and concerns, is a powerful way of challenging patriarchal normativity and the many myths and lies rooted in it. Historically, patriarchal normativity has provided the basis for thoughts of inequality between women and men. It has justified “the oppression of one by the other... [to] make it seem normal that men should control women” (Johnson, 2014:90). However, this chapter explores how Ngcobo and Dangarembga’s representations of African women’s concerns and needs demystify these and other thoughts rooted in patriarchal normativity that have been used to oppress women. All this is fleshed out through textual analyses of the following novels by the two writers selected for study: *And They Didn’t Die* (ATDD) and *Nervous Conditions* (NC).

Some of the misguided patriarchal assumptions that the chapter seeks to dispute and challenge are based on observations made by feminists which indicate that, owing to patriarchy, women and men have been situated differently (Napikoski, 2019). The chapter contests how patriarchal normativity has produced differential family and societal roles for women and men where women have been expected to occupy inferior status while men have been “seen as superior, preferable, and of greater value than women” (Johnson, 2014:9). Another misrepresentation contested in the chapter deals with bigoted patriarchal views that have created situations where “[t]he work women did at home was [and continues to be unfairly and unjustifiably] marginalized and devalued” (Johnson, 2014:63). All these views are an affirmation of how much patriarchal normativity has profoundly undermined women. Because of such erroneous patriarchal assumptions, women’s aspirations have been seriously affected in real life and misrepresented in hegemonised fiction, particularly by men. For instance, due to patriarchy’s socially-constructed preference for men and boys, women and girls’ concerns and needs have often been misunderstood and trivialised within socio-economic and political structures, particularly by men writers such as Ernest Hemingway whose selected short stories (including ‘The Snows of Kilimanjaro’ and ‘The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber’) have been accused of negative treatment of women.

Women in his short stories were presented either as dynamic shrewd characters who

always preferred wealthy men, or passive women who were almost ignored or removed from the life of men. He encapsulated women's identities into one dimensional stock roles: wife, doll, betrayer or widow (Kadhim, 2018:230).

Such bigoted representations of women by many male writers explains why “[g]ynocritics believed that a male author cannot make an objective and a true description of woman character, because he had no experience of being female” (Kadhim, 2018:230). Thus, it is critical that literature by women writers be explored to understand women's concerns and needs from their own perspective.

As alluded to earlier, in the chapter I examine how Ngcobo and Dangarembga's literary representations of African women and men characters, themes, plot, literary form and other issues challenge the many taken-for-granted assumptions within patriarchal normativity about women, men, their roles, needs, priorities, social class, race and other oppressive forms of privilege and domination. The focus is on how their literary representations of African women, their needs and concerns upset and question patriarchal normativity's 'wisdom' and its notions about women, their desires, wants and needs. The emphasis is on how the two writers inscribe identities of women and depict their needs in ways that contradict patriarchal normativity.

African feminists have argued that African women's 'true' needs have been misrepresented and can only be authentically defined by African women themselves and not by anyone else (Mama, 2001; Aina, 1998). Nwapa has argued: “in African literature, there have been female portraits of sorts presented by men from their own point of view, leading one to conclude that there is a difference between the African male writer and his female counterpart” (1998:92). In other words, men have played serious negative roles of misrepresenting African women. Their identities, needs and concerns have been seriously undermined, whether it is within African patriarchal structures or white colonial/apartheid patriarchy, as both patriarchies have threatened African women's lives and livelihoods. This is why the chapter's analysis of African women's needs and concerns benefits from the two writers' identities as African people and as women.

The writers' identities as women are important because they are intricately interwoven with the temporal and spatial contexts of the two novels' representations of African women's concerns. Thus, Ngcobo and Dangarembga's identities as African women are a strength that enables them to provide authentic accounts of African women's desires, needs, interests and concerns. This reflects a connection between the writer and the story she writes, affirming Achebe's argument that the "writer and his [her] society live in the same place" (1974:42). Thus, Ngcobo and Dangarembga's identities as African women are important to the chapter's analysis of women's concerns and needs as they give an 'insider-status' that is fundamental in articulating and addressing various issues of social injustice that have undermined and continue to complicate the lives and livelihoods of African women (Govinden, 1998). The study of feminist literature by African women becomes important in enabling me, as a man and a scholar, to understand the strategies deployed by African women in addressing or at least exposing women's concerns and needs, to help energise the global fight against gender, race, class and related inequalities.

What follows is an analysis of how each writer portrays women characters' needs and concerns, and the harrowing aggression, harassment and sense of injustice confronted by different women. Ngcobo and Dangarembga deploy various literary devices and strategies to expose the critical concerns and needs of African women in their novels. These include novel title, the setting and plot of each novel, women characters' powerful responses and actions of resistance to harmful practices and systems of oppression. The chapter's analysis begins with examining Ngcobo's ATDD before moving on to Dangarembga's portrayal of the same issues.

### **3.1 An overview of women's needs and concerns in *And They Didn't Die***

African women's concerns centre on how various systems of privilege have severely undermined their human rights. These systems of privilege have been accused of failure to recognise that the "rights of women are an integral part of human rights" (Ifechelobi, 2014:17). This stems from their pursuit of promoting men's interests. According to Ifechelobi, "Women want to be recognized and identified as human beings too after all, we are first human beings before the classification into gender, class etc" (2014:18). African women are, therefore, engaged in questioning and resisting the systems of privilege that deny them their rights.

Ngcobo's novel deals seriously with the themes of race, poverty and the oppressiveness of apartheid that South African women had to undertake to survive, satisfy their needs, social prescriptions and succeed in life. The novel is framed by ideas of oppression, a pervasive cancer as illustrated by the many women characters who are deeply concerned by the cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment perpetrated by the social, economic and political systems of the day. African women's concerns and their resistance stories are interwoven and connected to the madness of apartheid in South Africa that sought to disempower Africans socially, politically and economically and deny them their rights on the grounds of race. Denying African women their basic human needs and restricting their access to many unearned privileges enjoyed by men in the same home, school, church, world of work, land, and many other facets of life, is discriminatory and speaks of grievous "social, political and economic injustices" that should be challenged (Mama, 2001:59). In the novel, the women's concerns revolve around "their own fears about their land and stock, their children's education and their women's right of movement" (50-51), among many issues which the chapter explores in greater detail later.

The narrative centres on a young rural African woman, Jezile, who is married to Siyalo. Set in the barren rural enclave of Sigageni, the novel depicts the harsh realities exacted on African families to survive the indignities of apartheid that denied them most of their needs as well as their human worth by exposing them to abject poverty and other humiliations. It is the story of the couple's extraordinary endurance and remarkable defiance (despite their meagre resources) to survive apartheid's unjust inhuman racial policies that made it very difficult for Africans to lead dignified and fulfilling lives. Initially, the couple was unable to have a child of their own several years into their marriage because apartheid's exploitative labour laws took able-bodied men into towns to work in white industries (which further hampered any chance of development in African reserves), thereby dislocating African family life by keeping husband and wife apart for eleven months. Childlessness was a devastating experience for Jezile given patriarchal normativity's attachment of great value to maternity and children (Okolie, 1998). Bernstein has equated the apartheid-imposed estrangement between African wives and their husbands to the illegalisation of African marriages. She has argued that apartheid economic conditions unfairly

treated African men as “visitors” in their homes and made “a mockery of family life [marriages], cutting an impassable chasm between husband and wife” (1978:13). Without a child, Jezile faced patriarchal scorn and condemnation arising from the African patriarchal customs which made a demand on women’s procreative capacities (Okolie, 1998). However, when the couple finally succeeded to have a family of their own, they discovered how extremely difficult it was to keep the child alive as a consequence of apartheid’s horrible conditions for African people. It is the astonishing courage, particularly by Jezile and other women, to resist various forms of oppression so as to secure their families’ survival that makes this novel a remarkable story filled with hope.

The narrative style of ATDD largely follows the lives, actions and experiences of African women within patriarchal and apartheid settings, where Jezile is the protagonist and main character. Jezile is a powerful character, described by her husband, Siyalo, as “a woman with something unconquerable about her” (p.225). The description draws attention to the positive identities that Ngcobo has for her women characters. Following the life of a woman is a fundamental strategy deployed by Ngcobo who situates women as the subject of discussion and the central characters of her narrative. This narrative style where women characters are central figures to the advancement of the plot disrupts and seriously challenges the male-centred ideology imbedded in patriarchal normativity and its focus “primarily on men and boys and what they do” (Johnson, 2014:10). By using a literary approach that locates women at the centre of literary focus and makes their actions the subject of narrative interest, Ngcobo ensures that African women’s concerns and needs are not distorted, misrepresented, or buried under those of men who have accessed privileges most African women have been denied. Although ATDD follows the life of an individual woman, Jezile, this does not necessarily make it a story of an individual woman but that of most women such as Nosizwe, Gaba, Nomawa, MaBiyela and many other African women who were similarly concerned about the oppressions of various systems of domination.

### **3.1.1 Novel form and the representations of African women’s concerns with survival in *And They Didn’t Die***

The central issue that frames the novel is the ruthlessness of the apartheid system that gave Africans - women and men - little space and few possibilities to exercise their agency and to survive. However, African women were the worst victims because they were further oppressed within the family relations by their men. The setting helps capture African women's concerns with the impact of racial and gender inequalities which hampered and continue to undermine many women's lives.

The novel's setting is particularly interesting in creating an oppressive context for the narrative. The rural aspect of the setting builds an expectation in me as a reader, of encountering a society whose cultural practices, customs and values are imbedded in patriarchal normativity. This reflects Daymond's assertion that "rural life comes to stand for age-old traditions" (2004:144). Women characters confronted the oppressiveness of patriarchal expectations because, for the African woman, there was a "string of taboos that she had to observe" which did not apply to African men (p.56). Thus, the predominant rural setting is fundamental as it portends the impact of African patriarchal beliefs and practices that situated African men as more dominant than African women. The political setting of the novel, on the other hand, is reminiscent of the racist apartheid order of South Africa where the white male patriarch dominated everyone else in apartheid South Africa. Apartheid South Africa's political governance that was built and founded on inequalities confirm Mann's argument that situates the nation state (its politics and social organisation that promotes male privilege) as a form of patriarchal oppression (1986). In contrast to the elevated status of the white male patriarch who ruled over everyone in the novel, the African women occupied the foot of the social hierarchy where their inferior social positions in the home and public arena threatened the fulfilment of so many life-enriching needs and concerns that they had. The novel forges connections with real life dispensations of colonial rule whose power structures, based on race, condemned Africans, and African women in particular, to the fringes of social and economic participation, worsening their experiences of domination in the home. Thus, the apartheid and rural setting of Ngcobo's novel underlines African women's concerns with discrimination from different fronts: the racial and traditional patriarchal inequalities which continue to undermine many women's lives. Through the physical, social, political and cultural setting of the novel, it is clear that Ngcobo is not just dealing with African women's concerns with racial inequities but how their needs and priorities were further displaced within the context of African patriarchal structures. This resonates with O'Brien's argument that

apartheid worsened an “already intolerable pressure... [that was exerted on African women to perform] their duties as women” by African patriarchy (1994:150). Though there was common oppression for African women and men on the grounds of apartheid/colonial oppression, African women suffered further discrimination and subordination within African patriarchal structures on the grounds of gender. It shows that the patriarchal oppression of women was bound in an intricate and complicated way with the racial oppression of the African women and each system of privilege resulted in African women’s needs being unmet. These issues which the women found oppressive and concerning have remained topical even today. Thus, although the novel was written more than two decades ago, readers can easily identify with the contemporariness of many of the issues of African women’s pressing needs and concerns raised in the novel.

Due to the oppressions of the two patriarchal systems that dominated African women, (apartheid white patriarchy and African patriarchy) there was a gap between African women’s needs and priorities on one hand and what the two patriarchies prescribed and offered them. Against this background of African women being oppressed by different systems, their resilience is represented in ways that contradict many misconceptions embedded within patriarchal normativity about women. Ngcobo uses a variety of literary devices, including the plot, not only to represent and chronicle the harsh apartheid (mis)treatment of Africans but to also portray African women’s defiance.

The plot is structured and organised in ways that give primacy to African women’s powerful resistance despite the cruel apartheid system that sought to undermine their rights, concerns and needs. At the beginning of the narrative, the cruel domination of apartheid rule that frames the novel is represented by “[a] lone white man [who] stood planted like a spear on the earth of Sigageni” (p.1). Mr Pienaar, the white man, represents patriarchy: white patriarchy. He is also a representative of colonialism/apartheid and racism. Colonialism/racism reflects the “underlying factor in patriarchy [which] is power and status” where it is the white man who is perched at the top of the social hierarchy (Ifechelobi, 2014:18). The image of the spear etched in the soils of Sigageni, an African reserve, creates a metaphor that underpins the imperial and domineering attitudes of white colonialists on the African land. Giving primacy to the presence of a dominating white man in an area that apartheid’s Group Areas Act designated as an African

homeland helps underscore the unrestricted control and mobility of the white colonizers who, as the centre of power, had the freedom to roam all over South Africa, a privilege denied the Africans who needed a travelling pass. As a representative of white hegemony, Mr Pienaar's presence in Sigageni serves to reinforce racist ideologies in the African reserve and depicts the close surveillance that African communities were subjected to by apartheid authority that monitored their lives and refused them leeway to live freely. Therefore, Ngcobo's plot and its placement of Mr Pienaar, a white dipping officer, right at the beginning of the narrative, surveying the rural African village of Sigageni like he owned it and cursing its women for emptying the dip tank, describing them in crude dehumanizing terms as "[s]enseless, unthinking creatures" (p.1), is a pointer to the dominance and choking stranglehold that apartheid had over the lives of African people and how they were denied equal status. Mr Pienaar's posture underlines the hegemonic intentions of the apartheid administration to dominate the rural African communities and control their ways of life by demanding that they dip their cattle.

In spite of white dominance, the plot gives primacy to the courage and resilience of African women in their resistance of apartheid oppression. The novel opens in the midst of a month old protest by rural African women demanding that their concerns and needs regarding land injustice, health and other concerns be heard and addressed by the apartheid government. The opening sentence underlines women's refusal to comply with oppressive racial system that had undermined their interests: "The dipping tank was empty" (p.1). The reader is ushered by the spillage of the "dip mixture [which] lay green, drying in trickles and splashes on the grey clay soil" (p.1). The women were refusing to comply with the apartheid requirement: to dip their dying cattle. According to Lodge, "[d]ipping was... unpopular because it was believed to make cattle more susceptible to illness" (1983:149). Thus, to impress on their demands, "For the fourth successive week the women of Sigageni had emptied the tank in spite of the threats" (p.1). The women's courage and fearlessness even at the possibility of the army coming to besiege their village is demonstrated by Jezile's boldness when she says to the rest of the women: "Let them come, then perhaps they'll listen to what we have to say - we must tell them" (p.3). The bone of contention was the disjuncture between apartheid authority's construction of African women's needs and the women's definition of what they considered as their fundamental needs. The women's desire to speak implies their refusal to be silenced. They were struggling against a

callous apartheid authority that, like all forms of authority, “had been well-established, powerful, deaf and beyond questioning... [because] its power had not been derived from the gift of consent” (p.50). The ruthlessness of the system could not silence the women’s hunger to speak and be heard. Ifechelobi has cited D’Ameida who has stated: “Silence represents the historical muting of women under the formidable institution known as patriarchy, that form of social organization in which males assume power and create for females an inferior status” (2014:22). Silence can, therefore, be understood as ubiquitous, a patriarchal tool to control others (Uwakweh, 1995). However, African women are portrayed refusing that as they understood that “[a] human being’s voice is one of the precious assets so, anyone without a voice is bound to go in search of it” (Ifechelobi, 2014:24). The women’s desire to say something and for the apartheid officials to ‘listen’ marks their declaration of intent to be heard and not to be denied voice. This underscores the imperativeness of taking charge of their lives by speaking for themselves rather than being spoken for. It reveals that it is only women who understand what their true needs are and will not bow to being dictated to. The novel’s representations of women’s astonishing courage and desire for self-definition right at the beginning of the narrative and their demand to be heard contradicts patriarchal normativity’s misconceptions of women as people who are “meant only to be seen and not to be heard” (Ifechelobi, 2014:17).

The women refuse to recognise Pienaar and to be afraid of him. Though the dipping mixture lay everywhere and a white official stood in front of them, the women remained calm and collected and went about their business as if nothing had happened. The narrative voice describes “[a]group of about seven women approaching [Pienaar] non-chalantly... [and] were going to pass him by as though they had not seen him” (p.2). Their pretended obliviousness of Pienaar underlines their refusal to acknowledge the presence of the white man who, as a representative of apartheid (and patriarchal) authority, was expected to dominate them. Pienaar represented two oppressive systems: the apartheid system whose white hegemony sought to cower African women and men into submission and dictate to them to do its bidding: dipping their cattle. He also represented patriarchy. As a man, Pienaar was expected to be “in command of every situation, especially those involving women” (Johnson, 2014:13). There is, therefore, a shift in the portrayal of women and men in this case given that it is not the women but Pienaar who seems utterly disturbed, shattered and at a loss of how to deal with the women. Pienaar’s sense of

helplessness due to women's determined rebellion was deep as exposed by how "he slowly walked around in circles" and how he wondered "what more was he to report to the authorities at Ixopo" (p.1). Clearly, Pienaar felt vulnerable, showing the impact of oppression even on the lives of the oppressors who know no peace. This affirms French's argument that "dominators, pressured and threatened on all sides, have less personal freedom than an itinerant labourer" (1985:509). Because of the resistance of the African women, Pienaar is reduced into talking to himself in a fit of rage, reflecting the impact of the women's resistance. Representations of a man right at the beginning without control and feeling very vulnerable while the women are calm defies the logic of patriarchy where "the idea and practice of control as a core principle of social life is part of what defines patriarchal *manhood*, not *womanhood*" (Johnson, 2014:14). Patriarchy has associated men with "qualities such as control, strength... coolness under pressure" but, in this case, Pienaar lacks these qualities (Johnson, 2014:7). Thus, in their pursuit of the fulfilment of their needs, the African women challenge patriarchal normativity.

The novel's introduction and ending, as part of novel form, are significant. African women are shown, right at the beginning of the story, asking critical questions about their needs and concerns, and about cattle and land injustice. From the introduction, Ngcobo challenges patriarchal normativity that has limited women's identities and roles to child bearing and rearing. Within patriarchal normativity, cattle and land have been viewed as men's purview but in the novel, in the absences of their men, African women defended their community's interests regarding land and cattle (from apartheid misrule). As the narrative comes to a close, we witness Jezile who has just killed a white would-be-rapist uttering the following last words: "I had to defend her. We have to defend ourselves" (p.245). Thus, the novel starts with women resisting domination and ends with another woman murdering a white soldier. Thus, the narrative is framed by ideas of women defying patriarchal normativity, showing an emerging identity of brave women who will not watch as their lives are trivialised. The women did not just assimilate into the expectations set by patriarchal normativity about women and womanhood but questioned those assumptions and the oppressiveness of society. Thus, patriarchal normativity's proclivity towards limiting African women "to the home mostly as mothers and homemakers" should be questioned (Chukukere, 1998:140). The fact that women's resistance comes right at the beginning of the novel and is highlighted even at the end underlines women's refusal of

oppressive systems as a crucial need that they have. Their need is to lead liberated lives which do not fit into the oppressive assumptions entrenched by patriarchal normativity.

The women's defiant actions of emptying the dipping mixture are thought-provoking. They reject compliance with an oppressive socially-constituted system. This underscores Johnson's argument that "every system of privilege depends to some degree on subordinate groups going along with their own subordination" (2014:60). Thus, by refusing to dip their cattle, the women make a powerful statement of how the oppressed can make determined efforts not to go along with systems of oppression. Actions of resistance make the oppressor feel vulnerable and confused:

There's no place of safety for a dominator, ever; there is no security, peace or ease. The urge to control others backfires; it cannot be satisfied and it entraps the controller.... The dominators of the world never have a day off" (French, 1985:509).

This shows how costly it is even for oppressors to maintain systems of privilege as they make the world unhappy even for them. The African women's actions serve as a sharp reminder to all oppressors of the world that no system of privilege will last forever. This may be viewed as a call for all dominant groups not to evade close scrutiny of how their maintenance of systems is a burden even for them.

However, those who subscribe to oppressive systems of privilege do not accept defeat easily. Feeling defeated and angry, Mr Pienaar dangerously and threateningly "drove straight at [a group of women]... if only to filch away the apparent calm" (p.2). This was his attempt at regaining the composure and control he had apparently lost. His success in making the women scream and scatter in different directions underpins how the controlling power that men hold over women has been achieved through violence. The threat of being run over is a reminder of the brutality that characterised the apartheid system and how vulnerable and unsafe the African women's lives were (and have continued to be) within racist systems. It demonstrates how, within racialized structures, white people have arrogated so much power to themselves, which they have abused to oppress racialized people and deny them their rights. This is why these inequalities should be challenged and resisted by addressing the concerns and needs of the women.

The choice of title, *And They Didn't Die*, is a particularly interesting literary device that Ngcobo has deployed to challenge ideas of women as weak and passive. Providing a title for any work of fiction is a science. Genette (citing, Hoek) has posited that

the title as we understand it today is in fact, at least with respect to ancient and classical intitulations, a construct, an artefact created for reception or commentary... [that] may contain much additional information that the author, the editor, and the public would not have distinguished [in the past] as clearly as we do now (1988: 692-693).

This is an argument that points out the title as a critical element that should “be analysed if we truly wish to identify its constituent elements” and have a deeper appreciation of the text (Genette, 1988:693). Genette has further argued that the title holds significance in any literary work as “a sort of flag toward which one directs oneself” (1988:701). Thus, there is some form of inseparability between the title and “the work’s destiny” (Genette, 1988: 699). Therefore, a good title should provoke curiosity and inspire readers towards attaining the meaning of the text.

Ngcobo’s title, as part of her novel form, is a fundamental tool that she has deployed to convey important messages about women, their will-power to survive and remarkable resistance against certain death. Unlike her first novel, *Cross of Gold*, where African men are central characters in the struggle for independence, and the only woman character, Sindisiwe Zikode, a mother and anti-apartheid fighter, is shot by the police in the first chapter of the novel and dies a painful death, Ngcobo’s second novel, *And They Die*, may be seen as redressing the depiction of women characters. This time her women characters, as suggested by the title, do not die but survive the viciousness of apartheid and the oppressiveness of African patriarchy. They escape the tragic and premature death that Sindisiwe faced in *Cross of Gold*. So the title, *And They Didn't Die* reflects

a counter-narrative to the predicament the women faced in the first novel. Ngcobo's choice of title for her second novel makes "a great claim for the human spirit amidst adversity" (Daymond, 1998:272). It is a simple statement that locates survival at the centre of the narrative, as an important and urgent need that African women have which, however, was threatened by apartheid politics. The title also raises serious questions about social (in)justice, by exposing the precariousness of African life under apartheid and the possibilities of dying as a result of apartheid oppression. Thus, the title portends the threat of death that hangs as a noose round the necks of many African people. This is a powerful exposure of how African women's needs and rights have been undermined. Death was an ever-present threat for the Africans who shared drinking "water from the spring" with animals that "dirtied it" (p.144). It was terrible for the Africans because life under apartheid was a daily struggle to survive the gridlock of brutal apartheid policies, laws and very harsh economic conditions. Thus, what they needed was not what apartheid offered them but transformation of its oppressive racial policies so as to meet their needs.

Ngcobo's title does not only indicate the threat of death but also celebrates African people's resilience and victory over death. In this way, the title locates life and grief as closely and strangely entwined in the lives of African people. In spite of the horror of life-threatening conditions that apartheid exposed Africans to, the title announces Africans' refusal to succumb to death. In that way, it offers so much hope for African families' survival and triumph over oppressive conditions. This survival was made possible through the various strategies of resistance and ingenuity of African women (and men) as explored in the next chapter). Thus, the title is an interesting literary strategy deployed by Ngcobo to underscore not only the brutality of the apartheid system but, in the same breath, also highlight African women's (and men's) incredible resilience and ingenuity to ensure their families' survival. Survival was not assured and it needed great interventions and the women's powerful responses to address their apartheid

oppression and domination (Daymond, 1992; 1998). However, the mere fact that they survived where they could have died underlines their formidable spirit against oppressive systems.

Ngcobo evokes the horror of the brutality of apartheid inequalities and politics by portraying the extreme conditions in which Africans lived which exposed them to abject poverty. For instance, Sigageni, one of the reserves allocated Africans by the white colonialists was a poverty-stricken area where “The sun got hotter by the day... [and] [t]he fields lay fallow and bare, baking in it day by day” (p118). Because of the intense heat, “the crops were scorched and dying in the grip of another drought. Sigageni was [perennially] in the hold of a slow death - each year worse than the last” (p.38). The picture of Sigageni’s aridness and grim poverty that Ngcobo portrays here sharply contrasts with the situation obtaining at “Mr Collett’s and Mr Hencock’s farms that surrounded Sigageni” (p.114-115). The white farms are not only lush green and huge, but there is plenty of food as shown in how, to the dismay of African women, the two white farmers even had enough skimmed milk which they refused the starving African children because, they argued, “they needed it for their pigs” (p.115). Clearly, these white farmers valued their pigs higher than their African neighbours whom they left to starve than give the milk. The inequalities created by the apartheid administration underline Moser’s views of “the state as the dominant structure of power, control and domination” (1993:191). As a consequence of African people’s predicament and the threat of death that hovered above them, survival became a critical need. “In the heat of the day people [of Sigageni] shied away from looking at each other’s eyes, afraid to answer the silent questions and respond to the bewilderment they would see there” (p.118). This reveals how desperate their situation was. Ngcobo’s portrayal of the ruthlessness of apartheid is a cry against the nation state’s refusal to meet the basic needs of its citizenry.

It was not only the crops that were drying in the scorching heat of the sun in Sigageni but even the cattle were dying. Children were severely malnourished or dying as shown by the description of S’naye’s “emaciated” body where her “[v]eins stood out distended and pulsing at the temples” (p.114). This exposes the callousness of white imperialist rule in Africa and the serious damage its racial inequalities caused on the physical, social and psychological lives of African people, “with its train of misery, pillage, crime and destruction of human and cultural values” (Cabral,

1972:205). As we see Jezile's profound pain as she looks at her severely malnourished child upon her return from prison, a child who had lost "all that thick crop of hair" where "only sparse brown wisps remained" and the "skin hung loose on the body except around the face and head" (p.114), we understand how much the survival of her child was her critical need. We experience with her the harshness of apartheid racism that denied African people equal chance at life and survival given that pigs enjoyed skimmed milk but "there was no food to sustain S'naye" (p.116). With such levels of apartheid heartlessness, the survival of her child was uppermost in Jezile's mind as her greatest concern. The impact of the African women's roles in ensuring survival of their children and families against all odds is a powerful way of challenging the misconceptions about women in patriarchal normativity.

What is noteworthy is how similar Jezile's needs were to her husband's. Both were interested in the survival of their child. Siyalo was determined to do something: "I'm not going to let my child die simply because all odds are loaded against me. I want my child to live" (p.141). African women and men's similar needs and concerns as reflected here are a powerful way of challenging patriarchal normativity that has sought to situate them in binary terms.

African women were not just concerned with the survival of "our children [who] die in their numbers, but our men [who] die young because they drink all these concoctions" to drown their sorrow (p.46). The African women's concerns with the welfare of children and men links African feminism "to the liberation of the entire society" and this demystifies negative views that portray it as a struggle for the "woman in isolation" (Chukukere, 1998:144). African women's concerns with the welfare of their men reflects the "social connectedness" between women and men which patriarchal normativity attempts to shroud through its separation of women and men along sex and gender (Kabeer, 1992:14). Though theoretically it is possible to separate women from men, in reality separating them is complex because "we can no more talk about women than about men" (Cixous, 2011:286). Ngcobo's portrayal of women contradicts Western feminist ideas that have often equated women's liberation with separatism between women and men. African women's concerns with their men's well-being shows how African masculinities have not been exempt from enduring the oppression perpetrated by white supremacist ideas. This

confirms Lorentzen's argument about the existence of inequalities between masculinities where some men, particularly African men, have also suffered marginalisation (2014). Thus, African feminism is more broad-based and holistic in approach as its goal is social transformation for everyone's benefit.

African women's identities as mothers and as wives are portrayed as very critical as they inspire their concerns for their children and husbands as well as trigger their challenge of apartheid oppression. In the words of Razavi and Miller, women's concerns "stem from social problems embracing both men and women and that require solutions affecting both genders" (1995:i). This means that as mothers and as wives, African women cannot just watch their children and men dying but act in ways that ensure their families' survival. Therefore, motherhood and wifehood need to be viewed in very positive light given their instrumental role in ensuring survival. This is a clear departure from patriarchal normativity that has often devalued motherhood and wifehood. Thus, Ngcobo's portrayal of the significance of African women's identities as mothers and as wives in influencing their resistance to racial oppression contradicts some narrow Western feminist definitions that have insisted on "distinguishing between engaging as a 'woman' and engaging as a 'mother' or a 'wife'" (Nnaemeka, 1998:17). As Ngcobo depicts, African women's engagement in challenging systems of oppression is based on their identities and experiences as women, as mothers and as wives. Such views present African feminism as a struggle that is not anti-man. All this underpins O'Brien's argument: "[w]omen's domestic role actually necessitates and compels political action" that benefits society (1994:150). Thus, the African women's concerns with the welfare of their men and children challenges the "dismissal of maternal politics as nonfeminist politics" (Nnaemeka, 1998:18). In other words, African women's maternal roles and duties did not hold them back from aspiring to fight to improve the conditions for themselves and their families. Thus, contrary to patriarchal assumptions that have devalued womanhood, women's roles as mothers and as wives are very important.

The deaths of children and young men that the women were concerned about, as alluded to above, construct a worrying picture of a community denied to grow old and to reach full maturity by the toxic and suffocating apartheid politics. African women's concerns with the

vulnerabilities of the African families and the survival of everybody - men and children alike - suggest, as earlier highlighted, how everyone stands to benefit from African women's struggles against social injustice. It also reveals that "men's and women's lives are so bound up with one another" (Johnson, 2014:204). The adoption of African feminism to analyse the literary texts studied confirms how African women and men's concerns are linked in ways that hegemonic Western feminism has misunderstood. Instead of binary relations often associated with Western feminism's portrayal of women and men's relations (Muchemwa, 2002), Ngcobo, as an African feminist writer, shows that African women and men have been oppressed together within racial discourses. This has been affirmed by Oyekan: "[r]acism, both in intent and effect, portends grave consequences not only to the black women but also to the black man" (2014:4). African women's concerns with their men's welfare as represented in the novel is a powerful response to Ratele's criticism of the way in which men have been somewhat "relatively neglected within gender-critical works" (2015:145). Ratele's argument is a call to explore the complexities of oppression where, even if African men have been privileged by sexist attitudes, they too have suffered racial prejudices alongside African women. African feminism has shown that, for the African feminist to solely champion for emancipation against African familial patriarchy at the exclusion of racial/colonial patriarchy (as another form of patriarchy that severely affects women and men) will not yield total liberation for African women at all. Therefore, African feminism's struggle "is a much broader enterprise that seeks to advance societies as a whole by ensuring that... all human beings can develop and make choices without the limitations set by stereotypes, rigid gender roles, and prejudices" (Lorentzen, 2014:16). The fact that African women and men's lives are actually bound up with one another is one reason why Johnson has argued that "finding a way out of patriarchy has to involve men" (2014:204) because men are also "gendered beings" (Kimmel, 2005:106). This challenges African men to reciprocate by fighting alongside African women to transform society's oppressive systems.

Owing to apartheid, African patriarchal structures were dislocated as African men failed to perform the breadwinners' roles expected of them by patriarchal normativity. The novel's portrayal of men's failure to accomplish their roles as breadwinners is a continuing challenge in most of rural Southern Africa today where African women continue to take "primary

responsibility for all aspects of the family's welfare" (Narismulu, 1999:72). The horrible picture of African men's vulnerabilities and the helplessness of their situation is depicted through Siyalo who was forced to steal milk in order to feed his hungry daughter but got arrested for it. For Africans, having to resort to stealing to survive highlights the magnitude of apartheid's denial of their rights and needs which were regarded as inconsequential. Getting arrested for stealing a few pints of milk in order to ensure the survival of his hungry dying child is a very small crime that pales in magnitude with what the white colonialists did: stealing a whole country and getting away with it. This brings into question apartheid justice. Siyalo's defence of his actions before the white man, Masadubana, when caught stealing, exposes the sharp contrast between the privation of African lives and white opulence:

These are your cattle. But you don't need this can of milk as much as I do. My child is dying. She's starving. I came to you for your skimmed milk a while ago; the kind you give your pigs. I wanted to buy it from you but your servants said you would not let me (p.143).

Siyalo also defended his actions before his wife who had criticized him for bringing stolen milk: "Stolen food! Did you say stolen food? I want to know who's doing the stealing in this country" (p.141). His arguments expose the hypocrisy and acute injustice of white colonialism and its rotten partisan politics that was blind to the humanity and needs of the African people. Clearly, Siyalo's vulnerability at the hands of settler colonialism, a form of colonial patriarchy that undermined African masculinity, impacted on the whole family. Jezile was the worst victim, particularly after Siyalo got imprisoned. Thus, white colonial patriarchy worsened African women's experiences of African patriarchal oppression. Disregard for African people's rights and needs provides justification why the oppressiveness of systems of privilege and domination should be challenged. In her discussion with Jezile and MaBiyela after Siyalo got a ten year prison sentence for stealing milk, Nosizwe underscored the critical role that South Africa's apartheid politics (colonial patriarchy) played in creating the lack and suffering among African people:

The reason why Siyalo has no job is political; the reason why he [and many others] could not make use of the land to raise crops to feed his family is political; the

reason why all your cows have died in the drought is political. We have no grass when Collett has so much - that is political; the reason why he has such a large farm and hundreds of cows is political - it's not because he's a brilliant man... it is because the government gives him such high subsidies to maintain his crops and preferential treatment in marketing his produce - there's no magic in it - it is political (p.154).

Nosizwe's outpouring of anger at the racial inequities and the lack among Africans due to racial politics shows how horrible the racial inequalities created by the apartheid government have been to the African people. Thus, a change in the racial politics of the land is the most pressing need that African women have to fight for because apartheid, also known as settler colonialism, is the source of all the brutal conditions of deprivation they endure in the novel.

The women's courage in the face of their challenges was astonishing. They might have confronted "many burdens - the children were ill or dying, the women were childless, the husbands or sons were away in the cities and were jobless... there was little rain and the crops were failing" (p.17). Yet, in spite of the oppressiveness of their situation being very apparent, the women "talked and laughed loudly" (p.17). Their outward show of strength defied the enormity of the challenges before them: "They were capable, they were strong. They had to be" in order for their families to survive (p.17). This affirms Aina's argument that "For the African woman, fighting for survival remains a priority" (1998:71). The African women had to be creative so as to manage to laugh amidst all this adversity. Managing to laugh is a marker of the women's resilience and refusal to succumb to systems of oppression. They went about their daily lives normally in an abnormal situation, their tenacity enabling them to fend for their children. Today, most African women continue to be "trapped in the daily business of securing the survival of themselves, their families and their communities (Mama 2001:59). The role of women in securing survival is represented as very crucial. This affirms Aina's argument that, in Africa, "the survival of poor families from the devastating socio-economic situation on the continent depends largely on the strategies adopted by women" (1998:71). Locating women at the centre of the survival of families offers a powerful challenge to patriarchal normativity that has

portrayed women as less important to men. Women are not weak or passive. African women's engagement with issues of survival and the threat of death posed by apartheid laws is addressed in Keshia Abraham:

[s]urvival is the primary way in which African women... have been and are resisting. It may seem to those on the outside of this identity that it does not require a choice - you just live and that's it - but for those of us on the inside who live with the daily reality that as Audre Lorde says, 'we were never meant to survive', we know better (2003:154).

Thus, through this novel's title that celebrates triumph over death and other aspects of its form, Ngcobo challenges patriarchal normativity's trivialization of the critical roles women continue to play to ensure the survival of families and communities. In this way, men's monopoly over the tag of breadwinners is challenged.

### **3.1.2 The role of women's education in raising consciousness about oppression**

In order for women to successfully challenge patriarchal normativity and other systems of oppression, an important and urgent need observed in ATDD is education. In her speech to the women of Sigageni, Nosizwe highlights the importance of education when she says to them: "there's a lot for us to learn" (p.46). Perhaps Nosizwe sensed that the majority of the rural women she was dealing with required some kind of education regarding their oppression as they lacked critical understanding of the nature of the struggle they were about to engage in. Education has been viewed as one of the "necessary ingredients for total female emancipation" (Chukukere, 1998:145). Uwakweh agrees: "Education is critical to female independence" (1998:13). It is a catalyst for the creation of "increased awareness of human rights among women [which] will ultimately lead to their empowerment" (Chukukere, 1998:145). Given the brutal colonial mental conquest and misinformation (of those subjugated) resulting from white imperialism, education occupies a critical space in the decolonisation of African people's minds (Ngugi wa Thiong'o, 1986). Colonialism was designed "to introduce [the colonised to] new forms of seeing reality and unconsciously or consciously relinquishing one's cultural norms and

adopting new ones” (Dascal 2007:1). This is the primary aim of every oppressive system of privilege such as patriarchy and colonialism: to twist “the logic and take over the thought and actions of its victims” (Kgatla, 2018:148; Dascal, 2007). To reverse the adverse mental conquest of African women and men produced by colonisation as well as achieve liberation from the other oppression of patriarchy, education becomes even more critically needed for the emancipation of African women.

Drawing from the above, education is a powerful tool that has a decolonising impact on the victims by reversing or at least minimising, the influence of the repressive agenda of systems of oppression. According to Kgatla, “the process of the decolonisation of the mind is an attempt to help black people reach self-empowerment and self-emancipation from external as well as from internal enslavement and the control of their colonisers” and such decolonisation requires precision of thought in articulating it (2018:146). Though Kgatla was discussing on the impact of colonisation on both African women and men, her argument has equal bearing when it comes to challenging patriarchal normativity so that women are also ‘decolonised’ from the influence of many erroneous assumptions imbedded in patriarchy. This means that in the African women’s fight for their “dignity and true humanness” (Illunga, 1984:156), education plays an important role for them to realise the corrosive impact of patriarchal normativity and other oppressions in undermining their needs. Thus, women’s and men’s ability to articulate how they have been oppressed is a crucial step in their struggles for liberation and equality from the systems that have undermined their livelihoods. In ATDD, during a women’s Thursday prayer meeting where Nosizwe, as “their political leader” (p.40), was helping organise and mobilise African women for anti-apartheid resistance, she pointed out: “[t]here are times when I feel that many of us suffer and fight back without the full understanding of what is going on, why it is going on, and where it is taking us” (p.42). Her argument emphasises that without acquiring clear understanding of how oppression has played out, women’s resistance will be weakened. This underpins Abraham’s argument that it is dangerous to fight a system without seeking clarity on how its oppression plays out (1999).

Patient education provided by educated African women and intellectual activists like Nosizwe, a doctor by profession, and Tokozile, a journalist, was a fundamental enabler for poor rural African women characters in the novel to clearly understand how various apartheid legislations created opportunities for white abuse and left African people vulnerable and easy prey for exploitation of their labour by the men who oppressed them. Such “[c]onsciousness raising and increased awareness of human rights among women will ultimately lead to their empowerment” (Chukukere, 1998:145). Nosizwe explained how apartheid’s capitalist system had created policies and laws that enabled easy exploitation of both African women and men as sources of cheap labour:

[t]he reserves are the creation of the government to provide a source of cheap labour for white people’s agriculture, mining and industry. To force our men to go to these places, it is necessary that we should starve; that means we should have less land to cultivate and that they should go out and work for food. Also, the government has imposed a number of taxes of various kinds to force the men to work to pay these taxes: poll tax, quit-rent or hut-tax (p.42).

Such apt articulation by Nosizwe left the women “agitated and restless” (p.46). She raised their political awareness of how white colonial patriarchy that subjugated and captured African men by forcing them into underpaying employment impacted on the women’s conditions and relations with their men: “[w]e live all our lives without the help of our men... our men earn very little for the jobs they do out there” (p.43). She showed how oppressive African patriarchal relations in the home were reinforced by colonial/apartheid and its capitalist ideology. Thus, she equipped and empowered the women’s analyses of their situations and, for the first time, “there was a qualitative change in Sigageni” (p.50). After her informative conscious-raising speech, the women were no longer the same: “it was not the face of fear that she saw... [but] an accommodation of new factors and of strange possibilities” (p.47). This affirms education as an important need and a necessary ingredient in strengthening women’s resistance and struggle against different forms of oppression (Mama, 2001). Without education, there is great potential that women’s articulation of their challenges and concerns will be murky, full of heat than light as illustrated when MaBiyela stood up to address the women: “There was no eloquence in her

words, only the strength of affirmation” (p.49). MaBiyela and many barely educated women in the novel may be feminists in practice, but the lack of education weakens the proficiency required to clearly expound on critical theoretical formulations that are fundamental in driving feminism and linking different sites of oppression. Thus, education is a critical need in the feminist struggle and feminist intellectuals have a special role to play if all women are to have proper conceptualisation of the diverse ways of their oppression. This affirms Mama’s argument: “We cannot afford to ignore the importance of intellectual work, especially in the 21<sup>st</sup> century when knowledge and information define power more than ever before” (2001:63). Education is, therefore, a critical liberatory tool for resistance to take place.

The women did not have access to any formal school to acquire such an education but the Thursday prayer meetings provided insightful political education that provoked and emboldened their desire to resist. Nosizwe explained possibilities that the women could “be assaulted... end up in prison... lose what little land you have and be dispersed” (p.46), yet, the political consciousness received strengthened their resolve to resist rather than be crushed. Chukukere clarifies the value of their regular Thursday meetings: “Women must continue to meet, discuss, and learn from each other’s experiences. Knowledge of individual experiences will lead to group consciousness” (1998:144-145). This is exactly what happened in ATDD. During the prayer meetings, women took turns to share their experiences with the rest of the women. Thus, prayer meetings among the African women “assumed a much wider meaning over and above the strictly religious intention” (p.41). The ‘prayer’ meetings opened up space for African women to speak out about the gaps between their needs and what colonial/apartheid patriarchy produced for them, their oppressed men and children. This affirms Razavi and Miller’s argument about the churches being critical in “creating space for women to politicize their demands” and their needs (1995:ii). The church space enabled them to educate each other, strategise, challenge and create political awareness. They also were a guise to evade monitoring/policing from the white man and to reduce suspicion. Without such critical political education and mobilization, women’s resistance could have been weakened. These Thursday church meetings where women discussed the oppressiveness of their situations and mobilised each other for resistance can be interpreted as a way of calling “upon the church to get involved in human projects of liberation” (Kgatla,

2018:146). The African women's horrible situation demanded spiritual intervention. The urgency of the women's need for social transformation is underlined by the regularity of their weekly prayer sessions which they held "throughout the country, every week of every year" (p.41). At church, they "poured out their loneliness to God, and vicariously to each other" (p.17). This indicates how much they needed one another as well as supernatural intervention in their plight (p.17). Thus, African women occupied a mediatory role between the two worlds: the natural and the supernatural. Unfortunately for them, the same God they prayed to would at times "send pests of all kinds to destroy the crops, or would send them devastating storms instead of gentle rain, that poured scorn on all their labours" (p.17). It was as if they had been neglected by their God and so had no one to turn to but themselves.

Though the women were burdened by the precariousness of their positions in the apartheid-created rural slums where they had to deal with severely malnourished "children [who] were ill or dying" (p.17), the Thursday prayer meetings and the political education they continued to receive transformed them in a number of positive ways. They did not only help cement ideas of communality and solidarity with oppressed women in other parts of the country but also inspired them into dreaming for change of their oppressed realities.

People met on the pathways, stopped to greet each other, and to ask after their health as always - and lately, to inquire with their looks and gestures. What was it they wanted to know?... Was it a concern about the future? In all their daily chat, for years now, they had concerned themselves only about the past and the present - never asked about the future (p.50).

Thus, the impact of political education could be seen as the women were no longer the same. The narrator says: "something had stirred, something deep down – ever so imperceptibly at first, but there had been no mistaking it. Everywhere you had turned there had been a new sense of direction" (p.50). Hope filled their lives and they lived their lives with new purpose: to seek change. This underlines how education transforms people's world outlook.

Women also educated and raised each other's consciousness about the oppressiveness of their own African patriarchal structures in very informal settings, not just the tyranny of apartheid. Gaba whose "husband had died in Johannesburg" and Nomawa whose husband "had simply disappeared, again in Johannesburg" (p.147), were powerful agents in helping Jezile realise the destructive impact of patriarchal normativity to women's survival needs. Gaba quizzed Jezile: "Just what do you think you're doing, burying yourself in that house like a mole. A house is the death of a woman" (p.158). The impact of this teaching was to open Jezile's mind that she could not remain imprisoned to patriarchal expectations that tied a woman to the domestic space. Such critical education was important for Jezile to venture out and survive, particularly after Siyalo had been imprisoned. Gaba and Nomawa had a strong opinion about patriarchal normativity's overwhelming injustice for daughters-in-law and challenged Jezile not to subordinate her interests to those MaBiyela, her mother-in-law:

MaBiyela, footsek!.... Look, from now it's you and you alone that you need to consider, whatever decision you're making.... MaBiyela has no money to give you and MaBiyela must shut up (p.159).

Their critical analysis of the oppressiveness of patriarchy helps underscore how education is critical in the fight against the oppression of women.

The education the women offered each other was critical for survival. In spite of Gaba and Nomawa having no husbands, (including Jezile after the imprisonment of Siyalo), they showed great resourcefulness to survive despite their deplorable and meagre provisions. "[t]hese young women were on their own, left exposed to all the callous talk reserved for women bereft of husbands" (p.147) but did not buckle under pressure. They supported and strengthened each other: "Jezile was adopted into the unofficial women's league of the lonely, the deserted and the widowed, those who were left at the mercy of their mothers-in-law without recourse to male protection" (148). This description of women, their solidarity and need for each other is a shift from patriarchal normativity that has suggested that women benefit more from associating with men than with women. Instead, these women have strength as women and are not passive. They ventured out of their homes to look for economic opportunities that helped alleviate their pathetic

situations. Venturing out to find food for their families demystifies patriarchal normativity's confinement of women to narrow roles as mothers and home makers.

Jezile epitomises the women's strength, resourcefulness and creativity in the midst of want, and terrible privations that could easily flatten their spirits. When, earlier, Siyalo had been rendered jobless and "was at his wits' end" on how to provide for the family (p.126), Jezile's resourcefulness and strength were visible when she took over the family responsibilities as breadwinner, and "did work very hard. She always seemed to have alternative chores to do - when she was not cooking, she was fetching water; if not, she was trailing cattle wherever they were, looking for their dung, to make fuel" (p.127). Jezile did a lot of work, including working "as a water carrier, a wood gatherer, a road mender" (p.5.6). She even went out with other women to work at the Dumas, leaving her husband more of a 'housebound' - rendered helpless by his inability to help the family. White patriarchy had made him feel vulnerable. He only "felt revived [after] his mother had assigned him a role" (p.122), underlining how women run affairs to ensure survival. Thus, what women do is far more than those roles ascribed them by patriarchal normativity. Unfortunately, patriarchal normativity has overlooked the important roles of women: "women and the work they do tend to be devalued, if not made invisible, and women are routinely repressed in their development as human beings" (Johnson, 2014:15). The work that Jezile engaged in was significant as it ensured the survival of the family against all odds, particularly at a very trying moment when the husband had lost his job. "If hard work, providing, and breadwinning define manhood" (Johnson, 2014:134), then, clearly, the representation of Jezile's critical labour that supported life and ensured the survival of the whole family connected her to masculinity. This questions patriarchal normativity's conceptualisations of masculinity and femininity as binaried terms.

The fact that Siyalo tried different vocations after losing his job but failed shows the fallacy of viewing men as complete on their own, as they also need women. Jezile's success where Siyalo, a man, failed, further questions and challenges the many misconceptions about women and men that are rooted in patriarchal normativity. Ngcobo's portrayal of Siyalo and Jezile reflects Johnson's observation that "[m]en and women often appear and behave in ways that do not fit

masculine and feminine expectations” (2014:87). The notable contribution of Jezile and many other women affirms the goals of feminism which “seeks to give the women a sense of self as worthy, effectual, and contributing human beings” (Ifechelobi, 2014:20). Thus, by making visible the importance of women’s labour and contribution which, unfortunately, patriarchal normativity has trivialised and “rendered invisible” simply because it falls “under the category of housework” (Razavi and Miller, 1995:9), Ngcobo powerfully challenges patriarchal normativity. Given the amount of time Siyalo spent in prison, it means that it was Jezile whose contribution greatly ensured family survival. It can only be grossly unfair to overlook that great sacrifice towards the good of the family by women. Therefore, views that demean women as dependents are questioned through such representation of women. Ngcobo’s portrayal of the enormous contribution of women to the survival of the family offers powerful challenges to views propagated by patriarchal normativity which tend to erroneously negate women and womanhood as if, in being women, they lacked masculine attributes and were mere adjuncts to men or their appendages (Sofola, 1998). Jezile, like many of the women of her community, was a strong character who could not be viewed in patriarchal terms as unproductive. The narrative voice says about the women of the village: “They were capable, they were strong. They had to be” (p.17). Such characterisation defies any patriarchal logic that may attempt to marginalise women. Therefore, through her depictions of African women’s productivity, creativity and resourcefulness to survive, Ngcobo succeeds in challenging patriarchal normativity.

Drawing from the above, the key roles performed by the women in the novel, to provide for families and raise children almost single handedly, emphasises that motherhood should not be despised, diminished, or treated as a subject of patriarchal contempt and devaluation (Uwakweh, 1998). Ngcobo’s representations of the capacity of many women as heads of families and breadwinners comes as a direct challenge to patriarchal normativity that has situated women as dependent on men. It is quite misleading, therefore, to accept patriarchal misrepresentations of women that have often situated women as “needy beneficiaries... [and] passive recipients of welfare programmes” from the government or from men (Miller, 1995:4). O’Brien has underscored this emerging identity of independent women who do not rely on men for survival as she has promoted views where “the condition of motherhood is viewed with pride and

reverence by women themselves” (1994:149). Because today many women similarly assume family responsibilities as single parents, it is grossly unfair that most women, particularly in Third World countries, remain oppressed by a variety of oppressive systems. This is a powerful argument for the transformation of society to empower women and enable them to fulfil, even more, the diverse needs of the family.

### **3.1.3 Dislocation and (un)belonging: representations of African women’s concerns with land hunger, dispossession and displacement**

Another critical area of concern where the ruthlessness of apartheid oppression was most felt by African women related to their being denied land rights and a chance to increase cattle head when white farmers had easy access and rights to land and cattle. Land was, and continues to be a crucial need for women in postcolonial Africa (*United Nations Human Rights Report, 2015*). It remains a critical resource for them to produce their material realities. However, their need for land and their access to this critical commodity sharply conflicted with the intentions of the apartheid government which, through its laws and agents, sought to “control land use and soil management” (Walker, 1991:232). The apartheid government produced oppressive laws to determine where Africans could live or go, how big their land could be, how many cattle they could have, implying that African land needs and access were severely repressed.

Conceptualisation of land access and ownership in ATDD underscores the dynamics of African women’s struggles, revealing the impact of racial inequalities and exclusionary politics in land ownership that Ngcobo wishes to expose.

Ngcobo grapples with what it meant to be African in apartheid South Africa. Her novel derives from historical records that have shown rampant land dispossession of Africans during apartheid. According to Lodge, “there existed large numbers of people with access to no cultivated land at all” (1983:271). For those with land, it “was ill-suited for cultivation” (Lodge, 1983:272).

Landlessness compromised African women’s productive capacity as highlighted by Nosizwe that African women and men’s greatest need as “the land to live on and cultivate to raise food crops for our children” (p.46). The relationship with recorded history suggests “that it [the novel] is to be read... as a ‘supplement’ to history which gives a ‘dense realisation of the texture of life [and]

the individual experience of historical time” (Daymond, 2004:142). The cruel apartheid land dispossessions that concerned African women in the novel is premised on the acute land shortages (among Africans) that followed “the passing of the Natives’ Land Act of 1913 [which] has been seen as probably the single most destructive piece of legislation for African life, both rural and urban” (Daymond, 2004:143). The major challenge confronted by Africans was that there were “too many people on too little land. But the [apartheid] government chooses not to see it that way” (p.43).

Within apartheid South Africa, owning land, belonging, dispossession and displacement were all fused, entangled and dependent on one’s racial identity. The centuries of colonial-apartheid aggressions, dispensations, and laws triggered and advanced widespread land grabbing by whites, and so created acute land hunger among Africans as their crowded “reserves were never meant to provide enough food” (p.43). Land access for African women was complicated even further by patriarchal structures because women accessed land through their husbands or fathers. Boehmer has suggested that owing to patriarchal normativity and its repression of women’s access and ownership of land, “the motherland of Africa... may not ‘signify’ ‘home’ and ‘source’ to women in the same way that it does to men” (1991:5). For instance, after Jezile was divorced and ejected from the Majola family, she found herself with no piece of land to call her own. She was afraid she “might be sent to some distant rural part where all the landless were being dumped” (p.220). It was “the Mapangas [who] got together and decided they would build a small house for Jezile within the confines of her mother’s homestead” (p.220). Thus, though land was a rare commodity for the Africans, it was particularly more difficult to access for the African women. According to Nosizwe, “Not only does it [land] fail to produce food, but it cannot support the livestock which we use to till this land” (p.43). This severely stifled African women’s productivity. According to Tsikata, it is only when African women have full access to the land and have ownership of productive land that they can take full advantage of it, not when they lack access to it (2009). Even in the postcolonial dispensation, land has remained a critical need. Landlessness continues to undermine African women and men’s potential to produce their material needs. Contemporary South Africa continues to grapple with the same issues of land inequalities created by the skewed colonial-apartheid policies as argued by Lindiwe Sisulu:

The issue of disparity in land ownership [in South Africa today] is part of the unfortunate past of South Africa during which ownership was based on the colour of people's skins (2018:A2).

The magnitude and severity of land inequities that the African women were concerned about in Ngcobo's novel can be understood through Sisulu's explanations:

Critically, this apartheid legacy means that today, 72 percent of agricultural land is owned by white people; 15 percent by coloured people; 5 percent by Indian people; and 4 percent by African people. This in a country where white people constitute 8,9 percent... and African people 79,2 percent (2018:A2).

Thus, land imbalances have clearly been fuelled by the greed of the few white colonialists who felt entitled by their race to expose the rest to vile abuse.

In ATDD, the crucial role of land in the lives of African women is evidenced by their view of the land as the "sole support for us and the children" (p.43). This is confirmed right at the beginning of the narrative where we see a "group of about seven women... with hoes slung over their shoulders" (p.2). The hoes are a testimony of African women's desire to be "active contributors to economic development" (Razavi and Miller, 2014:4). The hoes illustrate their productive role to the welfare of their families. They mark their refusal of tag of economic dependents. They till the land and contribute to the food production and catering for the economic needs of their families, showing the critical role of the land in securing the material realities of their lives. Such conceptualisation of the land echoes a *United Nations Human Rights Report* that has affirmed the fundamental significance of the land by locating it as "an essential element for the realization of many human rights.... [and as] a source of livelihood... [that] is central to economic rights" (2015:4). Without access to land, African women's livelihoods cannot be secured. Therefore, landlessness is a violation of their human rights. The novel shows African people very concerned by being bundled off their land and being thrown into semi-arid areas like Sigageni where survival was extremely difficult. The callousness of their displacement reminisces diverse discriminatory and segregatory laws passed by the apartheid government (to benefit white people) such as the Development Trust and Land Act No 18 of 1936 and later the Natives Resettlement Act, Act No 9 of 1954" where the white government granted itself powers "to eliminate 'Black spots' (Black-owned land surrounded by White-owned land)" (Horrell,

1978:203). In terms of the latter Act, the government acquired alternative land for the displaced Africans (South African History Online, 2011). Apartheid racial impunity and the intense avaricious nature of the apartheid system of governance resulted in the snatching away of land rights from the African community who were forcibly removed from their land, allowing white farmers to lay claim to the land they had vacated. As a result, many African families lived in constant fear of being pushed off their land and even from the donga-riven land they lived.

The dystopian nature of apartheid civilization for the Africans in ATDD is revealed by the barrenness of the land set aside as African reserves which was generally marked by “the ravages of erosion” (p.63). Sigageni, one of the rural enclaves meant for African people in the novel lies bare and riven by “deep dongas. These dongas mean that all the good earth has been swept away” (p.65). The dongas and ravines that marred the Sigageni landscape heighten the sense of abject unproductivity of the African reserves, a situation worsened by the poor rainfall patterns, pitiable harvests and persistent drought. The dongas illustrate the ecological crisis that apartheid created. So repulsive and horrible were the conditions of living that the people of Sigageni “shied away from looking at each other’s eyes, afraid to answer the silent questions and respond to the bewilderment they would see there” (p.118). Clearly, their land offered them little hope for survival, showing the imperativeness of securing social justice which can only be achieved if oppressive systems are challenged and if Africans get “more land” (p.44).

In sharp contrast to Sigageni’s barrenness and its “fields [which] lay fallow and bare, baking in” the sun’s “malicious and malevolent heat” (p.118), the white farmers were settled in very good farming areas. The personification of the sun in Sigageni as ‘malicious’ and ‘malevolent’ represents the oppressiveness of the whole apartheid environment and its ‘oven-like’ conditions that conjure thoughts of African people living in purgatorial conditions. What alarms the reader is that, against these depraved conditions set for Africans, a white-owned farm is described in the following terms: “Mr Collett’s lands were expansive, lush and green” (p.20). The use of the plural “lands” to describe Mr Collett’s farm suggests the enormous size of the property possessed by one white farmer. This contrasts severely with the crowded conditions on the African side. Similarly, use of the words ‘lush and green’ to describe white farms creates an alluring picture that points to the glamour of the land, drawing a sharp dissimilarity with the repelling “fissured

donga walls” that marred and rented the African reserve of Sigageni (p.63). While Africans were squeezed in very small pieces of unproductive land, a single white farmer had “ten times more land under cultivation than” what Africans had (p.44). The enormous size and productivity of white-owned farms underline Nosizwe’s argument that white farmers have “all the advantages and support of the government” that African families have been denied (p.43). To make matters worse, despite African reserves being overcrowded and semi-arid, the white officials from the Bantu Affairs Department shockingly asked the community “to divide your land into strips, so that one piece can lie fallow once every three years” (p.65). The verbal imagery created by use of the word ‘strips’ underlines the smallness of the land allotted to Africans, revealing the disparities with Mr Collett’s farm which was ‘expansive’. A critical rhetorical question we can pose is: if the African families divided their crowded land into strips and allowed one piece to lie fallow every three years, would there be enough land left to farm (while some land lay fallow) and support their livelihoods? Everything points at the greed and insensitivity of apartheid to African people’s land needs. As a direct consequence of land imbalances, Nosizwe sums up the challenges confronted by the African women:

Many of us harvest each year less than the seed we planted.... This is not our fault - given the same conditions, any other farmers in the world would be just as poor and the land just as exhausted (p.43).

Nosizwe exposes apartheid as a system that promoted white privileges while denying Africans equal treatment. The women’s need for economic resources so that they could be self-sufficient reflects how their conditions of lack have been socially produced. They aspired for better and worked very hard to fend for themselves but, racism played serious roles in “constrain[ing] women and prevent[ing] them from realising their potential” (Mama, 2001:59). This exposes white racial hegemony as a serious concern for African women due to its unwillingness to safeguard their interests. What infuriated the women even further in the text was that they were asked “not to keep so many cattle because cattle destroy the lands” (p.65). Among the Africans, “cattle represented wealth, savings ad security” (Lodge, 1983:265). Thus, forcing them to reduce their cattle head contravened and offended African people’s rights to more secure lives and livelihoods. While the African women were asked to reduce their cattle herds, in contrast, Mr

Collett had “thousands of cattle on his land” (p.65). Disparities in resource allocation reveals enormous human rights abuses that inequalities embedded in the nation state can produce for some people. For the African women and men in the novel, the critical question had nothing to do with cattle destroying land as the regime alleged. Their experiences were rooted in white abuse of racial identities.

A critical concern that was triggered by land displacement centred on African people’s lack of belonging. Because of apartheid’s rapacious imperialistic annexure of African land, many African families were forcibly ‘uprooted’ from their homes with little notice, separated from friends and ‘replanted’ in reserves which were even poorer and more crowded. Displacement from the land was quite frightening as it meant that whole families could lose so many important things overnight: their homes, their livelihoods, and being relocated meant they were forced to live among strangers and separated with old friends and neighbours. The sad story of African families’ state of imposed landlessness and ‘unbelonging’ exposes the paradox of lack of a permanent home for the Africans in their country. It is a serious irony that they were forced to negotiate for a physical space and a home in their own country. Desmond, in his caustic criticism of apartheid’s racial ideology, has condemned the forcible removal of African people from their lands and being dumped in unproductive Bantustans as ‘surplus’ people who were not needed in areas demarcated as white land (1971). Some ‘unluckier’ families were moved “into enclosures, fencing them in and limiting their rights to own animal” (p.44). The idea of fencing them in does not only evoke mental images of African families being imprisoned, caged and equated to animals, but also speaks of their lack of mobility and belonging. A critical question that can be posed centres on how these families were expected to survive after being dispossessed of their land rights and being fenced in.

The displacement of African people gave them the label of ‘strangers’ in their own homeland—strangers who did not belong and were not needed. A *United Nations Human Rights Report* has rightfully argued that land is “linked to people’s identities, and so is tied to social and cultural rights” (2015:4). Thus, being bundled off the land implied losing an important part of one’s history and an identity linked to the land. Loss of land rights robbed African women (and men) subjectivity and ‘belongingness’. This situates Ngcobo’s novel as an important work that “raises

questions about the significance of land as a home and a place of belonging” for African people (Masola and Xaba, 2017:56). Ratele has also argued that in South Africa, “[t]he question of home is particularly poignant... [in the context of] colonial history of land dispossession [and] apartheid’s regime resettlement of black population in rural ‘homelands’, [and] urban influx control” (2014:38). Therefore, the African women’s concerns with being driven from their land by apartheid policies, or being moved into enclosures or poverty-stricken reserves are legitimate concerns that reinforce the inequalities and disadvantages imbedded in African patriarchy where women accessed land rights through husbands and fathers (Yngstrom, 2002). Access to land is a tool for empowerment that underlines African feminist goals and agenda (African Feminist Forum, 2006).

Today, the obtaining conditions of landlessness and the attendant poverty among the African people of South Africa can be viewed as consequences of apartheid policies that drove them to crowded arid pieces of land, thereby denying them equal chances at life as the white people. This is why the continuing impunity of racism should be challenged as it has produced oppressive and exploitative conditions which continue to make survival, for the majority of African women, very difficult. Drawing from all this, it is apparent that the land dispossession limited (and continues to restrict) the African people’s capacity to produce meaningful existences. This exposes the criminality of colonial/apartheid practices and Ngcobo’s novel holds up for scrutiny apartheid impoverishment of African people.

#### **3.1.4 Apartheid neglect of African women’s concerns and priorities**

While African women had critical needs that centred on their families’ survival, access to land, health needs and others, Ngcobo exposes the apartheid state’s shocking demonstration of their misplaced priorities. The Apartheid authorities neglected and exacerbated the women’s suffering and needs in various ways. For instance, despite the land hunger, and cheap labour systems it engineered, which resulted in the deep wretchedness of African women’s lives, the apartheid authority seemed unaware of their plight.

At the beginning of the narrative, Mr Pienaar seems oblivious to the suffering of the people of Sigageni. This is indicated by his belief that the apartheid government was doing everything to improve the African women's lives: "[t]he government is doing everything for them... for their own good" (p.1). One wonders what 'good' he is talking about, particularly in the sight of malnourished children, jobless men, land displacement and the desperate living conditions of African women, among other things. What this confirms is the African feminist arguments that only those who are in chains can define their own oppression and that no one should be allowed to define it for them (Metcalf, 1987; Bell-Scott, 1994; Abraham, 1999).

Feminists have identified various immediate needs and concerns that should be prioritised to improve African women's lives. According to Chukukere, "Women have least access to food, health and education" (1998:142). These rank amongst some of the women's critical needs as defined by women themselves. In the novel, instead of addressing the African women's health and economic needs through building clinics and hospitals, the government was busy building them beer halls, dipping tanks for their cattle (that had no grazing pastures) as well as building churches. This reflects how divorced apartheid solutions were to African women's real urgent needs as defined by the women themselves. Apartheid authority's failure to understand African women's real needs and concerns is highlighted through Mr Pienaar's inward admission that though his "duties brought him regularly to the black reserve of Sigageni. Yet, he knew that he did not understand anything about the place or its people or its problems" (p.1). He regularly came to Sigageni yet failed to see the connections between various issues that undermined the African women's livelihoods. He was blind to his government's prioritisation of unnecessary things at the expense of those important to the women themselves. After the women revolted against dipping their cattle, he highlighted even further his lack of comprehension of their needs as he asked himself: "[w]hat do dipping tanks have to do with clinics and doctors and starving children; what have they to do with schools and beer halls?" (p.1). What he could not see was the connectedness of these various concerns. He failed to appreciate that dipping cattle that had no grazing pastures was as political as the starvation of the African children who could not go to school or visit clinics while their fathers hid their frustration by taking to drinking. The admission by Pienaar, a white official, that "he did not understand anything" or see the

connectedness of different women's concerns is significant as it comes from a man who functions as the conduit between apartheid administration and this African community (p.1). It mirrors how the entire apartheid infrastructure, as represented by Mr Pienaar, misunderstood the real needs of the community. Therefore, it was only African women who could define their own needs (Nnaemeka, 1998). Unfortunately, instead of engaging the women to find out what they wanted, the apartheid government was busy defining their needs for them according to its agendas. African feminists, like Mama have insisted that African women "should define... [their] own terms" (2001:60).

When Jezile went to Durban, she discovered that the city women's concerns were not very different from those of their rural counterparts. While in Durban, Jezile read a copy of the newspaper *Ilanga Lase Natal*, and her attention was grabbed by the headline that read: "Clinics, not beerhalls" (p.30). The caption exposed the running theme of health as a critical need just as highlighted by Nosizwe's summary of rural women's needs: "we want clinics for our sick children, and not beer halls to kill off our men. These whites mean to kill us" (p.46). Thus, though African women were differentiated on the basis of physical or spatial location, as rural or city women, what comes out in the novel is "how similar their situations were" and their prioritisation of health needs (p.30). In the city, building beer halls instead of the much needed clinics highlighted apartheid authority's misplacement of African communities' priorities. African women needed to secure the health needs of their families and communities instead of having their men's health compromised by drinking beer to drown their sorrows and further wasting the money required for the family upkeep. Siyalo lent support to the women's arguments that the apartheid government's projects ran contrary to African women's actual needs and concerns:

[t]hese women are right.... They build us beer halls, not clinics; they build us churches, not houses to live in. People are drinking themselves to death; children are sharing the same concoctions as their parents, for lack of milk and they are dying like flies (p.32).

This illustrates the potential for African women and men to work together against foreign domination. Building churches in the absence of adequate housing and divine justice inducted a whole community of African people into submission to victimhood and promotion of indecency and starvation of families.

### **3.1.5 African women's concerns with apartheid appropriation of African labour**

In the rural reserves, African women were also disgusted by apartheid exploitation of African men's labour. Nosizwe highlights how this exploitation was brought about:

So, we here, as women, serve to produce migrant labour - our children are the labour resource of this government. We work hard and suffer to raise these children, without any form of assistance from the government so that one day they will go to the city and help create wealth for them in the cities... the wealth we are not allowed to enjoy (p.42-3).

The exploitation of men attracted African women's condemnation as it affected them in a variety of ways: it left them to carry all the workload in the home alone. The apartheid government had "imposed a number of taxes of various kinds to force the [African] men to work to pay these taxes: poll tax, quit-rent or hut-tax" (p.42). This left the reserves without the labour contribution of African men who spent close to a year before coming back home. "The removal of the healthiest and strongest members of the population" negatively affected productivity in the rural areas (Lodge, 1983:262). Torn away from their families for a whole year, it meant that African men did not participate in the provision of their families' daily needs, leaving their women to confront the full brunt of apartheid abuse and cruelty alone in the homestead.

To make matters worse, the African men were paid poverty wages that were "just enough for a single man" (p.43). Such apartheid capitalistic exploitation prevented African men from leading meaningful lives in towns. It also left the men unable to provide for their families' economic needs back home, as Nosizwe observes: "[e]ven the most loyal of our men can only send back a

pittance to support their families” (p.43). Women sympathized with the men’s vulnerable positions within apartheid. This literary representation resonates with Lodge’s historical account:

[i]n the course of their protests [African] women would sometimes show an angry awareness of the way African men could be emasculated by their situation, a reaction to the frequent failure of men to perform their customary role as protector and defender of their household (1983:139).

Paying starvation wages to the African men was an affront to the African women who were restricted from going to work themselves but were expected to rely on their husbands’ paltry salaries - the same that were inadequate for a single man. Apartheid’s exploitative and extortionist practices limited African men’s options, forcing them to seek employment in towns: “To force our men to go to these places, it is necessary that we should starve” (p.43). Making it “necessary” that African people “should starve” was quite appalling (p.42). The cruel irony was that African families endured living apart yet gained nothing from it.

The helplessness of African men’s situations was heightened by the actions of Siyalo who, after losing his employment, was reduced to stealing milk so as to feed their malnourished child, S’naye. After being rendered jobless, Siyalo’s sense of masculinity was shattered by the racial hegemony of whiteness which left him terribly distressed. He could see his marriage and its harmony collapsing around him but could not help it. “Being unable to provide for his child and wife and mother was the cause of all the acrimony.... He felt annulled, and wished that he were dead” (p.115). He tried various strategies to survive, including making products of leather but it came to no fruition and he soon gave up. The poverty his family endured was not due to his lack of trying, but the racial system had closed all opportunities for African people to survive. Siyalo’s suffering and struggle to survive is a powerful means that shows the plight of both African women and men under apartheid. The reader can also see how his failure to provide for his family, despite his efforts, debunks the misrepresentations made by patriarchal normativity where men are expected to be in control and to have access to privileges (Johnson, 2014). hooks has exposed some contradictions inherent within patriarchy about men accessing privileges. She has argued that the disempowered man

often finds that few if any of these benefits [promised by patriarchal normativity] are automatically bestowed him in life... he is constantly concerned about the contradiction between the notion of masculinity he was taught and his inability to live up to that notion. He is usually 'hurt', emotionally scarred because he does not have the privilege or power society has taught him 'real men' should possess (hooks, 1984:73).

The above views show feminist concerns with the position of the disempowered men. Though African women are the most oppressed group within different forms of patriarchy, their capacity to sympathise with the disempowered men says a lot about the selflessness of the feminist struggle. Their attention to the plight of men is another powerful reason men need to support feminist struggles against patriarchal normativity and intersecting systems of oppression. In ATDD, Siyalo's story of emasculation is the story of many African men who were used and abused by colonialism, apartheid and capitalism, even in their prime working years and then discarded when they became old or were injured at work and became invalids (Hepple, 1971). "The disregard of occupational health and safety ... violated the rights of hundreds of thousands of South African workers, particularly black workers, to life, health, dignity and a healthy and safe environment" (O'Malley, 1999:3). The government failed to provide a safe working environment and the burden of looking after the injured, the 'invalid' and aged African men dumped by apartheid fell on the African women. It was the women who were expected to "care for them and feed them and bury them" (p.43) even if the women had lived their lives with insignificant help from these men. The depiction of women looking after men (and not the other way round) is a deviation from the claims of patriarchal normativity where men are supposed to be the primary breadwinners.

African men's long absences from home and the low salaries they got, which were insufficient to support their families meant apartheid interfered with African customs by denying men the chance to perform their breadwinner roles in the family, as expected within African patriarchy. African men became men without control since they were also vulnerable to racial oppression. African men's failure to measure up to patriarchal expectations, where men dominate and are in control,

exposes the emptiness of patriarchal normativity for the African men within racial relations (hooks, 1984). In the absences of the African men, African women had to take over men's duties and roles as breadwinners as defined by patriarchal normativity. Thus, women were not restricted to maternal and mothering roles but occupied critical roles of ensuring their families' daily survival. They took over men's patriarchal roles with great strength and had to be very creative to survive the poverty that apartheid had created for them. The reliance of whole families on women's labour, including the ways invalid and jobless men were looked after by women demystifies the erroneous notion created by patriarchal normativity "that the woman is dependent on her husband. [In reality, if given the chance] The woman not only holds her own, she is astonishingly *independent* of her husband" (Nnaemeka, 1998:13). Women have continued to shoulder all family responsibilities single-handedly without men's support:

For a range of reasons South African fathers have had very little to do with the lives of their children... [as it is] the mother (or grandmother) [who] takes primary responsibility for all aspects of the family's welfare (Narismulu, 1999:72).

Thus, apartheid's oppressive system did not only reshape women's roles in the African patriarchal family but also doubled the workload they carried in the men's absence as they performed 'breadwinner' roles that were previously associated with men within African patriarchy. African women showed great concern about the oppressiveness of the workload they had to carry in the home, as highlighted through Jezile's desire for better treatment and her need

to get away from her life as a water carrier, a wood gatherer, a road mender, from her life in the fields, ploughing, sowing, weeding and reaping. She hated running after cows that invariably broke through fences. It was a hard, unremitting life, which left her unfulfilled (p.5-6).

Clearly, within the homes, African women have been overworked because they "worked from early morning to sunset... it was hard work" (p.56-57). This explains their disillusionment with the status quo: the unremitting life in the interlocking vice of apartheid and African patriarchy, where they performed virtually every domestic chore in the home, left them with no time to rest.

This is a powerful indictment of the apartheid system that worsened African women's conditions within African patriarchy.

Drawing from all the above, women's enormous contribution to the survival of themselves, their families, elders, communities, crops, animals and management of the poorest 13% of the land allocated by colonialism and apartheid cannot be covered by patriarchal normativity's blindness to the true value that women hold in real life. In spite of attempts by patriarchal normativity to diminish women's importance in life, it is apparent that women cannot be devalued by limiting their roles to the domestic sphere. As O'Brien has portrayed,

[t]he struggle for women to raise children in [apartheid] South Africa is not merely a domestic task. The political and social tensions which overwhelm everyday life make motherhood a role tantamount in importance to any full-time (male) political activist's (O'Brien, 1994:149).

Thus, Ngcobo's representations of these acute women's issues is a powerful way of exposing the reality. This goes a long way towards explaining her feminist attempts to challenge the various patriarchal ideologies that compounded the oppression of African women.

The apartheid appropriation and exploitation of African men's labour and lives, that impacts on African families, is better illustrated by Ngcobo's representation of the men's living conditions in the cities. On her visit to Durban, Jezile was revolted by the despicable conditions that the African men, who toiled to produce white colonialists' wealth, lived in. The hostels the men lived in were awful, inhospitable and inhabitable:

the place was so austere and grim it could have been a prison. It gave the feeling of prohibition, a feeling of trespassing that made Jezile's heart beat faster.... The place was crowded, with hardly a space for a chair.... There was hardly any standing room. Pots and dishes lay under the bed, and a whole wardrobe hung on a string stretching across two nails on the wall above the bed (p.24).

These horrible living conditions confirm the critique that apartheid lacked morality as it exploited Africans but did not ensure their protection and safety as citizens and employees (Bolt and Rajak, 2016). Within the confined space that apartheid had created for them, the men were sweating profusely, reflecting how unbearable their lives within apartheid's restrictions were. This projects a larger picture of the difficulties that the African men go through under apartheid. The description of African men's prison-like living conditions reveals how far reduced the African men have become. It is unthinkable that a man living in these despicable and depraved conditions could provide adequate support for his family. What this reflects is the shifting identities of African men who, though privileged within African patriarchal structures, now found themselves victims of the dominant colonial-apartheid patriarchy. This affirms Johnson's argument that "[r]acism undermines men of color's access to male privilege, for example, by making it more difficult for them to earn a good living and claim the patriarchal position of male provider" (2014:163). This further reveals a hierarchy of masculinities where African masculinity was deemed secondary to white male racial hegemony, and this oppressive hierarchy still persists today (Lorentzen, 2014). Thus, white patriarchy is the ultimate oppressive system that has marginalised both women and men of colour (and other patriarchies). African men have suffered the pain of white men's subjugation and being men does not help them, further underlining the misconceptions embedded in patriarchy that associate men with control and dominance. According to hooks,

the pain men experience can serve as a catalyst calling attention to the need for change. Recognition of the painful consequences of sexism in their lives led some men to establish consciousness-raising groups to examine this (1984:72).

Thus, it is critical to show how some men are also victims of sexist attitudes that disadvantage women. Men's realisation of their own victimhood under colonial/apartheid patriarchy may help connect them to the feminist commitment to social change. They may learn to value feminism and its commitment to "the removal of all forms of inequality, domination and oppression" (Bhasin and Khan, 1986:12). That African men are oppressed within racial politics "doesn't mean, however, that there is no such thing as male privilege or a patriarchal system that

promotes and legitimates it on behalf of all men” (Johnson, 2014:163). It only means that some men have, at times, found themselves dominated by other men as has been the case with African men within apartheid discourses.

Ngcobo shows how much African women were concerned about the injustices of apartheid’s capitalist ideology that exposed both African women and men to awful living conditions through the exploitation of their labour. Through Nosizwe’s repetition of the words: ‘our men’ as she explained to the rest of the African women the connectedness of the plight of African women and men, Ngcobo suggests possibilities for solidarity between African women and men:

Our men earn very little for the jobs they do out there.... This government has never taken us into account when employing and paying our men... we blame them but really it is the government that is to blame. When our men have failed to provide for us, they have taken their frustration out on us; when they have been put into prisons for a thousand possible infringements of the law, we have suffered (p.43).

Nosizwe demonstrates how much African masculinities also required liberation from the colonialist racial hegemony. The depiction of African men suffering subordination and subjugation by fellow men underpins Ratele’s argument that “the empowerment of women and girls is not exhaustive of gender relations and practices. Boys and men are gendered too. Contestations and hierarchies within masculinities matter” (2015:147). This broadens the conceptualisation of gender oppression within patriarchal normativity to include some men, particularly African men, who have been abused by white men.

The African women’s concerns with the well-being of their men does not only promote a sense of community between African women and men but also reflects their inseparability in the face of various oppressions that face them. Such African feminist contestations of white middle class feminism’s attempts to divide African women and men provide a clear understanding of African feminist principles and ideals which negotiate the need for men joining women “to fight against societal oppressive structures created by both men and women, and not necessarily fighting

against men” (Aina, 1998:71). Sabine Jell-Bahlsen has argued that it is ‘foreigners’ who have attempted to

create divisions among Africans, antagonize [African] women against men, aim at assimilation, and above all, serve to justify the imposition of European and American ethics, educational perspectives, leadership goals, goods, etc. on the African continent and her peoples (1998:103).

Oneness and community between marginalised African women and men is critical in making their struggle against racism collective. Without such bonding between African women and men, “no viable political solidarity could exist between women and men” in their anti-racist resistances (hooks, 1984:70). African women’s concerns with their men’s plight suggests the need for African men to support women’s struggles against all forms of societal inequalities (including African patriarchy) given that the feminist agenda for social transformation is “for the good of all - men and women” (Chukukere, 1998:138). There is, therefore, need for African men to reciprocate and realise in turn that, African feminism is not anti-man: it recognises that within racial discourses, both African women and men’s realities have been invariably affected and regulated by racial politics and that the two genders need each other to strengthen their collective resistance against their exclusion. It is, therefore, ironic that African men go on to oppress and abuse the women around them. As a male African academic myself, I argue that it is important that African men be ‘assisted’ to understand that as women engage in feminist struggles, they should not be misunderstood as men’s enemies but fighters whose struggles against all forms of oppression in society benefit men. This is an affirmation of African feminists who have pointed out that only “[g]enuine co-operation and dialogue between women and men will transform women’s problems into society’s problems - which requires the entire society’s involvement in the quest for solutions” (Chukukere, 1998:145). Such a solidarity stance between women and men challenges ideas that have often been misconstrued by some to suggest that men and women are from different planets (Gray, 1992).

The foregoing argument where women and some men, particularly men of colour, have endured oppression together (though women have suffered more forms of oppression) reflects what McCall (in his examination of the kinds of complexity that intersectionality as a heuristic attempts to grasp) has described as the ‘intercategorical’ approach to understanding oppression. This approach “focuses on the complexity of relationships among multiple social groups within and across analytical categories” (McCall, 2005:1786). It unmasks the complicated ways in which oppression has worked within and across social categories, across sex and gender lines. This intercategorical approach can be illustrated in the manner that apartheid did not only produce social inequalities between different racial groups but even within the same racial category, producing so many categories of social elites where even white men who, collectively, were the dominant social group were also unequal. These layers of inequalities between whites can be illustrated through Mr Potgieter, who had earlier dominated African men on the road works but “looked shabby compared to the city whites” (p.189). Among ‘the city whites’, “his smile betrayed a lack of confidence, not the same masterful stride that paced up and down the road to Umzimkhulu” (p.189). This suggests that the whole world is actually oppressed by a few dominant men and if all oppressed people of the world were to unite, the power of their resistance would be quite tremendous. If, as shown above, some poor white men, despite all the unearned racial privileges that they enjoyed, were marginalised within apartheid’s power relations, the situation was very bad for the African women who anchored the social hierarchies of patriarchy, colonial/apartheid, and capitalism.

There were other ways that the white colonizers devised to exploit Africans of their labour and abuse them as unpaid sources of labour: most of the areas designated as “African reserves” had no firewood. In contrast, a single “white forester... had thousands of acres of wattle plantations... [and] sold the wood to the few who could afford it” (p.127). For African women to get the much needed energy resource, they were compelled to go to Mr Collett’s farm, “to work in his fields for the day... [in order to get his permission] to collect firewood” (p.20). They would arrive at the white man’s farm around “seven o’clock, in time to start work with all his labourers. It was a long day with three short intervals for drinks in the morning and afternoon, and a half-an-hour stop at lunch time. After five o’clock they were allowed into the woods to

collect firewood” (p.20). Working the whole day in the white man’s farm for firewood, a natural resource, was the height of exploitation. It shows how much apartheid laws “contravened a customary right of free access to firewood” (Lodge, 1983:265). It is bizarre that African women living on the African continent had to spend ten hours slaving in the white man’s fields so as to get a pile of firewood. Women ended up carrying very heavy loads to recompense for their day long labour, compromising their health in the process. For instance, on one occasion, “Jezile’s neck creaked and ached with stiffness from carrying the extra-heavy load to compensate for the little bundles of the children” (p.20). Working the whole day in some white man’s field for a bundle of firewood was vile abuse and labour extortion suffered by African women. The women’s torturous labour in the white men’s fields served to increase the power and profits of white patriarchy under apartheid who had the best living conditions in the world at the expense of these African women they exploited because they had no alternatives to meet their needs. The African woman found herself trapped between two patriarchies: African and white patriarchy. While African patriarchy placed the burden and responsibility of securing firewood for the family’s energy needs on the woman, white patriarchy exploited the same woman who could not get firewood anywhere (except in white farms) by making her work the whole day for the white man’s gain. Thus, African women were severely exploited of their labour.

Related to this exploitation, the apartheid government also came up with various projects in the rural areas which were ironically called ‘Betterment’ Schemes where rural women (and some unemployed men) were expected to work for no salary. They were coerced into abandoning their own fields so as to expend their labour for no pay at all. As Nosizwe who may be understood as representing the authorial voice, articulates,

[t]here’s a lot of work in these Betterment Schemes. There are dams to be built and barbed-wire fencing to be erected. One would think that this would provide some kind of employment for some people, but one could not be further from the truth. What the government is doing is forcing people to work for nothing (p. 44).

One key question that could be posed centres on how these ironically termed ‘Betterment Schemes’ actually benefitted and bettered African women and men’s lives if the work was “done under forced labour” (p.44). According to Daymond, “these Betterment Schemes were “imposed without consultation” (2004:147). Lack of consultation reflects apartheid inconsideration for African women and men’s input on the kind of projects they felt would benefit them. Thus, their needs and concerns were ignored. Being overworked for no pay reflects some form of ‘refurbished’ slavery. The men who were pressed and drafted to work in the ‘Betterment Schemes’ were those who had been deemed unfit “to work in the industrial areas, people... dumped in the reserves” once they became ‘useless’ to apartheid capitalist interests in towns (p.44). To heighten the sense of apartheid injustice, while the African women and men received no salary, “their white supervisors are paid” (p.44). Okia has condemned the use of forced labour in Africa pointing out “its immediate association with the slavery” (2012:9). The Africans had little choice because failure to comply or raising complaints were punishable offences interpreted as “incitements to disobedience” (p.45). This confirms the acute impact of colonial oppression that Ngcobo addresses through exposing capitalist patriarchy that horribly oppressed African women and men.

The forced labour imposed across the colonised lands after the slave trade was abolished still retained the language and character of slavery (Allina, 2015). Its burden weighed heavily on the African women who were

forced not only to carry the fencing poles and rolls of barbed wire... but...  
to cook for the work teams, all for no pay. They are not even given any food to cook  
for these teams. They have to provide their own food when their turn comes  
(p.44-45).

African women were questioning the exploitation of their labour by capitalist patriarchy. They lost control over their own labour, an exploitation that created an economic dilemma for African women whose own families were already languishing in abject poverty but were now expected to fund projects that promoted apartheid interests not their own needs. These were serious human rights abuses because the women who were compelled to subsidise the apartheid government by

providing food for work teams were already burdened by the mammoth task of securing and ensuring family survival with no support from government and very little support from their impoverished men in the cities. Through those ironically termed 'Betterment Schemes', apartheid contributed to undermining the livelihoods of African people by hijacking their land, where African material resources and labour were abused to advance the apartheid racial agenda. It is therefore clear that the racist apartheid ideology in South Africa was designed to establish and cement white economic power at the expense of advancing African people's interests. The harshness of life under apartheid's racist structures which exposed the sharp contradictions between African women's needs/desires to lead dignified lives, and what the apartheid system offered them is the reason why the white racial hegemony that has caused untold suffering in history and which continues unabated in the twenty-first century should be challenged as its ideology is oppressive and exploitative. And colonial/apartheid, as a different but very oppressive form of patriarchy which reinforced the abuse and exploitation imbedded in African patriarchy, is exposed and challenged by Ngcobo for denying Africans, particularly women, their rights.

### **3.1.6 Apartheid, women and sexual exploitation**

Apartheid South Africa's immorality and lack of human decency are also powerfully enacted through Ngcobo's portrayal of how African women like Jezile, powerfully challenge the ruthless sexual violation, exploitation and abuse which threatened and harmed them. The reality of the violence of sexual abuse and exploitation which many women continue to confront, and which Ngcobo represents, has been very destructive to the lives of many women. It continues to be a constant reality that seriously undermines women's dignity, respect and rights. This is an actuality that haunts many women which Ngcobo exposes and challenges in a very powerful way (as the next chapter demonstrates).

Several feminist studies have documented sexual abuse as "[a]nother pressing and yet unaddressed issue affecting women" (Mowbary, Oyserman, Lutz and Purnell, 1997:185; Connell, 1987; Muchemwa, 2002; Cixous, 2011; Johnson, 2014). Rape is depicted as a constant

threat that hounds African women and girls not only in Ngcobo's novel, but many novels by women writers, including Yvonne Vera's *Under the Tongue*, NoViolet Bulawayo's *We need New names* (2013), Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* (1970) and many others. The fact that rape is a constant subject in women's fiction underscores women's concerns about being treated as objects to gratify rapists' lust. Men, whether white or black, are generally the perpetrators of so much sexual violence against women and this should be challenged.

In ATDD, women's concerns with the threat of rape are evident. For instance, before Jezile moves to Bloemfontein, she works as Mr Potgieter's washer-woman but each time she went to collect his clothes "there was something Jezile could not ignore entirely - something in the white man's eyes that looked at her every time she went in to collect his washing on Friday mornings and when she returned it on Tuesday evenings" (p.186). His roving eyes demonstrated his lust and the threat of rape that has for long hovered around women's lives. The threat of rape was a serious concern as raised by Nomawa who advised her friend, Jezile, to "be careful" (p.184). Simmonds has viewed rape as "the ultimate tool, not only for female subjugation, but also over women's sexuality" (1992:217-8). In his condemnation of rape, Johnson has argued that rape reduces women to men's "objectified sexual property" (2014:39). Such objectification is a serious concern that Ngcobo highlights in her novel.

The violence of rape and the searing pain it causes are dramatized through Mr Potgieter's sexual abuse of Jezile, the domestic worker he brought from Sigageni to Bloemfontein to work for his family. He hid his time and initially pretended to be interested in Jezile's welfare. He cruelly repaid Jezile's commitment to the family domestic work by raping her, exposing the atrocities of apartheid rule. On the day he raped her, he began by shutting Jezile's mouth, "had her arm twisted and he rolled her onto the bed and pinned her down" (p.204-5). Use of sheer brute force demonstrates how much male sexual aggression has brutalised women victims by treating them as their sexual objects. Shutting her mouth demonstrates apartheid attempts to muzzle and mute African women's voices so that they do not speak out about the grievous injustices they have endured.

After enduring this indignity by her employer, Jezile “curled up like a ball at the opposite end of the bed and winced and whimpered like a wounded animal” (p.205). The simile ‘like a ball’ underscores how Jezile felt reduced to a plaything, an inanimate ‘kick about’ object for this white male oppressor’s leisure. The verbal imagery created by use of ‘winced’, ‘whimpered’ and ‘wounded’ intensify our revulsion at the excruciating pain and the sense of helplessness suffered by Jezile as a result of this horrible act. No matter how much Jezile “willed her hand to touch the desecrated part, but it would not. Pain was etched on every muscle of her face” (p.205). We feel her pain and are revolted by the cruelty and heartlessness of this lust-driven act that haunted Jezile which was the reason for the collapse of her own marriage to Siyalo. The psychological trauma and sense of defilement that engulfed Jezile is seen in how she “walked out to the tap and poured water over the top of her head letting it flow, bowl after bowl after bowl” (p.205). Repetition of the words: ‘bowl after bowl after bowl’ increases our understanding of her disgust towards her defilement. The double tragedy for most victims of rape is that it is not just a violent physical act, but it also silences them as they cannot bring themselves to explain what happened (Muchemwa, 2002). As Ngcobo’s narrator indicates, “Rape is a burden to its own victim” (p.205).

A worrying situation for Jezile was her realisation that the African patriarchal system did not offer her any form of protection as a victim of rape. Before she went back home, she was already consumed by feelings of shame about her being violated. She felt silenced as she could not explain the horrible injustice to the people in her community, and “could predict all the lurid gossip. They would even suggest that she had followed him to Bloemfontein because she had had an affair with him” (p205; 6). As a woman, she felt trapped by the customs of her patriarchal society where there were no safety nets for victims. She was caught between the oppressions of three systems: the racist patriarchal violence Potgieter traded on as his right, the violent rejection of her rights as an African person and woman under apartheid rule and legislation, and African patriarchal oppression of women that hindered many women from fulfilling their needs (Katrak, 2006; Nyanhongo, 2011). She had to battle these different forms of tyranny that closely intersected in oppressing her. Jezile was aware of the unspoken suspicions that would taunt her

and this prompted her not to head straight to her husband's homestead after the atrocities of this rape. The fact that the customs of the African patriarchal system have no provisions for protecting the victim implies that, in a way, African patriarchy ignores the woman's trauma by placing the responsibility for the rape on her. This underscores the overlapping oppressions of colonial-apartheid patriarchy and African patriarchy in Jezile's life. She had nowhere to turn except her mother and some supportive women. The trauma of rape suffered by Jezile is a cry against women's collective and personal violation and should be challenged as the next chapter attempts to do. In his definition of rape, Muchemwa has viewed it as "a violent silencing act that takes the identity of a woman as a possession of the rapist" (2002:13). This unravels the wounds of silence imposed on women by rape. The rape of Jezile by a white man, a representative of apartheid-colonial domination does not only communicate the abuse of an individual but also speaks of the trauma of the colonial and national rape that silenced both African women and men in their own country. The apartheid justice system was even more appalling as the novel indicates: Mr Potgieter, the rapist, ironically was the face of the justice system. He "had left the road-works altogether and he was now working at the prosecutor's office... [and] was doing law by correspondence with the University of South Africa" (p.210). Ngcobo shows the travesty of apartheid justice, that the rapist escaped the clutches of law while the victim was flushed out of Bloemfontein and out of employment, to look after her coloured child (as categorised by apartheid) who was a product of rape, on her own. This is a loud call that Ngcobo makes, for the transformation of all the unjust colonial and apartheid patriarchies that have abused and exploited women and men. Since such societies offer women no protection, it is left to the women to try to defend themselves against rape (which is addressed in the next chapter).

Jezile's response to the rape of women underlines women's refusal to be treated as sex objects. She later murdered a white soldier attempting to rape her daughter, S'naye. After killing the white man, she went to see her estranged husband, Siyalo, and confided what she had done: "It's happened again. Only, this time, he wanted to rape S'naye" (p.244). It is clear that Jezile at this moment conflated Mr Potgieter who raped her many years ago with the white soldier she just killed so as to protect her daughter. This suggests that to millions of victims all rapists are the same: inhumane men who abuse women. Through the death of the rapist, Ngcobo makes a

powerful statement about what women need: to end the sexual violations that have been pervasive within patriarchal normativity. Women cannot remain vulnerable as Jezile emphasises: “I had to kill him. They’ve destroyed us, Siyalo.... I had to defend her. We have to defend ourselves” (p.245). Thus, what women need as demonstrated through Jezile is an end to patriarchal obliviousness to the various ways in which women have been sexually exploited, abused and taken advantage of by men.

### **3.1.7 African patriarchy and the oppression of women**

African women have not only been oppressed by colonialism. Their lives have also been complicated by the harsh African patriarchal structures and values of their society. Therefore, the oppression of women is not reducible to a single form of oppression but many systems of privilege that have intersected in women’s lives (Mama, 2001; Crenshaw, 1997). Despite African feminist concerns for the welfare of African men who have been oppressed within racist and economic contexts, what is significant about African feminism is how it also challenges African men “to be aware of certain salient aspects of women’s subjugation which differ from the generalized oppression of all African people” (Ifechelobi, 2014:19). It would be unfair and a great injustice to real African women’s concerns to highlight the impact of racial oppression without paying attention to the chaos created in African women’s lives by African patriarchy.

Ngcobo depicts the impact of many oppressive cultural and social beliefs in imposing unreasonable limitations on women. For instance, for a newly married woman, there was a “string of taboos that she had to observe” at her in-laws’ house (p.56). “There were foods she could not eat because she was not a full member of the family” (p.56). Denying a woman the right to certain foods when she got married was ridiculous and appalling. What made it all the more horrible was that this prohibition did not apply to men. Thus, patriarchal normativity limited and reduced women’s liberties and access to certain food. Chukukere (citing Ogundipe-Leslie) “has identified the family, especially marriage, as the social structure that most oppresses” women and one whose oppressive values should be challenged (1998:144). Because men remained unaffected by the restrictions on food, it means they were constructed as some

kind of social elites within patriarchy. Ngcobo's narrator exposes other limitations imposed on the wife:

[f]rom the day she arrived at her husband's home, no one called her by her name.... Losing her name isolated a young married woman emotionally, further confirming her alienation. Her position would only change when she had her first child; she would then be known by her child's name... her adult identity derived directly from her capacity to be a mother (p.56).

This demonstrates the oppressiveness of the African concept of wifhood which stripped African women of the right to their names. This acute oppression has estranged a woman from herself and other people. Thus, patriarchal normativity took women away from their own history and this systematic erosion of their personhood could plunge them into alienating personality crises.

The most painful illustration of how wifhood oppresses a woman in ATDD is seen in how the newly married woman could not call other people, including her own husband by name. As the narrator shows,

[s]he could call none of them [senior in-laws] by their names, except the very young. Sometimes she could not even call her husband by his first name but would have to identify him as a younger brother's brother or younger sister's brother (p.56).

As if that was not enough, "[a]fter the birth of their first child she could then designate him [her husband] the title, father of so-and-so" (p.56). Cooper, citing Salami-Agunloye, has underlined the brutality of African patriarchal values and prejudices against women: "[i]n many African societies, being a wife is nearly as bad as a slave or a bond woman as has been illustrated by many writers" (2010:3). Patriarchal normativity has propagated many illogical practices that need to be challenged, and feminist writers like Ngcobo have led the way. Preposterous patriarchal customs that distance wife from husband only serve as justification for the primacy of men (Ratele, 2015). This suggests the imposed exile of the newly married woman from the man she freely talked to during dating and courtship but can no longer call by name. Denying a

woman a chance to recognise the man she had just married was the height of aggression against her as it dwarfed her sense of subject status and equality with her husband. This has made African wifehood a site of unequal power between husband and wife. Feminist writers like Ngcobo expose patriarchy as an arena of women's subordination because "patriarchy called for wives to submit to their husbands. The wife was not an equal but a 'helpmate'" (Strong and de Vault, 1989:30).

The treatment of the newly married Jezile in her husband's home in ATDD contrasts sharply with the reception she received when she went back to her parents' home. Back among her own people, she "threw all care to the winds - she was with her people and free to call anybody by their names, and to be called by her name and to eat any food she liked" (p.56). Through the contradictory and conflicting behaviour patterns expected of Jezile in her husband's home and her own parents' home, Ngcobo exposes and challenges the emptiness of patriarchal assumptions within the marriage institution that continue to undermine many women's freedoms.

To further expose the serious identity crises faced by women within patriarchy, Ngcobo shows how women's identities were in a constant flux. Once she got married, she

would be called MaMapanga, MaMajola, MaDuma or MaSibiya - her father's name.... Her position would only change when she had her first child; she would then be known by her child's name - NakaJezile (Mother of Jezile), NakaDumazile, NakaZenzile - thus living her life through the identity of her father or her child (p.56).

This picture of the impermanency of a woman's identity mirrors how the "patriarchal daughter remains suspended as a social positionality between already established territories [and]... maintains status only in so far as she succeeds in disappearing, in deconstructing into 'wife' and 'mother' of his children" (Spiller, 1990:127). That a married woman's position only changed after the birth of her first child illustrates how women lived their lives through those of their children, as if they lacked their own value or were valued less than their children. As Ngcobo's narrator shows, when a woman got married, "it was not the marriage itself, for its own sake - it

was the children of the marriage who were of paramount importance... young mothers were truly powerless” (p.55). In this sense, patriarchal normativity disinherited and dispossessed women by treating them as if they were not equal to men and even less important to the children who gave them identity.

Lauretta Ngcobo shows that these are critical issues that concern African women. Women require liberation from these oppressive patriarchal beliefs and value systems. Thus, women do not just aspire for the transformation of apartheid/colonialism and its ruthless mistreatment of Africans but even for the transformation of African patriarchy. Ngcobo’s examination of the oppressiveness of African patriarchy offers an honest analysis of oppression. Thus, she offers a powerful illustration that African women were not just concerned by colonial/apartheid oppression but even the oppressiveness of the African patriarchal system that undermined women’s position and status.

### **3.1.7.1 African patriarchy, women’s decision-making powers and reproductive health**

In ATDD, patriarchal oppression extended to cover decision-making in the home. In life, many men have made decisions that have affected African women’s lives without bothering to engage women first. And this has greatly impacted on women’s lives in a variety of ways. Men’s monopoly over decision-making power is exposed in ATDD at the beginning of the story by Jezile’s silent complaints against Siyalo’s timing for his return from Durban that had coincided with the beginning of her menses:

Just why, just why did he always choose the wrong date? Why couldn’t he plan the time of his leave in advance with her? He said it all depended on his employer, but what did his employer know about her, or her body or their need for a baby? How could he plan their life without them? (p.6-7).

It is clear that a woman is best placed to make such decisions. And Jezile desired to make her own decisions regarding her life. That determination is captured by her remark: “[t]here must be

a way I can intervene; I must influence things somehow. It is all about me” (p.7). She desired agency. Thus, Ngcobo contests patriarchal normativity’s deprivation of women control over their own lives and challenges its unjust expectations that women should surrender to men their power to make decisions.

Men’s unjust denial of women control over their destinies is further illustrated when, in the absence of the men who had left home for the city, the women had “made decisions but had *waited* for their husbands to give them *the final go ahead*” (p.81; emphasis mine). Denying women the power to make important decisions that affect them has been a cruel travesty of justice that has been treated as a norm within patriarchy. Without the power to make their own choices and decisions, it meant that African women did not live their lives the way they wanted. Given that the men returned after eleven months, it meant that many critical decisions that affected the women in the rural areas and required urgent attention were postponed for close to a year. This reveals the height of combined oppression by the apartheid and patriarchal structures. As the story opens, Jezile questions why African women have been denied power to decide for themselves: “why is it that something that affects my whole life should be outside of me. Have I ever had any power to influence anything in my life?” (p.7). Her rhetorical questions emphasise both her psychological torture at being denied agency and, more importantly, her refusal of such repression imbedded in patriarchal normativity and colonial/apartheid and capitalist ideology. This is contestation for the transformation of all oppressive systems that have denied women the power to chart their own lives.

Women’s lack of freedom to act on their decisions before consulting their men demonstrates how oppressive of women African patriarchal thought was. The role of African men in limiting African women’s freedoms and agency indicates a convergence of patriarchy and apartheid in oppressing women. African women did not merely confront exclusion and marginalisation simply because they were African or they were women, but because they were African women. Yiu (citing Ngcobo) has argued: “[i]n South Africa, over and above the [apartheid] oppressive system, a black woman is oppressed by law, which has calcified around the old traditional

customs” (2008:30). Thus, in the novel, Ngcobo shows awareness of women’s marginality within African patriarchal structures as well as apartheid oppression.

African men’s dictatorship has severely compromised African women’s reproductive health because of the pressure they have exerted to have babies. As African feminists have shown, for the “majority of women in Africa... there are not too many alternatives to being married and having children” (Nwapa, 1998:95). The patriarchal pressure for women to have babies has weighed down many of them. A lot of written literature such as Emecheta’s *Joys of Motherhood* (1988) has portrayed women dying in childbirth or suffering ill health as a consequence of that.

African women in ATDD were particularly saddled by compromised reproductive health due to the social pressure to have children. Because African families were separated for close to a year as men moved into the cities, children assumed an added significance. The narrator says, owing to the separation, the “only thing that secured husbands were children... mothers used them to keep the memory of home alive in their husbands, and husbands used them to fill the lonely existence of the wives they left behind” (p.18). Thus, there was an added pressure for women to have babies. This means that childless women experienced a lot of social and psychological pressure to have children. Barrenness and childlessness were constructed as a woman’s failure and not a man’s. That unproven claim meant that many women often suffered social censure and ridicule for their childlessness. Owing to that, childlessness was quite frightening and scary for many women. A ‘tragic’ consequence of childlessness could be loss of husband. Patriarchal normativity had constructed loss of husband as a subject for social contempt reserved for women. This left many women seriously concerned about losing their husbands because “the only thing that secured women a position in society were husbands” (p.18). Consequently, many women felt deeply pressured by African patriarchal expectations to have children and could go to any length to have children. The critical role of children, within apartheid, of securing many African marriages is underscored by views that situated children as “an insurance premium that had to be paid each year, lest the policy relapsed” (p.18). Unfortunately, many women ended up having so many children because their “husbands made certain they bore a child with each yearly visit, like an insurance premium that had to be paid each year” (p.18). Because of the toll of so

many births, African “women withered under the strain - they grew thinner and more ill with each baby” (p.18). This exposes how African women’s reproductive health was severely compromised.

The duplicity of patriarchy was seen in that, though children were seen as a site for securing marriages, in reality, having many children never cemented a woman’s place in her husband’s family. No matter how many children a woman had, the narrator shows that “[b]eing a mother did not put a woman centrally at the home of her in-laws. She could decide nothing about her life: where to live, where to go, with whom and when” (p.55). In other words, a wife suffered subordination. Thus, marriage was merely a site of the oppression of women’s reproductive health. It was not only women whose health was compromised given that the “women withered”, even the “children they bore grew weaker and less able to withstand the rigours of their impoverished lives” (p.18). It was ridiculous that the ‘withered women’ were expected to toil daily to fend for their weak children. This emphasises how trapped women’s lives were within African patriarchy. On the one hand, they needed children to secure their marriages yet on the other, suffered the physical toll associated with enduring so many births.

The physical toll of enduring so many childbirths on women’s health is demonstrated through the sad experiences of Zenzile, Jezile’s childhood friend. Zenzile was married to “that good-for-nothing Mthebe” (p.5) who rarely visited his wife or gave financial support to his family despite living lavishly in the city. Despite neglecting his family’s financial needs, Mthebe still exercised control over reproduction matters in the family. For instance, regarding the number of children, Zenzile confided in Jezile that she “had more than she wanted” as she could not afford to look after them (p.19). She did not want to have many babies, a clear contradiction of patriarchal normativity’s claims about the importance of children in the life of a woman. However, even if she no longer wanted babies, “[e]ach time Mthebe came home from leave he found a new baby, and he left another growing, ready to find on his next visit” (p.5). Thus, there was a huge gap between what she wanted and her lived reality. Within six years of marriage, Zenzile did not only have four children but was now pregnant with another. The yearly births depict Zenzile as if she were an automated annual child-bearing machine, perennially nursing a baby. Her body

suffered the physical toll of a difficult life of poverty that she and her children suffered, along with enduring too many births, but Mthebe seemed oblivious to how the demands of wifhood and motherhood, coupled with his neglect, had ruined his wife's life. Zenzile's anguish at her vulnerable situation is revealed in her confirmation to Jezile that she "can't cope with the children... [and] can't look after them properly" especially as Mthebe had totally abandoned her and the children (p.53).

Zenzile's horrible marriage experiences reflect feminist concerns that for many a woman, transition from daughterhood to wifhood has not only culminated in her loss of control over her own body but loss of her freedoms as well. And eventually the loss of women's lives too. Haggard and decimated by ill health due to enduring poverty and numerous childbirths, Zenzile is described as "a captive in her house, with children who whimpered and hung around her skirts. Everything around was drab and Zenzile looked haggard and despondent" (p.5). The drabness of her surroundings had been produced by the intersections of the poverty created by apartheid and her husband's neglect and failure to fulfil his expected role as breadwinner and provider for the family. Therefore, both *apartheid* and patriarchal oppressions intersected in Zenzile's life, to leave her in this trapped condition. Her marriage and the poverty-filled life she led were the reasons for her physical decimation where her eyes now "looked larger than usual [and], the only feature that seemed undiminished on that haggard face" (p.18). Her physical relapse contrasts her description before her marriage as a "young, pretty, intelligent girl who had laughed joyously.... [Now] Zenzile no longer laughed at anything - only a smile, when she could summon it, would play on her joyless face" (p.35,6). Thus, weighed down by the appalling poverty produced by callous apartheid structures, too many births and the irresponsible behaviour of her husband who abandoned the family to leave her burdened by childcare responsibilities alone, the emaciated Zenzile was no longer her old exuberant self. Gone was her old life full of joviality, gaiety and freedom as she slipped into captivity where she was eternally ill, tired and threatened by death. This affirms Mowbary, Oyserman, Lutz and Purnell's argument that has shown how many women have been consumed by "[t]he stress of parenting under conditions of poverty, social isolation and marital discord" while many men have been least concerned (1997:178).

Zenzile's death in childbirth underscores how reproductive health is a crucial need that women have to ensure their survival. Her health was compromised when she was "in labour" but while Mthebe was a spendthrift in Durban where he was driven around, spending money on trivial things such as watching movies, his wife could ill afford hospital bills at this crucial hour. MaGoba, Zenzile's mother-in-law, kept on asking the crucial question: "[w]here will all that money come from - money for the car, money for the hospital?" (p.57). It shows that without any improvement in African women's economic conditions, many will continue failing to get health assistance. That Zenzile died in childbirth together with her unborn child is a powerful pointer to African women's urgent reproductive and general health needs.

### **3.1.8 Apartheid and the dislocation of African marriages**

A critical question that African women pose in ATDD that underpins their concerns is asked by Nosizwe: "We, the women in the rural areas, need to know why we are here when our husbands are there" (p.42). Her question challenges apartheid separation of African couples which was responsible for strained or dissolution of African marriages. This was a critical concern that burdened African women in the novel.

Apartheid migrant labour laws created situations where it was difficult for African men to remain in the African reserve. The apartheid government "imposed a number of taxes of various kinds to force the men to work to pay these taxes: poll tax, quit-rent or hut-tax" (p.42). The men stayed in the cities for eleven months before coming back home. This meant that African men lived separately from their wives and families, far away in cities for close to a whole year, only to return home for a few days before going back again. Because of such long separation, Nosizwe noted: "[w]hen our men get lonely out there they meet other women and new families grow and we are forgotten" (p.43). This affirms Bernstein's argument about how apartheid economic conditions severely disrupted African family life (1978).

Apartheid labour conditions also exerted much pressure on African marriages. Urban accommodation was meant for single African men who stayed in shared communal bedrooms, confirming the exclusion of African women from taking their place beside their men in the cities. As long as women lacked rights of domicile in cities, it implies that, essentially, African family life was dislocated. Therefore, marriage breakdowns were partly because of apartheid logic that separated families for long times. Nosizwe queried the logic of apartheid laws which endorsed women out of towns, thereby illegalising women's co-habitation with their husbands. What this fundamentally means is that African feminism, as represented by Ngcobo, is not anti-family (a misconception that some men have). The women actually desired that families stayed together. The separation of families imposed by apartheid's exploitative industrial practices impeded many women's possibilities to conceive and strained African marriages as typified by the oppressive situation that Jezile found herself in at the beginning of the narrative: she "was afraid of losing Siyalo" to the city women (p.18).

Without a pass, women could not visit their husbands. Getting the pass was extremely difficult and an embarrassing ordeal. This was a grave concern for African women who were expected to justify their need to be with their husbands to an apartheid white 'jury' who either consented or refused them permission to visit their men. The regulation of African women's sexuality and matrimonial life was a dehumanising experience that alienated women from their true identities and needs as human beings. There is a disjuncture between what white patriarchy expected of the African women and what they inwardly desired. The women could not publicly admit to having natural sexual feelings. Racial and patriarchal normativity denied them the liberty to express their true needs. Due to patriarchal normativity,

there were things they could not even pray about, not at prayer meetings, but perhaps in the secrecy of their bedsides. Fears about their sexual needs – the dangers that lay under the surface – the daily longings and the ever-present temptations and the attendant disgrace (p.17).

Refused the right to live freely with their husbands, many African women were inhibited from expressing and fulfilling their natural sexual needs. That need had to be shelved for a whole year for most African women. This created in the women the fear “of failing in the burdensome task of harnessing their human needs. If they failed, their husbands would have good enough reasons to send them back in shame to their own people” (p.18). Women were, thus, trapped between two oppressive systems that trivialised their sexual needs. African patriarchy, on one hand, condemned adultery among women and the “worst misfortune that could befall a woman was to be caught in adultery, or worse still, to be pregnant in the absence of her itinerant husband” (p.17). While adultery was tabooed among women, African men did not face similar social censure. Thus, in their husbands’ absences, many African women hid their “daily longings and ever-present temptations” lest malicious and lurid gossips would be said about them, leading to the collapse of their marriages (p.17). The insecurities that characterised women’s lives illustrate how apartheid laws intersected with patriarchal customs to entrap African women and refuse them liberated existence.

The moral surveillance endured by African women in the novel underlines the level of sexual aggression that they suffered within the apartheid and African patriarchal setups. What worsened their dilemma was the possibility of losing their husbands to the city women. They could not easily visit their husbands in towns because of apartheid restrictions, yet, if they did not, they risked losing them to city women, resulting in the collapse of their marriages. Many women, therefore, struggled to protect their marriages. In her portrayal of African women struggling to secure apartheid permission to visit their husbands in towns, Ngcobo recreates the painful ordeals and humiliation the women endured at the Bantu Affairs Department (BAD) offices. She portrays disconcerting pictures of ‘long winding queues that did not move’; descriptions of women “sweating in the sun... parched at the mouth” (p.11) and scenes of frustrated women “looking ashen grey” (p.12) after the shattering experience of being denied permission to visit their husbands. The long winding queues that took the whole day to be served emphasise that many women were weighed down by apartheid politicisation of African marriages. As the women left the pass office, many avoided eye contact with those still in the queue and “would look the other way, unable to put their rejection into words” (p.12). Therefore, the passbook was

a symbol of apartheid oppression that did not only regulate the women's mobility but also "gave them permission to operate within a system of oppression" (Masola and Xaba, 2017:59).

The department that dealt with granting women permission to visit their husbands was called the Bantu Affairs Department and its acronym, BAD, was an apt pointer at the wickedness associated with this department. The abbreviation BAD is a fitting term that helps Ngcobo represent the pass office at Ixopo as "the burial ground of all human dignity" (p.11) where many women suffered verbal bashing, degradation and humiliation. The mockery of African marriages by the white officials is exposed in how one of the officials unashamedly encouraged African women to be promiscuous. He said to Jezile: "You want a fuck maan, you look for a man here" (p.13) This exposes the inhumanity of the apartheid system that dehumanized African women and men by unfairly treating them as if they were a base and lesser form of humanity that could easily swap mating partners with little conscience. Ironically, it also dehumanized the white colonialists who instituted the apartheid system, an immoral system that promoted promiscuity and prostitution. Such immorality that was produced by apartheid is illustrated in sex-deprived African men getting intimate with their wives or girlfriends in the bachelor hostels and communal bedrooms with pretended obliviousness to the presence of other men. For instance, the sexual encounter between Dlamini and the unknown woman created "a restlessness, a commotion in every bed" (p.26) because these were men who had been unfairly denied their conjugal rights for long. The restlessness from the men reveals how apartheid had, for long, suppressed their human needs. This is not only sexual harassment but, when the privacy between husband and wife is denied them and fellow men become privy to everything happening between husband and wife, it reveals how lowly humanity has sunk and how human decency has been thrown to the wind. On this instance, even Siyalo responds to the sexual encounter between Dlamini and the unnamed woman as he "gave two instinctive thrusts" (p.26). This heightens the impact of sexual harassment suffered by many men due to the apartheid system's blindness to the sexual needs and desires of the African women and men. Cut away from their women for very long periods, most men turned into prostitution or built new families altogether, abandoning their rural wives. Therefore, apartheid organisation posed a serious challenge to the most important factor within African patriarchy - marriage and children - and the women are

represented as very concerned about that. Thus, in a big way, failed African marriages are represented as a creation of apartheid oppression that denied wives and husbands the right to live together.

### **3.1.9 Sisterarchy: the dilemma and paradox of women reinforcing patriarchal oppression of fellow women in *And They Didn't Die***

Africans are also portrayed by Laretta Ngcobo as concerned by the manner in which systems of oppression have manipulated women by “turning sister against sister” (p.130). This worsened women’s experiences of oppression by reinforcing the system of oppression for all women. The reasons for women acting against the interests of fellow women are varied. According to Chattopadhyay, the paradox where women may be depicted as ‘perpetrators’ of violence is better understood through the lens of patriarchal bargain (2017). Patriarchal bargain reflects the strategies and coping mechanisms that some women adopt within patriarchy’s set of concrete constraints so as to survive its oppression (Kandiyoti, 1988). This reflects attempts by women at maximizing their own security as well as optimising life options (Kandiyoti, 1988). Actions by women which do not challenge or threaten the patriarchal order are a critical concern for women because they shore up patriarchal normativity instead of challenging it. This opens up new areas of women’s struggle that cannot be ignored in the struggle for their rights: decolonization of women socialised into conformity with patriarchal normativity.

Divisions between women in ATDD are shown in the inequalities in power between mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law. The inequalities which were socially-constructed are what this study refers to as sisterarchy, a term that draws parallels with patriarchy. The socially-created hierarchies between women and the inequalities between them (as ‘sisters’) have historically helped perpetuate patriarchy. They have sought to keep women divided. Because of the influence of patriarchal normativity, mothers-in-law acted in ways that inflicted so much pain on daughters-in-law, rather than making life more bearable for them. Mothers-in-law had more power than their daughters-in-law:

MaBiyela had so much power. She was permanently vigilant, armed with authority

and custom. Her vigilance was born of her own embittered life, soured by her own mother-in-law in her own past. It was the bitterness of generations, from mother-in-law to daughter-in-law (p.16).

What is clear is that MaBiyela received her power from patriarchal customs. However, she had not always had this power. During her time as a young bride, it was her own mother-in-law who had held more power and control than her. MaBiyela's mother-in-law had made marriage experiences very bitter for her. However, it is the way that MaBiyela, in turn, used her power as mother-in-law that interests this study. Because of MaBiyela's reinforcement of the expectations of African patriarchy, Jezile found her early years as a daughter-in-law quite unbearable. MaBiyela impersonated the oppressiveness of African patriarchy and its social conspiracy that discriminated against childless and barren women in her treatment of Jezile. MaBiyela's mistreatment of her daughter-in-law after years of suffering the same from her own mother-in-law shows that patriarchal "brutality can be transmuted into the nastiness that" women can show in their relationships with one another. It was because of MaBiyela's insistence on gender roles that Jezile was engulfed with a sense of pressure to have a child of her own at a time when there were so many obstacles that made this difficult. "No one knew how deeply affected Jezile was by her failure to have a baby" (p.3). She found her situation quite oppressive as it threatened her marriage. According to Chukukere, "[a] childless woman is anathema" within African patriarchy's debilitating social conventions and is made to feel like an outcast (1998:144). In the novel, Jezile's sense of failure was aggravated by the persistent scorn she received from MaBiyela, who was unrelenting that Jezile should provide a child for her only son, Siyalo. In the first chapter of the novel, instead of continuing with the rest of the women in celebrating the success of their dip-tank rebellion against apartheid authority that had seen Mr Pienaar driving off in fury and sense of defeat, Jezile locked herself up in her kitchen and wept bitterly because MaBiyela had reminded her of and chastised her for her perceived failure to conceive. As the celebrations were going on where women "called out the name of MaMapanga [Jezile] and gathered around her", it only takes MaBiyela's "cautionary look and one or two barbed words in Jezile's ear" (p.3) about her failure on the home front to spoil the day for Jezile, the mastermind of the dip tank resistance. Jezile's failure to conceive gnaws at her sense of self-worth and mutes her voice. Consequently, in the middle of the community celebrations, Jezile is forced to

prematurely abandon the celebrations and shut herself in her house. She “stuffed her apron into her mouth to stifle a scream and allowed herself a good cry” (p.3). Shutting herself inside her room reflects how lonely and alienated a childless woman’s life can be. What bothers readers is that Jezile’s psychological stability is actually fractured and damaged by the pressure from another woman, her mother-in-law, who has been socialised to comply with, and police the customs of her patriarchal society.

Literature by women has exposed how many mothers-in-law have been influenced by patriarchal normativity to act against women’s interests. Barbara Makhalisa’s *The Underdog* (1996) and Mariama Ba’s *So long a Letter* ((1981) are other novels by women writers that underscore the theme of mothers-in-law inflicting so much pain on the daughters-in-law instead of siding with them. Such portrayals of women would make some of them collaborators in the perpetuation of patriarchal normativity and oppressive practices. The actions of mothers-in-law who inflict pain on daughters-in-law reflect how some women who have negotiated some modicum of power within patriarchy or other systems of privilege have often (ab)used that power by reinforcing oppressive values against fellow women and even their own interests as women. According to Johnson, women who fail to use their power and influence to fight the oppressive systems of privilege and subordination, “tend to affirm the very systems that subordinate women,... by embracing the patriarchal values on which male power and privilege rest” (2014:8,9).

Ngcobo exposes MaBiyela and MaGoba as examples of mothers-in-law whose portrayal makes them guilty of perpetuating patriarchy and inflicting injury on their daughters-in-law. For instance, when the novel opens, MaBiyela is shown in the first chapter demonstrating her domineering attitude, not because of what she said, but by her non-verbal behaviour: “[i]t was nothing more than the cautionary look” but it affected Jezile deeply (p.3). MaBiyela’s actions demanded submission from Jezile, underlining that she could not do anything without consulting her first. On one occasion, she told Jezile: “in the absence of Siyalo, you should tell me - I’m here to look after his interests” (p.15). This reveals MaBiyela’s negotiation of her own gender roles to protect and ensure that her own position as mother-in-law was not undermined by Jezile in anyway. Her desire for control, though noble, infringed on Jezile’s rights and interests. As she

flaunted her power and authority in the face of her daughter-in-law who had gone to Ixopo without informing her, she showed her readiness to support patriarchal normativity. Her statement, coming from a woman to another, has a huge impact on women as a whole. It shows how some women have often supported and even made demands for fellow women to respect patriarchal beliefs where they benefitted from them. What is apparent here is that MaBiyela was defending her own intermediate position within patriarchy and the relative privilege she had as a mother-in-law. What she was protecting (in her acquiescence to the oppression of women within patriarchy) was a status of relative privilege when compared to her daughter-in-law. Such actions and utterances do not threaten or challenge patriarchal authority in any way but serve to reinforce it. This is an affirmation of Lorde's argument: "implying that all women suffer the same oppression simply because are women is to lose sight of the many varied tools of patriarchy" (1984:66). Therefore, to strengthen women's struggles against diverse systems of oppression, it is important for them to realise their own roles in inflicting pain on others (hooks, 1984). Ngcobo is, therefore, challenging women's actions that may perpetuate patriarchy.

To inflict pain on and silence her daughter-in-law, MaBiyela always chose "her moment well, and [would speak to her] in her most caustic voice" (p.5). Jezile's perceived 'barrenness' was a site for the incarceration of her voice because she was silenced each time MaBiyela reminded her of her failure to conceive or by her quizzical and searching look around her waist or her ever present pestering question: "Is there anything to tell us MaMapanga?" (p.5). Her constant harassment of Jezile over something she had no control over gnawed at Jezile's sense of self-worth and made her life an embittered one. MaBiyela was relentless as she "would not stop. She talked about children, she talked about childless women and she wondered aloud often, to all and sundry, what would happen if Jezile was barren, for Siyalo, an only son, simply had to have children" (p.3,4). This culminated in Jezile's loss of mental peace as seen in how, on one occasion, she was reduced to "babbling to herself" (p.6). Talking to herself indicates the extent of her psychological trauma that stemmed from patriarchal pressure. On another occasion after her menstruation cycle resumed and she discovered she was not pregnant, Jezile "wept for days and she could not look anyone in the eyes" (p.4). In her stream of consciousness after her menses, Jezile said about MaBiyela, "And that woman, she'll have a field day – she's so happy

to call me barren; it's as if it didn't concern her son as well – as though she wished him as much pain as she inflicts on me” (p.7). Essentially, Jezile's monologue communicates private meanings. Monologues reveal the solipsistic relationship between the world and the utterer: a very lonely world. In Jezile's young mind, MaBiyela was the face of her oppression though, in effect, it was patriarchal normativity that inspired MaBiyela's actions.

Mothers are portrayed as having very important roles to play when their married daughters face persecution. This is why Jezile, on one occasion fled her matrimonial home and went “back to Luve to be with her mother for several weeks” (p.4). The identity of mother as protector is clear. Such portrayal comes as a direct challenge to patriarchal normativity that has devalued women's roles as mothers. However, even when she got to Luve to be with her mother, Jezile's mental anguish persisted as articulated in how she “spent hours before her mother's bruised mirror scanning her shape – the scourge of barrenness” (p.4), seeking from the image in the mirror reassurances of her reproductive capacity which she had failed to get from MaBiyela. Retracing her footsteps back to her own mother's home was Jezile's means of evading the constant torture perpetrated by patriarchy through her mother-in-law who was the face and source of the anguish of Jezile's early life. It was MaBiyela's readiness to enforce and insist on patriarchal demands on her daughter-in-law that made her a cohort to the patriarchal system's intolerance of childlessness. This exposes how patriarchy has enlisted the help of women to perpetuate its agenda and divide women. One would have expected better understanding from MaBiyela in her relationship with Jezile because she, together with Jezile's own mother, had had bitter marriage experiences “because they had never had that power over their own lives – they had both sat and waited for their husbands; both had lost them in the waiting” (p.11). It is, therefore, ironical that once MaBiyela assumed status of mother-in-law, she abused her new-found power by making her daughter-in-law's life difficult, even denying her the opportunity to talk freely in the community of fellow women as she generally thrived in spoiling her day. Ngcobo has described it as “the bitterness of generations, from mother-in-law to daughter-in-law” (p.16). This reflects a vicious cycle where mothers-in-laws have wrongfully victimised their daughters-in-law as vengeance for their own mistreatment by their mothers-in-law. This underscores Kandiyoti's argument that a woman's life cycle within patriarchy is such that the deprivations and hardships

she experiences as a young bride are eventually 'superseded' by the control and authority she will have over her own subservient daughter-in-law (1988). It is as if women should only live in anticipation and hope of one day inheriting the authority of senior women (Chattopadhyay, 2017). For women, to spend their lives anticipating to possess some power in the future, albeit over other women, postpones their assumption of power and control to an unknown future and deflects their attention from seeking power and control in the present. Drawing from all this, it is apparent that the power inequalities between women and between men and women are embedded within patriarchy. Thus, African patriarchy, like apartheid, has created social elites, even among women, who have enjoyed unearned privileges at the expense of others. These social elites have affirmed its unequal system in their actions. As a consequence of the oppression that Jezile felt due to her childlessness, she began "to keep a low profile, and even in political matters she became silent" (p.5). This demonstrates how everybody was a loser at the end of day because her political inaction "slowed things down quite a lot at Sigageni" (p.5). Thus, in this sense, the oppression of a single woman impacted the lives of many other people.

However, as we condemn MaBiyela's role in her early harassment of Jezile, we need to put into perspective that her role in victimising Jezile derived from her awareness of the social censure associated with a family that failed to bear a child. She did not desire that her son and her family be victims of social ridicule that patriarchal normativity had sanctioned. Therefore, her victimization of Jezile reflects her own desire to escape social scorn associated with families without children. She desired her family to escape public scorn and damaging rumours that could tarnish the family name. Inherently, MaBiyela was not evil. Once Jezile fell pregnant, her metamorphosis into a loving and caring mother-in-law was apparent. For instance, the 'new' MaBiyela now "cautioned her against too much work. Jezile could not believe it, for she had never thought that her mother-in-law could have her welfare at heart" (p52). This representation of a 'new' MaBiyela implies that Jezile was an unfortunate victim of a mother-in-law who was not inherently wicked but had been transformed into a 'beast' by patriarchal normativity and the expectations it placed on her as mother-in-law. The name that MaBiyela gave Jezile's daughter, S'naye, was celebratory of her family's victory in fulfilling patriarchy's expectations. It underlined her relief that her family had, at last, escaped social censure reserved for families that

failed to have babies. The name S'naye was not arbitrarily given but was an announcement to the whole world that her family too had a child as it literally means: 'we too have a child'.

MaBiyela's contagious celebrations at the birth of her grandchild as she "called out: 'Wo, S'naye, S'naye nathi umtwana' (We have her, we too have a baby)" (p.72) overshadowed her earlier persecution of Jezile. We can conclude that it was patriarchal normativity and patriarchal values that had earlier turned her into a vicious woman.

It is not only mothers-in-law who are represented as reinforcing patriarchal normativity. The tendency among women towards sharing "lurid gossip" "about each other's failures and misfortunes" (p.17) is exposed as a negative trait encouraged by patriarchy. Such gossip reproduced the gendered nature of the Sigageni society by negating the identities of women. As an example, some women lied and spoke ill about fellow women's lack of morality in the absences of the men. They "were malicious and even inventive when it came to these matters" (p.18). This underscores how women have often supported (whether unwillingly or otherwise) and even made demands for fellow women to respect patriarchal normativity.

In spite of patriarchal normativity dividing women by making them think that it was more beneficial for them to identify with dominant men (hooks, 1984), there are signs of some women forging lines of unity and solidarity in ATDD. The sense of communality between them is quite encouraging. For instance, when the women went out to demonstrate against apartheid oppression in Ixopo, around lunch-time, "[t]he women sat down in groups and spread their food reverently. Each gave her contribution to a communal pool at the centre of the ring they had formed" (p.92). Such unity shown in coming together to demonstrate as a team and eating together reveals great potential of women's solidarity. Such solidarity would embolden their challenge of diverse systems of oppression.

### **3.1.9.1 White women as conduits of racial oppression: un-naming, re-naming and identity issues**

In ATDD, it is not just mothers-in-law but white women who are also portrayed in ways that underscore how some women have inflicted pain on fellow women. This is especially true in the unequal relationship between Jezile and her white employer, Mrs Potgieter. Mrs Potgieter's initial ill-treatment of Jezile enacts the brutality of apartheid's racial inequalities and its inhuman treatment of the African woman as the other. Ngcobo's exposure of the impact of racial oppression on African women challenges the hegemony of some white forms of feminism that have sought to locate patriarchy as the singular entry point into examining the oppression of women.

Jezile's terrible experiences of racial hatred when she left Sigageni and crossed over into 'the white world' reveal the dehumanization that continues to characterise white hegemony and white supremacist ideas even today. The 'white world' is described by Ngcobo's African women (at the beginning of the novel) as "the world of roads and safety", but this safety was not granted to the African women (p.2). Thus, the life of an African woman was insecure both in the African reserve and in the white-dominated South Africa. Moving into Bloemfontein did not bring with it an improvement in Jezile's conditions of life. There were new challenges she had to face. In Bloemfontein, she did domestic work for the Potgieters and Ngcobo examines the ill-treatment that domestic workers received within apartheid's racist ideology. Ngcobo's identification with the concerns and suffering of poor African domestic workers in white people's kitchens inspires feminist analysis not to neglect the plight of ordinary women who continue to suffer more forms of tyranny than women with access to certain privileges.

ATDD portrays the glaring inequalities between African domestic workers and the white women they worked for. It depicts the racialization of African femininity because white femininity was a site of white women's privilege that enabled them to enjoy some modicum of dominance denied African women and men. In the first place, Mrs Potgieter's racial and class position enabled her to hire Jezile to do the physically-straining work she desired to escape. Her access to these privileges allowed her to order Jezile about, albeit in the same language of domination and control that was central to the perpetuity of colonial-patriarchy. By taking up posts as domestic

workers, the African women “were looking for a way out of the crushing class oppression” (Johnson, 2014:185) created by the apartheid system but found themselves traumatised by racist prejudices. Mrs Potgieter and other white women’s access to racial privileges underscore the argument that subordination and privilege should be conceived as relational in nature. The white women’s relations with dominant white men elevated their status above that of their African counterparts. Unfortunately, white women employers in turn replayed the intolerance of the apartheid system, in their treatment of their Africandomestic workers. They were very poor, reflecting the interlock between race and class in undermining African women’s lives.

To begin with, the African domestic workers’ oppression is evoked by the manner in which their white women employers stripped them of their real names and fashioned new names for them. Renaming points to their loss of identity. This dehumanizing act negated their Africanness as if it was an identity to be ashamed of. As a new domestic worker in Bloemfontein, Jezile was renamed ‘Annie’ by Mrs Potgieter who did not bother consult her first as the following extract shows:

She immediately set to work alongside Mrs Potgieter preparing lunch. As the children arrived, Jezile heard Mrs Potgieter calling, ‘Annie, Annie’, and Jezile thought she was calling one of her children. It took some moments for her to realize that she was actually referring to her (p.199, 200).

The fact that Mrs Potgieter did not even speak to Jezile before ‘rechristening’ her Annie demonstrates the sub-human condition to which colonialism had assigned Jezile as an African woman who was denied her true identity. Renaming is akin to ‘murdering’ the rights and the Africanness of the women by the white apartheid system that Mrs Potgieter represented. To name is to have control over the named and so Mrs Potgieter’s renaming of Jezile shows the power she held over Jezile. Her possession of some form of control denied African women affirms African feminists’ arguments about the inequities between different women (sisterarchy) and how women have not had a homogeneous experience of lived realities, power and privileges (Mama, 2001). In this instance, the white woman ‘namer’ held more power than the renamed African. This underpins African feminist arguments that forced Western feminism “to think in terms of the intersection of differences - sex, race, class, ethnicity, etc. - between and within genders” (Nnaemeka, 1998:17). The inequalities between Jezile and Mrs Potgieter underline the complicity of race and class in the constructing gender. In this way, African women were

disinherited by losing their birth names and disempowered by being named by others. Racial power, as played out through Mrs Potgieter's relations with Jezile, produces devalued representations of African womanhood and depicts apartheid attempts to subordinate African women even in matters as crucial as self-identity. Jezile was not alone in this loss of name and identity as we learn that her new name "'Annie' was one of several generic names for female black servants" (p.200). The idea of calling all black women servants by the same generic name dehumanized them and lumped different African women into one faceless identity where they were denied individuality and not allowed to be identified by own names. Jezile's psychological anguish at the loss of her true identity after her forced metamorphosis into Annie was apparent as she inwardly asked herself: "Annie... me?" Jezile felt emptied of herself. 'What's wrong with Jezile, I wonder?' she thought to herself" (p.200). African feminists have argued that the process of naming themselves should be recognized as political and as a concern that cannot be dismissed. Jezile was content with her name and her identity. Thus, in spite of what white patriarchy thinks about African identity as something to be ashamed of, Jezile was actually happy with her identity. Her stream of consciousness illuminates essential points about the representation of the African women by settler colonial white women. African women were taken away from a history of themselves by colonialism through the actions of these white women employers. This speaks of a great disconnect between the experiences of white women and African women within racial discourses which feminism cannot ignore in its focus on the oppression of women (Chukukere, 1998).

Though Jezile felt 'emptied of herself' and wounded by the dispossession of her true identity, she could not vocalize her inner thoughts and so was restricted to speaking in private. The tendency to speak in private is a pointer to Ngcobo's exposure of African women's true concerns with the manner in which apartheid's racial oppression has muzzled and muted African women's voices. Jezile's monologue shows her desire to be herself. (In his article, 'Perspectives on the Poetic Fiction of Yvonne Vera') Kizito Muchemwa has underlined that, "Monologue essentially communicates private meanings" (2002:9). This means that as Annie, Jezile can *only think about* the mutilation of her sense of being *but cannot vocalize* these thoughts. In his exploration of the meaning of women's restricted voices, Muchemwa has said that women's silence "is associated

with absence, death, negation and repression; and speech with presence, life, affirmation and freedom” (2002:9). Thus, Jezile’s monologue invokes some kind of solipsism where African women have continued to be treated as insignificant and confined to privatizing their views and want for emancipation. Mrs Potgieter and other white women had the choice to call their African women servants by their names, so choosing to call every African domestic worker ‘Annie’ made them guilty accomplices in undermining fellow women. This affirms Ethel Crowley’s argument about the inadequacies of western feminism to capture the experiences of oppression by some women. She has added that oppression and freedom do not mean the same thing to all women of the world (1994). It also underscores Aina’s argument: “In colonial and postcolonial Africa, the subordination of women is seen at different levels - first, male dominance of the traditional patriarchal social structures; second, domination of women as members of the peripheral societies, subordinated to foreign capitalist males of the metropolitan states” (Aina, 1998:70). While we blame the apartheid system for creating this situation, the individual women who actually perpetuated this racial inequity should also assume responsibility for their own role in the abuse of the other.

As if that was not enough, an African woman working for white people was in some cases referred to as a ‘girl’ by the colonial establishment (p.138). Referring to a grown woman as a girl has exposed the unjustified racist attempts to appropriate control over humanity by treating adult African women, on account of racial difference, as if they were immature, and minors who required white people to make important decisions for them. All this cruel colonial ‘un-naming’ and re-naming of the African domestic worker, thus, dismissed and trivialized African women’s whole existence. And, as Ngcobo’s narrator shows, once a woman “had lost her name, her past, her friends and relatives, her language, her initiative, ...she felt she was just a shell of her real self” (p.201). Thus, African women have needed their identities to be respected. The act of renaming African women workers was a disempowering imperial tool of control of the other, designed to destroy African women’s voices and possibilities. This is an indicator that white women were victims like their African counterparts. This has been due to their access to racial privileges and power denied African people. This is an indictment of the racial bigotry and its ideology that has continued to fuel divisions among African and white women. Thus, to address

the oppression of women, there is need for white women to realise how they have accessed certain privileges denied to African women.

In the novel, what plunges Jezile's self-esteem even deeper in Mrs Potgieter's home was the fact that Mrs Potgieter gives her "the same bones... put down on the order as dogs' meat" (p.200). Such crude behaviour by Mrs Potgieter psychologically equates and shrinks Jezile to dog status. To heighten this sense of discrimination, Mrs Potgieter's main house was a site of Jezile's exclusion during meals and there were many small things she was not allowed to do. For instance, Jezile

hated asking for permission to do even trivial things like eating at the kitchen table on rainy days. She hated eating outside, leaning on that concrete stand every day. She hated being refused the use of electricity in her room. She hated entering by the back door.... She hated baking because she never ate the cakes. She hated cooking meat because she never ate the roast. She just lived to fulfil Mrs Potgieter's every wish - totally steeped in the life of this alien family and stripped of her life as she had known it. She had lost her name, her past, her friends and relatives, her language, her initiative, and she felt she was just a shell of her real self (p.201).

This mistreatment creates an awful picture of how a human being can try to reduce another to that level of inhumane treatment merely because of racial and class differences. The repetition of the phrase "she hated" indicates Jezile's real needs which were a complete opposite of what apartheid produced for her. This is a call for society to address all questions of social injustice and not just gender inequality because it is not the only form of oppression. According to hooks, this means

that race and class oppression would be recognised as feminist issues with as much relevance as sexism. When feminism is defined in such a way that it calls attention to the diversity of women's social and political reality, it centralizes the experiences of all women, especially the women whose social conditions have been least written

about, studied, or changed by political movements (1984:25).

The portrayal of Jezile's experiences in the Potgieters' house are, therefore, an indictment of the selfishness, abusiveness and meanness of the racial system that has been exploited to catapult white men and women into believing their own empty claims of racial superiority which they have abused and continue to do so to deny Black equality.

That it was Mrs Potgieter, a white woman, who was the face of Jezile's oppression is a powerful statement that Ngcobo, as an African feminist, makes to underscore the dissimilarities of African and white women's experiences of oppression. It is a strategy that helps white women readers to realise how women of colour may have different needs and concerns from white women given they have endured the stigma of race on top of other forms of oppression suffered by many women. This affirms that patriarchal oppression is not the single entry point to examine the ways in which women have been oppression.

However, Ngcobo does not solely focus on racial oppression of African women. She balances her analysis by also exposing how white women did not, themselves, escape white patriarchal oppression despite their access to white racial privilege. In spite of her access to various privileges (denied Africans) on the grounds of her race, Mrs Potgieter was still a recipient of so much physical abuse from her husband as shown in how "once or twice Mrs Potgieter woke up with a black eye [and]... a night of steaming angry scenes would be followed by frigid mornings" (p.202). A nasty experience was when after a row, Mr Potgieter drove off leaving his wife "crying disconsolately with blood all over her face" (p.204). Mrs Potgieter's bleeding face and the callous attitude of a husband who drove off after bashing his wife only to return late into the night mirror the abuses white women have also suffered within white patriarchy. Through Mrs Potgieter's experiences of her husband's physical violence, it is clear that white femininity was not free of oppression but was also vulnerable to abuse within apartheid structures. Johnson has asserted that "all the class or race privilege in the world will not protect women from being targeted for sexual and domestic violence" (2014:162). Thus, the brutality of white hegemonic

masculinity has known no racial boundaries. It has impacted the lives of both white women and those of colour - women and men alike. White women's access to racial privileges did not exempt them from enduring their men's oppression and domination. This speaks to the emptiness of white women's racial privileges. Identifying with white men in the abuse of Black people will not shield them from the oppressiveness of white patriarchy. The solution for them may be in forging solidarity with other oppressed groups whose rights have equally been taken away from them by white patriarchy. While we sympathise with Mrs Potgieter as a target of her husband's patriarchal aggression, we are forced to condemn her in the same breadth because she exercised the same callous victimization of Jezile. Just like her husband was guilty of patriarchal oppression, Mrs Potgieter too could not be excused from her racial abuse of Jezile. Her behaviour is not any different from that of African men today who, despite suffering racial oppression along with African women, are guilty of patriarchal oppression of their wives. Only duplicity would see a white woman struggle for her own patriarchal liberation without, in the same spirit, struggling for the racial emancipation of racialised women and men. Similarly, African men's participation against racism (as seen recently in the Black Lives Matter campaigns) without, in the same vein, contributing towards women's emancipation from familial patriarchal oppression and its prejudices against them, reflects warped mentality where they view their own freedoms as more important than that of oppressed women. Thus, Ngcobo's portrayal of these issues in ATDD provokes and challenges me as a male reader to abandon egoistic tendencies of seeking to protect **and** safeguard my interests while denying women around me their rights.

In ATDD, oppressive systems are portrayed as operating in complex ways. Mrs Potgieter's multiple identities are revealed in that as a white person, she found herself privileged by the racial hegemony but as a woman, she confronted patriarchal oppression by her abusive husband. These multiple identities that a single woman can have are a powerful way of challenging some "monistic approaches to oppression" from the West which do not embrace intersectionality in assessing the diverse systems of privilege that have oppressed women (Carastathis, 2014:308). And the major challenge with "monistic approaches to oppression... [is that] they are reductive: they reduce the complex experiences of simultaneous oppressions to simplistic unitary

categories” (Carastathis, 2014:308). This affirms African feminism which argues that women’s struggles against patriarchal oppression should never negate but embrace the impact of other forms of oppression (Mama, 2001; 2012).

Ngcobo portrays the potential for women of different races to connect as women and as mothers. As we later discover, Mrs Potgieter had a human side after all. She thawed once she discovered Jezile was pregnant and began to show some concern for Jezile. What connected the two women was Mrs Potgieter’s realisation of the humanity of Jezile as a mother. Thus, motherhood connected the two women. This demonstrates the potential for women across racial and other differences to forge alliances. Mrs Potgieter became “more friendly” and

improved Jezile’s rations and included in them fruit and vegetables, even though they were usually the more jaded ones that had not been eaten by the family that week. She also gave Jezile some of her children’s old clothes, hand-me-downs.... But on the whole most still had a lot of wear in them. She even gave Jezile some of her own clothes (p.207-8).

The fact that Mrs Potgieter showed her human side helps challenge “world views which pit individual against individual and mystify the social basis of exploitation” (hooks, 1984:25, citing Dixon, 1980). Mrs Potgieter’s ‘generosity’ comes late as her husband had already taken advantage of her earlier mistreatment of Jezile to rape Jezile. “Somewhere at the back of her mind, she [Jezile] blamed Mrs Potgieter. If she had not treated her so harshly Jezile would have been less well disposed towards Mr Potgieter” (p.207). It is as if, in racial discourses, there is a decided conspiracy between white male hegemony and the conscripted white women as Mrs Potgieter shares the role of oppressor with her husband: she was equally the source of Jezile’s misery. Through the Potgieters’ mistreatment, Jezile experienced the harsh confluence of two oppressions: racism and sexism. Ngcobo shows that the African women in the novel are concerned about the racial intolerance which made them suffer marginalisation.

### **3.1.10 Sisterarchy: African women and class exploitation in ATDD**

Another system of privilege that oppresses African women in the novel comes in the form of class exploitation that they endured. Feminists have shown how class inequalities are a serious cause for concern, having plagued gender politics by worsening the experiences of patriarchal oppression by poorer women in the world (Crompton, 1989; McGin and Oh, 2017). In other words, patriarchal normativity which this study seeks to challenge, has, among a range of many other factors, been “inflected by class, race, ethnic, religious and global-imperial relations” (African Feminist Forum, 2006:2). In ATDD, the experiences of African women such as Jezile and Nomawa were inextricably tied to their class positions within apartheid. The poverty... exposed them to abuse by the rich and the privileged. It was not only the white colonialist whose abuse of class privileges affected African women and men. Even African women and men are represented as guilty of exploiting the labour of poor women (and men) for their gain.

Ngcobo portrays glaring economic disparities between Africans in the same community: Duma and his wife, MaNgidi, were materially privileged Africans. Their access to economic resources influenced their control over the majority of African women who were less privileged than them. MaNgidi derived her access to class privileges from being the wife to the counsellor to the chief, a position that allowed her to hire and exploit her neighbours to work in their fields for piles of “logs”. Because of her class position in her society, “MaNgidi stood... different and separate as though she was not one of them” (p.130). This reflects how different class positions produced dissimilar experiences for different women. The Dumas’ treatment of their poor neighbours made them powerful symbols of the rich’s abuse of material power against poor women whom they oppressed and ill-treated. Their ill-gotten wealth was because they had been manipulated by apartheid authority against the interests of the African people. The poor African women of Sigageni were struggling to eke out a living but MaNgidi made them work in her fields long hours, and “as always, [she paid] a pittance” (p.159). MaNgidi shared in her husband’s exalted position as wife to the chief’s counsellor while the rest of the women in the community suffered abject poverty. The authority of Duma as the chief’s counsellor, and that of his wife was conferred by apartheid after the original chief, Siyoka, and his counsellor were deposed. Therefore, Duma and wife became representatives of colonial intolerance of dissent. It was the women of the community who “weeded his crops, harvested his crops, plastered and

whitewashed his big house, so that it shone like a white pebble from a long way off” (p.128). The hyperbole in the simile, ‘shining like a white pebble’ signifies how thorough the work was. The opulence of the Dumas unmasks apartheid capitalist exploitation that divided African women. The irony was that African women built beautiful houses that provided luxury for others, yet, lived in abject poverty themselves. This draws similarity with Jezile’s experiences at Mrs Potgieter’s home where she cooked appetizing food for the Potgieters but never got to taste the food except the bones meant for the dogs.

To emphasise on the different experiences that class privileges created for the rich and the poor women, Ngcobo portrays how, while the other women worked, MaNgidi never ventured

outside her house to weed or to mix the mud. Other people worked on it with their feet until it congealed. Other people’s wives pounded it for hours, so that when evening came they could hardly walk for fatigue, and they would ache for days in their groins (p.128).

This shows how a majority of the African women characters are mapped and plotted in ways that situate them without economic means to improve their gender identities. MaNgidi was blind to the needs of her fellow women and thus, in the novel, she re-enacts the evil insensitivity of capitalism because she did not “look at the clock at the end of the day. This made very long working hours” (p.160). While fellow women worked and got dirty, the class differences are revealed in that “MaNgidi was always clean and fresh and smiling” (p.128). Smiling in the midst of all this suffering and poverty underscores the selfish motives of many who hold economic privileges. MaNgidi’s class privileges blinded her to the realities and needs of ‘other’ women she had previously identified with. This indicates how systems of oppression can actually divide women. Without examining such critical issues of how women have been oppressed by different exploitative systems of privilege and forms of tyranny that made some accomplices in the oppression of fellow women, we may miss the ways through which the systems of oppression have perpetuated and continue to perpetuate themselves through their ‘capture’ of some of the oppressed so that they do nothing about the evil around them.

### **3.2 Representations of women's concerns and needs in Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions***

There are a number of issues that concerned African women in colonial Zimbabwe which Dangarembga portrays in *Nervous Conditions* (NC). These issues stemmed from various forms of tyranny produced by the manner in which colonial life was ordered by hierarchies of power based on race, class and gender. These intersecting systems of privilege limited many African women's liberties and options by excluding them from equal participation as well as stuck most of them into the misery of poverty associated with it. Most of the issues that Dangarembga highlights in NC are similar to those depicted by Ngcobo in ATDD: the anguish of women's lives and the various struggles that they engaged in to survive and make the most of the oppressiveness of patriarchal normativity, colonial exploitation and class oppression that simultaneously entrapped them.

Dangarembga explores the impact of the colonial encounter in Zimbabwe. She shows how colonialism worsened many African women's already bad conditions and inferior statuses within African patriarchy. She represents rural African women, both young and old, who suffered and struggled, with varying degrees of success, to survive and make meaning of their lives within the repressive contexts of both African patriarchy and colonialism. Her novel "deals with the themes of poverty, the challenges faced by women trying to achieve their aims in life and the struggles they have to undertake to be able to succeed" (Ternate, 2016:1). She exposes as a key concern of African women: the burden to survive placed on a range of women by the compounding oppressions of patriarchy, colonialism and class. The protagonist and narrator is Tambudzai, a young girl of eight at the beginning of the story, whose dream was to escape the life of subordinate positions set up for women by patriarchal normativity. Of particular interest are Tambudzai, Lucia and Nyasha who (as discussed in detail later) contested, resisted and negotiated their gender identities to survive the different forms of oppression at the hands of patriarchal customs, values and practices. The impact of these young women's responses to forces of oppression and the coping skills that they embraced to survive (which are discussed more in the next chapter) depict how women can successfully challenge patriarchal gender oppression and other systems of privilege intersecting with it.

The novel is set in a rigidly hierarchical and women oppressive patriarchal rural community where African men's interests were given priority while their women's were regarded as secondary and were trivialised. The novel's rural setting in colonial Zimbabwe provides a fitting platform that allows the reader conceptualisation of the impact of traditional customs of African patriarchy. In a review of the novel, Uwakweh has stated: "Dangarembga demonstrates through Tambu's story the oppressive facets of patriarchy and the psychological schism it manifests within the female child in particular" (1998:14). It is the gender based discriminations which are largely portrayed as the sites of women's concerns. Thus, what women have needed is transformation of their society to make it more equitable.

The novel adopts the first person narrative style. It is written as a personal biography that chronicles the experiences of Tambudzai (Tambu in short) who, despite her tender age as an eight year old girl, questions and challenges the role and position she is expected to assume by her patriarchal society as a woman. Although this might appear as a young girl's story and the memories of an oppressive past by an individual woman, it still raises the "larger political themes" that address the concerns of many African women (Govinden, 1998:70). In her examination of the critical role of (auto)biographies in exploring women's issues, Abraham cites Ellen Kuzwayo's *Call Me Woman* (1985) as a good example of how a biography "explicitly places" the woman narrator's "life in direct connection with those of other ordinary women, yet exemplary women devoted to liberatory struggle" (2003:154). This implies that even if NC is a biography, it does not entirely concentrate on the private concerns of the narrator. The conflicts that the biography highlights actually reflect the communal concerns of African women in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe). Muchemwa has equally argued that Tambudzai's "personal biography is as important as the history of armed conflict in its dwelling on other sites of [women's collective and individual] struggle" against oppressive systems that cannot be ignored, including the harrowing oppressions of patriarchal normativity and class relations (2013:59). In this way, the biographical approach adopted by Dangarembga shows how connected an individual's concerns are to those of the rest of humanity.

### 3.2.1 African women and the burden of coloniality

In NC, the women characters, just like those in ATDD, are trapped between two major intersecting systems of oppression: patriarchy and colonialism. This is exposed early by Mai Tambudzai: “And these days it [life] is worse, with the poverty of blackness on one side and the weight of womanhood on the other” (p.16). This statement reveals African women’s concerns with the evil intersection of colonialism and patriarchy which brought so much distress and anguish in the lives of African women. Dangarembga, like Ngcobo, shows how African women are critical of the oppression of patriarchal beliefs and customs, as well as the oppression produced by racial prejudice. This affirms that one cannot discuss only one form of tyranny without discussing other oppressions on African society. Ratele has pointed out: “[a]lthough it is theoretically possible to separate gender from race, in everyday reality, gender relations and identities cannot easily be disentangled from race relations” (2015:150). Thus, Dangarembga and Ngcobo’s novels both tackle African women’s attempts to address the different forms of tyranny that produced marginal positions for them.

The colonial government in Zimbabwe (formerly Rhodesia) displaced African people from their original homes to create space for white colonialists. Just like in apartheid South Africa, the colonial government in Zimbabwe showed disregard for African people’s rights to their land and other natural resources as well as their human needs by displacing them from their original land “where the soil is ripe” (p.18) and setting up unproductive reserves which were a poverty trap for Africans. Sibanda has described these reserves as “cemeteries not homes” (1989:31). Equating the reserves where Africans were shunted to as graveyards highlights death as a constant threat for Africans in their new homes. The colonial conquest left African families “destitute” and unable to lead their “former standard of living” (p.18). Such displacement which echoes Ngcobo’s explanations of the impact of apartheid displacement of African people in South Africa implies that the poverty that is characteristic of most African people in Southern Africa today has its roots in colonial structures that discriminated against African people. In Dangarembga’s novel, the poor circumstances of Tambudzai’s family contrasts with the pre-colonial realities of Tambudzai’s “great-grandfather [who] was a rich man in the currency of

those days, having many fat herd of cattle, large fields and... worked hard to produce bountiful harvests” (p.18). The family’s economic status was upset once the white colonialists came, dispossessed and drove African people off their land:

On donkey, on foot, on horse, on ox-cart, the people looked for a place to live. But the wizards were avaricious and grasping; there was less and less land for the people. At last people came upon the grey, sandy soil of the homestead, so stony and barren that the wizards would not use it (p.18).

Moving African people from their original rich land particularly left many women vulnerable to hunger and poverty given that many African men “managed to escape to glittering gold mines in the south” (p.18). This left the African women alone and exposed because “The wizards had no use for women and children” (p.18). Thus, it was women as mothers who toiled to ensure the families survived the poverty and starvation brought about by colonialism. In the case of Tambudzai’s grandmother’s experiences, she “was left with six children to support”, a very difficult feat for an unemployed woman to undertake, given the poor soils of her new surroundings. Such a historical account of how colonialism produced poverty for women resonates with Ngcobo’s account in ATDD. Thus, though both African men and women were dispossessed of their land, women and children were the worst affected.

The sense of general hardships and suffering to which African families were subjected is emphasised by the names that Mai Tambudzai’s children wear in the novel. Each name underlines some kind of suffering: Nhamo (Hardships), Tambudzai (Tormented), Netsai (Suffer), Rambanai (Divorce) and Dambudzo (Deep Trouble). All these names which speak of nothing but problems represent and articulate the conditions of the African women and some men in the novel. They heighten the sense of injustice that was caused by the deplorable conditions imposed upon African people. The names indicated the deep connections between the name bearers and their families to so much hardship and suffering. In this way, the names were an indictment of the diverse systems of oppression that produced such tyranny and anguish.

### **3.2.2 Patriarchal hierarchies and the predicament of marginality in *Nervous Conditions***

The portrayal of women's needs and concerns in NC shows African women's resistance to patriarchal hierarchies and the women's desire for the transformation of the oppressive customs and practices that have produced so much inequalities that have disadvantaged them. Life in the text is experienced through extended family relations where all members of the family - husbands, uncles, grandmothers, aunts, wives, children and many others - are organised in social hierarchies. In this patriarchal setup, men are identified with power and control while women are expected to be content with subservience. Men such as Jeremiah, Babamukuru and Nhamo, insist on observance of patriarchal values and are very oppressive of the women. They perpetuate patriarchal normativity in a variety of ways (as discussed later). This is what some women characters such as Tambu, Nyasha and Lucia resist.

Patriarchal subordination of women in NC is depicted in a number of ways. One of these is through naming. For instance, the name, Mai Tambudzai, which literally means 'Mother of Tambudzai', was not her real name but one that derived from her role as Tambudzai's mother. While she was identified by her daughter's name, her husband, Jeremiah, was identified by his real name. That announces clear disparities in the treatment of husband and wife. The name, Mai Tambudzai, makes reference to her maternity, highlighting how she has successfully fulfilled her expected patriarchal role: to be a wife and a mother. However, the name stripped her of her own individual identity because it could easily be shared by several women as long as they had a daughter by that name. In this way, Mai Tambudzai's individuality as a human being was ignored by patriarchy while her reproductive capacity was not. This points at the oppressiveness of patriarchal social structures that were blind to her humanity. In that sense, she represents the way many women whose individualities have been ignored and trivialised by patriarchal tradition. Thus, the fact that she was not known by her own name reflects the patriarchal nature of her society which attached greater importance to women's procreative capacities than their own identities. The loss of identity that African women endured within African patriarchy by being called by one's child's name draws parallels with the treatment of African domestic workers within racial discourses that has already been analysed in ATDD where white women employers renamed them.

Nevertheless, Dangarembga shows a subtle way through which African women challenged patriarchal normativity: naming. The fact that Mai Tambudzai was addressed as Mai Tambudzai (Mother of Tambudzai) and not Mai Nhamo (Mother of Nhamo) is a powerful statement that Dangarembga seems to be making about challenging patriarchal normativity. Nhamo was the first born child and so naturally, Mai Tambudzai should have been known as Mai Nhamo. Identifying Mai Tambudzai with her daughter's name and not her son's name, even if Tambudzai was the second daughter, is a subtle but very powerful challenge to African patriarchal normativity that, according to Okolie, loves the male child and attaches greater value to him than the girl child (1998). In this way, through naming, Dangarembga resists patriarchy's placement of greater value on the male child than the girl child.

In the story, Babamukuru, as the central patriarchal figurehead, wields much power over his own family, including his young brother, Jeremiah, and relatives like Babamunini Thomas, Takesure, and others. It is the patriarchal system that has conferred all this power on Babamukuru as identified by his daughter, Nyasha, who, though a victim of Babamukuru's violence and fiery temper, understood that Babamukuru was not the source of the problem: "It's not really him, you know. I mean not really the person. It's everything, it's everywhere" (p.174). This underlines Nyasha's critical realization that the abuse of women was a product of systemic patriarchal socialization that had modelled her father's irrational expectations on the women who surrounded him. This echoes Johnson's critical argument about the complexities of patriarchy: "Obviously, we are in something much larger than ourselves, and that it is not us" (Johnson, 2014:17). In other words, the source of the problem is outside us. It is the patriarchal system that has accorded greater power on some and not on all people that is the problem, not individual men. Thus whether man or woman, everyone should challenge this system that has undermined familial and social harmony.

In the novel, women were not happy with marginality. In a private conversation between Tambu and her mother, Mai Tambu, an epitome of a 'good' wife (from outside) reveals her

dissatisfaction with women's inferior position that denied them the agency of thought and power to determine the course of their own lives when she states:

This business of womanhood is a heavy burden... you can't just decide today I want to do this, tomorrow I want to do that, the next day I want to be educated... When there are sacrifices to be made, you are the one who has to make them (p.16).

This private conversation between mother and daughter exposes their awareness of gender inequalities in their society. It also highlights their sense of injustice and dissatisfaction with inferiority that patriarchal normativity has produced for women.

Patriarchal gender inequalities are exposed in a variety of ways. For instance, the way most of the work in Jeremiah's home was done by women: weeding in the fields, cooking, repairing leaking roofs, herding cattle and many others, reveals deep-seated inequities. There was so much work to do for the women and Tambu shows how concerned she was with the plight of women, particularly her mother: "The thought of my mother working so hard, so alone, always distressed me" (p.10). Both Jeremiah and Nhamo, the men in the home, devised numerous ways of avoiding work. For instance, Nhamo would say that

it was necessary to read his books ceaselessly in order to pass his examinations at the end of each year. This was a good argument. It enabled him to avoid the uncomfortable tasks of pulling down and stacking the maize and stripping the cobs of their leaves (p.6).

For Nhamo, "[h]elping in the fields or with the livestock or the firewood... [was] a bad joke" (p7). While Nhamo escaped from participating in the chores in the home, his sisters and mother worked hard to ensure that the work in the home was done and they "used to itch viciously at the end of each day during the maize harvest" (p.6). This does not only expose the inequalities embedded in patriarchal normativity that Tambudzai was bitter about but it also reflects how it was the women's labour contribution that sustained the family. Father and son who drew their

entitlement to rest while the women toiled in the fields were very oppressive of the women as they exploited them of their labour survive. On the rare occasions when Jeremiah and Nhamo joined the family in the fields, especially when Babamukuru was coming to visit, they would work with the women for some time (to give Babamukuru the impression that they participated in the family labour) but “would return to the homestead” with Babamukuru, leaving Mai Tambu and her daughters in the fields. Jeremiah and Nhamo’s neglect of home chores emphasise their cruel exploitation of patriarchal hierarchies by leaving women to do most of the chores while they did very little. Lorentzen has condemned “men’s unequal participation in family care work and household tasks” (2014:16). What was particularly unfair was the way Mai Tambu was expected to labour in the fields carrying a child on her back when the husband was seated at home. As if that was not enough, towards evening after the women were done working in the fields, Mai Tambu would go on to “water her vegetables - rape, covo, tomatoes, *derere* and onions - which she grew on a plot that had been my grandmother’s, quite close to the homestead although still a quarter of an hour’s walk away” (p.8). All this industry reflects the critical productive roles of women in the home which patriarchal normativity has attempted to be oblivious of. While Mai Tambu watered the garden after leaving the fields, her daughters would herd “the cattle back to their kraal... since there was no other young man in our home besides Nhamo to attend to this chore. We would travel as briskly as we could so that we would not be late in preparing the evening meal” (p.8). All this is a sad reflection of how patriarchal normativity has, for a long time, misrepresented women through its lack of acknowledgement of the true value of their labour. “By highlighting women’s participation in production, researchers [and literary scholars] have provided a timely challenge both to the definition of ‘work’ and active labour” (Razavi and Miller, 1995:9). This representation of women questions the tag of inferiority associated with women within patriarchal hierarchies because at the end of the day, it was women whose labour provided food on the table. Thus, such portrayals of women and men explodes patriarchy’s audacious claims that locate men as breadwinners because Dangarembga shows that some men are not, and that it is women who do most of the critical domestic chores that sustain life.

Lucia questioned the way men exploited patriarchal hierarchies that made women work while men did very little work. From her perspective, it was important that men also played their roles in family chores. This is demonstrated in the way she attempted to stop Maiguru from carrying the heavy groceries from the car and wait for Jeremiah and Takesure to come back from where they had gone and offload the car instead. Lucia simply stated, “Don’t worry yourself Maiguru. Takesure and Jeremiah will carry all that when they get back” (p.128). This is her way of trying to challenge unfair practices and customs that enslaved women. Lucia “was a much bolder woman” who did not hesitate to challenge oppressive views and speak up her mind (p.127). She was also very strong because after Maiguru insisted that she would not wait for the men to return, she quickly hoisted the heavy provisions on herself, “throwing a fifteen-pound bag of mealie-meal on to her head and grasping another in her fist” (p.128). Other members of the family “staggered to the house weighed down with provisions” but not Lucia (p.129). This show of strength challenges claims of women as weak, that patriarchal normativity has promoted.

Tambudzai who is the girl child narrator and the protagonist portrays patriarchy’s system of social hierarchies as her serious concern since it created social elites among men and a few women who had access to many privileges denied most women. Tambu was only eight years old at the beginning of the narrative but had an acute awareness of the disadvantaged position suffered by women:

I felt the injustice of my situation every time I thought about it, which I could not help .... Thinking about it, feeling the injustice of it, his is how I came to dislike my brother, and not only my brother: my father, my mother - in fact everybody (p.12).

She hated the patriarchal system that had produced so many discriminations against women. She also hated everyone for they never questioned the oppressiveness of the status quo. She noted how, compared to the adult women, children “were not restricted. We could play where we pleased. But the women had their own spot for bathing and the men their own too” (p.3). The

restrictions imposed on older women made her “apprehensive about growing so big” (p.3). Her desire to cling on to childhood and abhorrence of growing older confirm her desire to remain independent and escape the oppressions associated with the adult women’s world. Therefore, independence was a critical need for the young girl, which married women lost as they became subordinated to some man in patriarchy’s social hierarchies.

There is no shortage of examples of the portrayal of patriarchy’s hierarchical structures that entrapped most women (and some men) in the novel. These hierarchies are better represented when Babamukuru, who is the patriarchal figure of the narrative, returned from England where he and his wife had been studying. On the day of their return, in the welcome celebrations held in their honour, there were glaring disparities in the treatment of the family members and other people - both men and women - who thronged the gathering. Such unequal treatment presupposes a patriarchal culture’s reluctance to treat people as equals. For instance, upon Babamukuru and his family’s arrival at the homestead, Tambu noted the deference and praise that attended to Babamukuru, “the returning prince”, “Our father and benefactor” who was the head of this extended family (p.36). As people jostled to shower praises on Babamukuru, Tambu noticed how everyone was “hardly noticing Babamunini Thomas, who brought up the rear, [and] not noticing Mainini Patience, who was with him, at all” (p.36). Even Maiguru, Babamukuru’s wife who had been in England together with him for five years, cut a lonely figure. All this demonstrates people’s occupancy of different levels of importance within patriarchy. Patriarchy has elevated some men (and few women who are mere tokens to hide gender prejudices) while marginalising the rest of women. As Babamukuru stepped into the house, the hierarchies of importance were quite visible as he was

followed by a retinue of grandfathers, uncles and brothers. Various paternal aunts, who could join them by virtue of their patriarchal status and were not too shy to do so, mingled with the men. Behind them danced female relatives of the lower strata. Maiguru entered last and alone, except for her two children, smiling quietly and inconspicuously (p.37).

By placing humanity in a hierarchy as shown in the description above, it is clear that patriarchy has also produced a hierarchy of femininities which underscores that women's lived experiences, their power and opportunities are unequal and dissimilar. It is such unequal treatment of different men and women that creates a deep sense of social injustice that warrants challenging. Thus, Dangarembga, just like Ngcobo, is concerned with the manner in which patriarchy has created social elites (among men and some women) who enjoy certain unearned privileges denied others.

On the occasion of Babamukuru's return from England, it was when the meal was served that the social hierarchies created by patriarchal culture became even more apparent. When Tambudzai carried the water-dish so that people would wash their hands, she says:

I knelt first in front of Babamukuru, which was a mistake because he wanted me to let his uncle Isaiah, our eldest surviving grandfather, wash first. I knelt and rose and knelt and rose in front of my male relatives in descending order of seniority, and lastly in front of my grandmothers and aunts, offering them the water-dish and towel. The situation deteriorated after my grandfathers and Babamukuru had washed because after that the hierarchy was not clear (p.40).

This kneeling and rising in front of every male member by the girl child points at the subservient role expected of women. Kneeling was regarded as an aspect of respect to men shown by the women. This is why, on this occasion, women were last to have their hands washed.

Tambudzai was greatly concerned by the oppressiveness of this socially constructed system of privilege and subordination which exposed her and other women to unequal and inferior treatment. To demonstrate her revolt at patriarchal normativity's expectations for women to defer to men, during the hand-washing ceremony, she deliberately but acting innocent, poured some water on an uncle who wanted to insist on patriarchal protocol in respecting hierarchies. This is how she describes her act of resistance:

At one point, having knelt for several minutes in front of one disclaiming uncle, I grew tired and let some water slop out of the dish on to his feet (apologising profusely) to encourage him to wash without further discussion (p.42).

These are marks of Tambu's budding resistance to patriarchal normativity. Despite outwardly conforming with patriarchal expectations, inwardly the women and girls were against patriarchy's oppressive value systems that were designed to help entrench socially-constituted inequalities. Thus, through Tambu, Dangarembga challenges patriarchal normativity by exposing the contradictions it produced between its expectations and women's interests.

During the meal, the men and women who belonged to the social 'elite' class sat separately from the rest, were served first and got the choicest portion. Aunt Mavis who was serving the food

had been unrestrained in dishing out the meat for the house [social elite] so that there was not enough left in the pot to make a meal for those of us who were not dining there. As a result the youngest of us had only gravy and vegetables... and there was plenty of it. We, who rarely tasted meat, found no reason to complain (p.41).

What this reveals is how the patriarchal structures unduly promote the interests of men and those of women linked to them, at the expense of many women. The novel interrogates the role of the patriarchal belief system and its values in the formation of the opinions of women and men regarding gender issues (Alabi, 1998). The fact that women who were the worst victims of African patriarchal organisation justifies women characters' need in this novel to seek the overthrow of patriarchal structures because they disadvantaged them.

Drawing from the above, women characters in the novel were primarily weighed down by the marginal and object positions that they were made to occupy in this patriarchal society.

Babamukuru is represented as the patriarchal voice and figure in the novel, forever cast as outlining boundaries for the women (and men) around him. Many people - both women and men - were afraid of his fiery temper. His word was law even as it oppressed the people around him. The power bequeathed on him by patriarchal structures as the eldest brother in this extended family and also by virtue of his occupancy of a higher social class (as the Head of a mission school) than his relatives enabled him to dictate to the rest of the family what needed to be done. Through Babamukuru's relations with the people around him, Dangarembga discusses the

diverse concerns of various women who found themselves oppressed by patriarchal normativity that Babamukuru represents.

It was not only women who felt oppressed by dominant men. Tambu heightens our conceptualisation of the unnatural power that Babamukuru held over other people in her description of the unequal power relations between her own father, Jeremiah, and Babamukuru where she says: “My father was much more afraid of Babamukuru’s wrath, which he had experienced, than the wrath of God, which he had not” (p.127). It was such power relations that explain why Jeremiah “had always been ingratiating in Babamukuru’s presence” (p.31). This is proof of how some men and some masculinities have been marginalised by systems of oppression (Johnson, 2014; Lorentzen, 2014). The extent to which the oppressive presence of Babamukuru was keenly felt by everyone linked to him - men and women alike - is highlighted when he bid farewell to his extended family at the end of a long visit: As Babamukuru finally drove off, “A sigh escaped from us and we all felt oddly relieved” (p.152). This demonstrates how the power bequeathed to Babamukuru by patriarchal structures was the epitome of patriarchal oppression. The fact that everyone felt relieved after Babamukuru left the homestead speaks volumes of their desire for emancipation from the oppression of the patriarchal system that he represents. Even Jeremiah and Takesure were equally relieved on this occasion and Jeremiah comments as he breathes a sigh of relief: “Whew! It was good to have *Mukoma* here, it was good... but it puts a weight on your shoulders, a great weight on your shoulders!” (p.152). All these remarks underline women (and some men’s) need to be liberated from the overbearing weight of patriarchy on their shoulders. It shows that not all men have actually benefitted from patriarchy as some have felt the oppression of dominant men. Thus, Dangarembga challenges men to seek to participate alongside feminists in the struggle against patriarchal normativity.

Tambu was frustrated by this picture of her father living in the shadows of her rich and more influential uncle. She desired to help free him from inferiority and plainly states her heart’s desire:

I wanted my father and Nhamo [her brother] to stand up straight like Babamukuru,

but they always looked as though they were cringing.... I used to suppose that they saw it too and that it troubled them so much that they had to bully whoever they could to stay in the picture at all (p.49-50).

In other words, Tambu's that show that the men who felt dominated by others, in turn, victimised women as a way of regaining a sense of control (Lorentzen, 2014). Jeremiah and Nhamo's failure to stand up tall, and their cringing was admission that they too had been pushed into second class men by Babamukuru. This would make women seem like third class and still, others women would be fourth class. Tambu's desire to see her dominated father and brother standing up tall portends an overhaul of the inequalities embedded within patriarchal normativity. Thus, women's greatest need as demonstrated through Tambu is the transformation of the whole social structures to make it more equitable for everyone.

Patriarchal hierarchies are also represented in NC through portrayal of husband-wife relations as both Mai Tambu and Maiguru were subordinate to their husbands. Tambu exposes the inequalities between her parents through her description of her parents' sleeping arrangement:

My parents slept in one of the bedrooms, the one on the left as you entered the living-room. The bed and its mattress belonged to my father. My mother was supposed to sleep on the red mat on the floor with her babies before they were old enough to join me in the kitchen (p.62).

The inequalities in the sleeping arrangement meant that while Jeremiah enjoyed the comfort of the mattress and the bed, his wife endured the discomfort of the hard floor. She only was valued when it came to reproduction but not as a bed mate. Interestingly, Mai Tambu's subtle challenge to this arrangement was to abandon sleeping in the bedroom altogether. This is shown by how she usually "fell asleep in the kitchen and could not be bothered to rouse herself to go up to the house"(p.62). Jeremiah did not like his wife's boycott of their bedroom because it denied him his conjugal rights. However, he could do nothing about it and Mai Tambu could not be persuaded. This shows ways and strategies that African women used to challenge and cope with the

oppressions produced for them by men within patriarchal hierarchies. Mai Tambu's actions of defiance "debunk the erroneous concept that the husband is the lord and master and the woman is nothing but his property" (Nnaemeka, 1998:13).

In Babamukuru's home, patriarchal oppression is revealed in that there was an unstated but implied rule known to the family where the family did not eat supper in Babamukuru's absence. They waited for his arrival from the office so that he could sit at the head of the table. Food would grow cold as the family waited and had to be reheated just to adhere with the demands of patriarchy where deference to the husband was promoted. On one occasion when Babamukuru saw the plates on the dining table and concluded the family had gone ahead and eaten before his arrival, he asked [read complained] pointedly: "You had already started.... Did you think I wasn't coming, even after you telephoned to say supper was ready and I said I was coming?" (p.80). This exposes his demand for his family to 'respect' the punitive structures set up by patriarchal hierarchies that made the family endure hunger and postpone eating till the man of the house came - all in the name of showing deference to the husband. As the family finally sat down to eat, Maiguru's submissiveness to her husband was clear:

she removed the lid from the serving-dish nearest Babamukuru and put it away on the sideboard. Then she picked up a plate from the pile in front of Babamukuru and held it for him respectfully with both hands while he spooned food on to the plate.... This carried on until Babamukuru had helped himself from the third dish (p.80).

Dangarembga heightens readers' sense of the unfairness of this dinner ritual by implying that Maiguru's deference was unnecessary as Babamukuru needed no help given that the serving dish was "nearest" him and the plates were just 'in front' of him. This exposes the hollowness of some patriarchal practices that merely serve to entrench men's sense of importance.

Such deference to Babamukuru was challenged by Nyasha. As the ritual of Maiguru 'assisting' Babamukuru to serve himself was taking long and the food was growing cold, Nyasha "did not wait for her father to finish. By the time he was on to the third dish, she was helping herself to

rice” (p.81). This gesture of defiance registers Nyasha’s refusal of cultural ideologies that kept women waiting and subordinated their needs to those of men. Her actions incensed Babamukuru who reprimanded her and demanded that she wait till he finished helping himself to every dish by asking her pointedly: “What are you doing Nyasha?” Nyasha did not hesitate to engage her father in dialogue and plainly told him: “I thought you had finished with the rice” (p.81). She also plainly told her father her needs: “I don’t like cold food” (p.81). Her actions are a clear challenge to social hierarchies created by patriarchal normativity where women are expected to accept deferring to men. She was different from Maiguru who, though highly educated by the standards of this Rhodesian community, did not question her occupancy of a subordinate role to her husband. Clearly, Maiguru’s education did not bring about independence to her as she persisted with the feminine decorum expected of women within patriarchy. This underlines Chukukere’s argument that, as a consequence of patriarchal normativity, “no matter the level of education [of the woman], relations between the husband and wife are based on an unequal power relation in which the woman expects orders and gives, in return, total obedience” (1998:144). Unlike her daughter, Maiguru (initially) acted in ways that underscored patriarchy. She even urged Nyasha to be obedient. Maiguru’s actions highlight Aina’s assertion that the “major dilemma of the elite women in most African nations is that they are so protective of the status quo which they believe marriage offers” (1998:74). Thus, it is important to note here that in the examination of the oppression of women and patriarchy’s creation of social hierarchies, a woman’s social status as a middle class woman or as an educated woman does not necessarily grant her an escape route from patriarchal intolerance. However, Nyasha’s actions are interesting to this research because they highlight Dangarembga’s portrayal of how women’s needs and concerns challenge patriarchal normativity because she generally refused to accept a subordinate role.

Maiguru was not openly rebellious, at first, and in order to survive Babamukuru’s fiery temper, there were various coping skills that she deployed. For instance, she often cringed to him and called him by so many endearing terms: “my Daddy-dear”, “my Daddy-pie” (p.80) or “my Daddy-d” (p.81) to pacify him. This echoes Kandiyoti’s explanations of patriarchal bargaining

where women employ different survival strategies in order for them to maximize security and optimise life options within oppressive systems (1988).

### **3.2.3 Patriarchal hierarchies and the predicament of preferential treatment reserved for the boy child in *Nervous Conditions***

Patriarchal hierarchies are also noticeable in NC through disparities in the treatment of boy and girl children. The girl children, Tambu and Nyasha, are shown as quite concerned about and resisting assumption of inferior statuses in their families. African patriarchy's preference for the boy child in Tambu's family is exposed in that there were things that her brother, Nhamo could engage in which she was not allowed to do. This was a dreadful experience for Tambu who could not give reasons for her exclusion. She was concerned by all forms of discrimination as she says:

Exclusion whispered that my existence was not necessary, making me no more than an unfortunate by-product of some inexorable natural process. Or else it mocked that the process had gone wrong and produced me instead of another Nhamo" (p.39-40).

Thus, for Tambudzai, being treated as second class citizens was a critical concern that she had.

Tambu's cousin, Nyasha, was equally concerned and dissatisfied by the mistreatment that she received, particularly from her father who monitored her every article of dress, her eating habits, and even wanted to control the friends she associated with and the books she read. This surveillance and policing of his daughter was in spite of Maiguru's assessment about her daughter: that "Nyasha is intelligent, and a good girl" (p.81). After Maiguru bought Nyasha a "dress for working so hard at her exams" and "innocently asked Babamukuru whether he was proud of his fine-looking daughter" (p.109), Babamukuru's disapproval of his daughter was shocking. While Maiguru "beamed" with pride as she looked at Nyasha, Babamukuru "accused her of compromising his daughter's decency" (p.109). Babamukuru was the only one who

viewed Nyasha's dressing as outrageous because everyone else thought "Nyasha was looking very attractive" (p.109). Nyasha desired to break free from patriarchy's constant surveillance and disapproval of women and girl children that was an epitome of the whole patriarchal infrastructure that supervised and dictated how women should lead their lives. Babamukuru insisted on his daughter's exhibition of gender correctness, making him a symbol of the oppressiveness of the patriarchal system.

The height of Babamukuru's suspicion of his daughter and his intolerance for her actions are revealed in his conflicting reactions when Nyasha and Chido committed the same mistake of coming back late in the night, but on two separate occasions. When Chido came home late, Babamukuru took neither notice of it nor offence. In fact, Chido who associated with the white boys at the mission school was constantly out of the house. However, when Nyasha committed a similar offence, just once, later in the narrative, she was called all sorts of names and accused of behaving "like a whore" (p.114) because "No decent girl would stay out alone, with a boy" (p.113). This reveals patriarchy's double standards and the unequal treatment between girls and boys, a concerning issue as far as feminism is concerned. It also means that there were things permissible for boys and not for girls. As readers, we are aware that Nyasha was innocent of all the accusations as she had been with her brother, Chido, and cousin, Tambudzai, for the larger part of the time and they knew why she had briefly stayed behind. However, Babamukuru was concerned about upholding patriarchal values and the family name. He was more concerned about what strangers would say than the explanations provided by Nyasha and her feelings. Innocently, Nyasha tried to reassure her father and told him: "You know me.... You've taught me how I should behave. I don't worry about what people think" (p.114). Unfortunately, this ended in her being beaten up - for committing an offence that Chido received no reprisal for earlier on. This reveals how patriarchy has had a different set of rules and expectations for women and another set for men and this is a huge concern for women (Namulondo, 2010). The fact that Nyasha was beaten up for the same offence her brother committed confirms that it is never easy to be a woman within patriarchy as women are discriminated against. Such patriarchal violence is an attempt to coerce women to accept subordination.

In spite of Babamukuru's surveillance of his daughter's dressing, Nyasha had a mind of her own. She still wore clothes she felt comfortable in, even if Babamukuru felt embarrassed. For instance, on the day the family returned from England, Nyasha revealed her independent spirit and resistance to Babamukuru's control over what to wear.

There was no other explanation for the tiny little dress she wore, hardly enough of it to cover her thighs. She was self-conscious though, constantly clasping her hands behind her buttocks to prevent the dress from riding up, and observing everybody through her veiled vigilant eyes to see what we were thinking" (p.37).

This show of defiance in her dressing illustrates her desire to choose for herself the clothes to wear and not to be dictated to by anyone. According to Moyana, as far as her dressing was concerned, Nyasha "does not change in spite of what others think" (1994:37). Such defiance underpins that what women need, their desires and interests contrast what patriarchal normativity expects of them.

### **3.2.4 African patriarchy and women's education: their aspirations and frustrations**

Dangarembga also portrays education as a critical need that women have in the novel in order to improve the quality of their lives. This is depicted through Tambudzai's determined pursuit of education in spite of patriarchal normativity's expectations for the woman to drop out of school. To break out of the squalor of her family's poor background, Tambudzai considered education as a "step upwards in the direction of my freedom. Another step from the flies, the smells, the fields and the rags; from stomachs which were seldom full, from dirt and disease, from my father's abject obeisance to Babamukuru" (p.183). In other words, for Tambu, education spoke of possibilities of a new life that was different from what patriarchy had set up for women. From the first chapter to the last, Dangarembga shows Tambu's strong determination to live her dream. She did not aspire to be in anyone's shadow or to be another patriarchal statistic like her own mother whose life had known nothing but pain since the day Jeremiah took her for a wife as revealed by Lucia who states that Jeremiah "has given her nothing but misery since the age of fifteen" (p.145).

In spite of Tambu's views of education as a critical need, there was a clash between her aspirations and what was socially determined for her as a woman. Her patriarchal society defined such 'lofty' aspirations by women to get educated as "unnatural inclinations" (p.33). This reflects Veit-Wild (cited by Uwakweh) who has remarked that due to patriarchal normativity, "women face formidable obstacles especially in matters of education and decision-making" (1998:13). Tambudzai shows awareness of how women's needs have suffered neglect in matters of education when she complained: "That was why I was in Standard Three in the year that Nhamo died, instead of Standard Five, as I should have been by that age" (p.12). Her delayed entry into school reveals disregard for her educational dreams. Tambu's educational aspirations set her in a collision course with the patriarchal logic that was primed to disadvantage women, leaving her disgruntled. Tambu was aware that as a consequence of the patriarchal values and beliefs of her family, the "needs and sensibilities of the women in my family were not considered a priority, or even legitimate" (p. 12). She was, therefore, frustrated by the patriarchal order that did not seem to see the humanity of women whose concerns and needs were not treated as a priority while those of men and boys were elevated. The disparities in the treatment between the boy and girl children highlight Maxwell Okolie's observation: "Traditional Africa loves the male child" (1998:34).

The introduction to Dangarembga's novel foregrounds patriarchal normativity's unequal power relations between men and women regarding education. This inequality drives the crisis that confronts Tambu's lived realities because patriarchy's logic excluded her from such lofty pursuits as education, as if her crime was in being born female woman. When the family faced financial challenges, it was Tambu who was expected to drop out of school while her brother remained the family's priority in education. Though she loved school so much and was good at it, her family expected her to be the first casualty of her family's poverty. Thus, due to the expectations propagated by patriarchal normativity, Tambu's "educational growth suffers not because she is stupid, but because Nhamo, being male, has the benefits of the scarce financial resources of their parents" (Uwakweh, 1998:14). Therefore, between Tambu and her family, the source of conflict in the narrative revolved around her right to education which she viewed as a

critical need while social expectations trivialised her needs. She was prepared not to submit to the oppressive expectations set up by patriarchal normativity. Drawing from all this, it is clear that women's aspirations were seriously affected by patriarchal normativity that expected them to get married and not pursue their educational dreams.

Tambudzai's father played a critical role in undermining his daughter's need and pursuit of education. The irony of Tambu's predicament in the first place was that her own father, Jeremiah, abused the money sent by Babamukuru for the children's school fees on alcohol. Jeremiah's decision to pull Tambu out of school was because he wanted her to focus more on how to become a good wife, reflecting how much he was an ardent subscriber to the patriarchal view where marriage has been represented as a woman's pinnacle of achievement. Jeremiah tried to reassure Tambu that education was not as important as her future role as a wife as he asked her: "Is that anything to worry about? Ha-a-a, it's nothing. Can you cook books and feed them to your husband? Stay at home with your mother. Learn to cook and clean. Grow vegetables" (p.15). He did not see his daughter occupying any other role except learning "domestic affairs in line with socially ascribed role for females" (Uwakweh, 1998:14). Even Babamukuru shared similar sentiments as he desired to see Tambu "learn ways and habits that would make my parents proud of me... [by] develop[ing] into a good woman" (p.88). Thus, even if Babamukuru differed from Jeremiah in that he saw education as important to Tambu, he still viewed it as a stepping stone to getting "married by a decent man" (p.180). Thus, ultimately, patriarchal normativity which both men stood for in the novel valued marriage for the girl child as more important than anything else. However, this was at odds with what Tambu desired for herself. Both missed and misunderstood Tambu's true needs because as far as she was concerned, education offered her the opportunity to be "a different kind of woman from my mother" (p.16). She had "nothing against marriage" but was irritated by "the way it always cropped up in one form or another, stretching its tentacles back to bind me before I had even begun to think about it seriously" (p.180).

The reader is shocked to realise the extent of Jeremiah's determination to keep his daughter out of school and 'domesticate' her:

He did not like to see me over absorbed in intellectual pursuits. He became very agitated after he had found me several times reading the sheet of newspapers in which the bread from magrosa had been wrapped as I waited for the sadza to thicken. He thought I was emulating my brother, that the things I read would fill my mind with impractical ideas, making me quite useless for the real tasks of feminine living (p.33-34).

Jeremiah was trying to socialize Tambu into conformity with the expected gender roles. In line with patriarchal normativity, Jeremiah was trying to “control her as father and custodian of her personality and sexuality on behalf of the next authoritative man in her life, the husband” (Moyana, 1994:29). However, while her father tried to derail her educational pursuit, Tambu remained resolute and determined as she was bent on rejecting roles set aside for women as cooks and gardeners. Dangarembga’s of challenge patriarchal normativity and what it stood for is identified through Tambu’s sharp criticism of her father’s ideas: “My father’s idea of what was natural had begun to irritate me a long time ago, at that time I had had to leave school” (p.33). This reflects Tambu’s refusal of ideas of marginality rooted in patriarchal normativity that hampered her needs and aspirations.

What Tambu found concerning and what hurt her was that her own brother, Nhamo, had changed from the caring brother he once was as he now constantly attempted to trade on the benefits he got from the patriarchal system in his relations with his sisters. Nhamo now enjoyed taunting Tambu and rubbing in the patriarchal thinking that a girl child could not be equal to the boy child. Nhamo was so puffed up with his discovery of his unearned position as a boy child in the home and society, and bragged about it to annoy and infuriate Tambudzai whenever the situation presented itself. For instance, we hear him asking her: “Did you ever hear of a girl being taken away to school? .... With me it’s different. I was meant to be educated” (p.49). Nhamo’s outrageous budding sense of superiority over his sisters underscores Johnson’s assertion: “When members of any group are identified as superior to another group, not for anything they have done but simply for membership itself, it confers a sense of special status that can be seen even in children” (2014:215). Thus, there is need to reset society’s mindset and conscientise young

boys and men on how society has undermined women's legitimate rights and needs. Therefore, challenging patriarchal normativity is an imperative need in order to liberate women.

Tambudzai showed so much creativity and resourcefulness in her pursuit of her educational dreams. She could not just watch as her dreams were thwarted but engaged in strategies that helped her circumvent the patriarchal destiny set for her. Her first steps towards challenging patriarchal normativity are shown when she asked for and cultivated a small maize field to raise her school fees in order to send herself to school. Her garden was a symbol of her desire for independence and her need to secure her own future. Uwakweh has described ploughing the garden plot as "Tambu's first lesson in independence" and "an action that wins her temporary control over her educational aspirations" (1998:15). The garden space she created communicated her desire to have control over her destiny. Therefore, by planting maize for sale in spite of her tender age, she questioned the patriarchal logic that displaced her needs and made her less equal to her brother. Her actions underscored various coping strategies that women have embraced in history in their struggle for the fulfilment of their needs.

Nhamo and Jeremiah's responses as they saw Tambudzai's educational dreams hurtling towards fruition were shocking. Nhamo enacted patriarchal determination to thwart a women's legitimate rights as equal human beings by stealing maize from Tambudzai's plot and distributing free maize to his friends, intending to cripple Tambudzai's ingenuity in her pursuit of education and her desire to contest patriarchal thought. Similarly, after Tambudzai showed so much resourcefulness to raise her own fees with the help of Mr Matimba, her teacher, Jeremiah unashamedly pursued Mr Matimba and demanded that he returned to him the fees that Tambu had raised and already paid to the school. He asked Mr Matimba: "Have you ever heard of a woman who remains in her father's house? She will meet a young man and I will have lost everything" (p.30). Jeremiah's reasoning was clouded by patriarchal thinking that made him conclude that his daughter's "sharpness with her books is no use because in the end it will benefit strangers" (p.56). Even if he had not contributed a penny to the fees that he now demanded, Jeremiah demonstrated patriarchal callousness that has historically exploited and appropriated women and girls' labour for men's benefit as he accused Mr Matimba: "Then you

have taken my money” (p.30). His attempts at recovering the money that Tambu had worked for underline his determination to confine his own daughter to domesticity. He did not bother to ask Tambu what her needs were but defined them for her and such thinking that underscores patriarchal normativity that should be challenged. Jeremiah’s patriarchal arrogance affirms Muchemwa and Muponde’s argument that “The family is the primary site for scripting of gendered identities and it is here that the iconographic investments in the body begin” (2007:”xix). In other words, it is family socialisation that strengthens the patriarchal logic that situates marriage as more important than Tambu’s educational achievement. Tambu’s views regarding marriage were clear:

Marriage. I had nothing against it in principle.... But it was irritating the way it always cropped up in one form or another, stretching its tentacles back to bind me before I had even begun to think about it seriously, threatening to disrupt my life before I could even call it my own (p.180).

What is very unsettling is how a father started discussing marriage with an eight year old daughter. His attachment of greater priority to marriage shows how much patriarchy, in its current oppressive form, is an evil that seeks to deny women the luxury of a normal childhood and equal treatment by training them for servitude and future roles as wives. While Jeremiah viewed marriage as more important than his daughter’s education, Tambu, despite her age, was acutely aware that many women’s lives and potential were interrupted by childbirth and expectations placed on them. This is why she was against early marriage. Tambu drew influence from Maiguru, whose pursuit of education gave her a job, a decent home and comparative independence when compared to Tambu’s mother and many other women in her family. Therefore, instead of abandoning school and starting to think about marriage as her father expected her to do, Tambu “decided it was better to be like Maiguru” who got educated and was employed as a teacher and had economic independence, earning her own salary as a teacher (p.16). It is clear that what Tambu needed was an escape route from the poverty of her family background. She viewed education as her ticket out of the ‘life of her mother’ and the squalor of her family. Her dream to get educated was a powerful way of challenging patriarchal normativity and its prejudices that sought to handicap women’s pursuit of education.

What Tambu constructed as her need was to own her own life and to become a different woman from the one patriarchy desired her to be. This shows her aspiration to distance herself from the roles ascribed for women by patriarchal normativity which would have limited her participation in critical areas of the economy. She wished to catapult herself from the kitchen and that was a direct challenge to the expectations set out by patriarchal normativity. The actions of men such as Mr Matimba who fought from Tambu's corner against her father's trivialisation of her educational dreams demonstrate the potential that progressive men who are liberated in their thinking can have in helping secure the liberation of women. This reflects some of the goals of African feminism as it "invites men as partners in problem solving and social change" (Nnaemeka, 1998:8). This view challenges patriarchal normativity by showing the potential for women and men to work together in harmony.

What is noteworthy in Tambu's pursuit of education is that her dream was tied to the improvement of conditions for the people in her family. Tambu defined her greatest concern as to one day be able "to dress my sisters in pretty clothes, feed my mother until she was plump and energetic again, stop my father from making a fool of himself every time he came into Babamukuru's presence" (p.183). Clearly, her vision was to draw every member of her family, her father included, from the shadows of marginality and she knew that only education, not marriage, could do that for her. The social role that Tambudzai aspired to attain had nothing to do with being subordinate to any man but being able to take care of her family. Her dream to rescue and pull the whole family out of their squalor differentiates her from Nhamo who, after his exposure to Western education at the mission school, transformed into a callous young man who shunned his own family, culture and language. After a single year at the mission school, "He had forgotten how to speak Shona [his native language]. A few words escaped haltingly, ungrammatically and strangely accented when he spoke to my mother, but he did not speak to her very often any more. He talked most fluently with my father" (p.52). Distancing himself from his family, and especially his mother, revealed the impact of colonialism and patriarchal attitudes in creating divisions in the family. Nhamo yearned to escape the squalor of his family for himself and the moment his rich uncle decided to take him to the mission school where he

was the principal, Nhamo's bigotry was shown in his preparedness to disown his own father as he said: "So I shall go and live with Babamukuru at the mission school. I shall no longer be Jeremiah's son" (p.48). This contrasts him with Tambudzai who desired to get educated so as to improve every family member's situation and not to despise and neglect them. Therefore, like Ngcobo, Dangarembga's statement here is that, ultimately, everyone stands to benefit from women's concerns and their struggles against marginalisation (unlike some men's self-serving interests as portrayed through Nhamo). This resonates with African feminism that has asserted as one of its goal: "taking into consideration the needs of others" (African Feminist Forum, 2006:2). This interest in the improvement of conditions of life for everyone is the reason why the various systems of privilege that have disempowered women should be challenged so as to make society better for everyone's sake by embracing women's contributions to social and familial development.

Dangarembga's concerns with the inequalities embedded within patriarchy and its preferences for the boy child in education and many other facets of life is a running theme of many literary texts by both women and men writers. Buchi Emecheta's *Second Class Citizens* (1990), for instance, navigates the sad and painful experiences of Adah, a girl child "who had arrived when everyone was expecting and predicting a boy. So, since she was such a disappointment to her parents, to her immediate family, to her tribe, nobody thought of recording her birth. She was so insignificant" (p.1). In *Under the Tongue* (1996), Yvonne Vera broaches the same subject of societal preferences for the boy child through Grandfather's tirades towards Grandmother for 'her failure to bring forth a baby boy. Grandmother accuses grandmother by pointing out: "Your womb is rotten. I married a womb filled with termites" (p.62). The impact of such a tirade is to dehumanize the girl child because if the womb is rotten, then, what comes out of it is equally rotten. Similarly, the metaphor: 'a womb filled with termites' demonstrates how social prejudices against women reduce the girls born out of it to the level of termites. Such is the height of social displacement of girl children that their needs, aspirations and concerns are never viewed as a priority in such patriarchal misrepresentations that undermine the humanity of women. Out of Africa, Charles Dickens' classic novel, *Dombey and Son* also portrays patriarchal dismissal of the needs of the needs of girl children because the title is actually a misnomer and highly ironic

as there is no son since Paul dies as an infant. The novel could have been aptly titled, *Dombey and Daughter* since this is a story about Dombey and his daughter, Florence. However, because Dombey is too “wrapped up in” the love of for a son, Florence is “left unnoticed, among the servants” (1985:99). In all these instances, the writers represent how the girl child’s experiences are a microcosm of women’s lived realities in general since women languish in neglect and alienation, with their needs and concerns dismissed and trivialised. In *Nervous Conditions*, Tambudzai showed how her needs suffered neglect by noting how Babamukuru, the voice of patriarchy in the novel, more than once forgot Tambudzai’s name but never at one time forgot Nhamo’s. For instance, during a family conversation, Babamukuru says: “When we heard that Nhamo and heyo- er, this girl- er...” (p.46). He stammered as he struggled to remember Tambudzai’s name. Being forgetful of his niece’s name but not the nephew’s underpins the inconsequential position allotted to the girl child in patriarchal societies and the emptiness of a girl’s life within unequal systems that do not view women as full members.

As if that was not enough, Babamukuru was concerned that Nhamo should receive a good education and was ready to fund his education. Tambudzai did not receive equal treatment but showed great determination and effort to remain in school. She “loved going to school and ... was good at it” (p.15) but patriarchal normativity meant that her needs were overlooked. Her quest for education was only supported by Babamukuru when Nhamo died. As Babamukuru said after Nhamo’s death: “It is *unfortunate* that there is no male child” (p.56, emphasis added). His use of the word ‘unfortunate’ suggests that had there been another male child, then Tambudzai was going to be overlooked. Thus, as long as the love for the male child remains deeply engraved in patriarchal attitudes and practices (Okolie, 1998), then the needs and concerns of girls and women will continue to be unnoticed and ignored. Dangarembga exposes and challenges Babamukuru’s lack of commitment to equality owing to patriarchal normativity’s repressive notions of women as the other.

Owing to the patriarchal inequalities alluded to, there was no peace in Jeremiah’s home but mutual hatred between Tambudzai and Nhamo as the former was deeply concerned by the grave consequences of women being side-lined. This shows that the disregard for women’s concerns

and needs can affect the attainment of peace in society. Therefore, there is need to challenge all systems of privilege that help create social tensions. Tambudzai highlights how: “Exclusion held dreadful horrors for me at that time because it suggested superfluity” (p.40). Her views underpin her desire for social transformation where women’s needs are considered and not just those of men and boys. Her desire for equal treatment is represented in her repetition of the words: ‘I wanted’ on the occasion that she was excluded from the party that went to Salisbury (present day Harare) to welcome Babamukuru. She exposes her disappointment when she says:

I wanted to be part of it. I wanted to juggle with transport timetables as well. I wanted to eat fresh cornbread, ashy roast peanuts and salty boiled chicken on the train at midnight too. Above all, I wanted to be as deafened as anyone by the roar and the buzz (was it a roar or a buzz?) of the aeroplanes (p.33).

This represents what the girl child really wants, not what patriarchy has produced for women. Noticing his daughter’s yearning desire to be included on the trip, Jeremiah quashed her dreams for equal treatment in life because “he called me aside to implore me to curb my unnatural inclinations” (p.33). Jeremiah desired that his daughter prepare for Babamukuru’s home-coming and not think about venturing outside the home. What he defined as ‘unnatural inclination’ was Tambu’s desire for equality. The role of patriarchal normativity, as represented by the actions of Jeremiah in clipping Tambudzai’s concerns, shows its ruthless dealings with ‘unnatural inclinations’ by denying them their true wishes and desires. MacMillan (cited in Moyana) has criticized such attitudes produced by patriarchal normativity where “women are forced culturally to concentrate their activities exclusively in the domestic sphere, thereby inhibiting their development into creative and intellectual people” (Moyana, 1994:29). Such injustice turned Tambu into a callous sister whose deep-seated resentment of her brother’s unearned position was the reason she did not mourn when Nhamo died. Tambu simply states: “I was not sorry when my brother died. Nor am I apologizing for my callousness” (p.1). Morally speaking, the death of a brother should be a moment of sorrow for everyone but not for Tambu for whom Nhamo had become the symbol of her oppression. While Tambu was weighed down by the patriarchal yoke that undermined her social standing and her needs, Nhamo offered no sympathy but infuriated Tambu by asking cheekily: “Did you ever hear of a girl being taken away to school? .... With me

it's different. I was meant to be educated" (p.49). Little did Nhamo, with his budding androcentrism, want to recognise that his privileges were not earned as he seemed happy to deny his sister's desires for education by stealing her maize crop that she intended to sell to raise her fees. Through Nhamo, patriarchy is represented as an unfeeling system that quashes women's needs and concerns. The school is also represented as a tool for the perpetuation of gender imbalance in the novel. Thus, patriarchal normativity requires challenging to reform its oppressive character.

### **3.2.5 Women's complicity with systems of oppression: how patriarchal normativity turns some women into agents of oppression in *Nervous Conditions***

The complicity of women in perpetuating patriarchal oppression of other women cannot be overlooked as another critical concern of women. Women's participation in inflicting injury on fellow women by identifying more with the demands of patriarchy than the needs of women is a consequence of the centuries of indoctrination they have been subjected to regarding patriarchal values and norms. It is also because of women's understanding of the violence and social censure reserved for the women who fail to toe the patriarchal line:

Decades of internalization of expected social and cultural norms has prevented women from overturning debilitating social conventions. Women are thus [at times] their own worst enemies; often being the first to criticize any concerted efforts to change the status quo (Chukukere, 1998:144).

In NC, there are women such as Mai Tambu, Tete, and Maiguru whose actions, in general, demonstrate their compliance with the expectations placed on them by patriarchy rather than coming to the aid of fellow women who seek social transformation. However, inasmuch as the women at times comply with oppressive expectations, their complicity should not be mistaken as acceptance of women's positions and roles within patriarchy. According to Kandiyoti, these are survival strategies that women have been forced to adopt so as to optimise their life options (1988). Women characters may not publicly voice their anger and frustration, but their subtle actions still underlined their need for the oppressive patriarchal structures to be transformed. For

instance, Mai Tambu was unhappy and concerned that her husband and son did few chores in the home but never said it openly. On occasions when Jeremiah and Nhamo “would return to the homestead”, leaving his wife and daughters in the fields, outwardly, Mai Tambu was a picture of a ‘good’, ‘noble’, ‘uncomplaining’ wife, but her inner thoughts and actions revealed otherwise. On these occasions,

My mother, lips pressed tight, would hitch hike little Rambanai more securely on her back and continue silently at her labours. The ferocious swings of her arms as she grabbed and stripped a maize stalk restrained Netsai and me from making the slightest murmur of rebellion (p.7).

Mai Tambu’s silence did not imply lack of consciousness of her plight as a woman. Her frustrations with the oppressiveness of patriarchal normativity are revealed in the lines above. She bottled her frustration because patriarchal normativity socialises women to be silent and comply with the position of subordination within patriarchy (Muchemwa, 2002). Nevertheless, Mai Tambu was pained and wounded by the exploitative practices within patriarchy where women have had to do almost all the chores while men rest at home. It is, her seeming acceptance of being silenced that this thesis questions as one wonders how much she could have achieved by standing up to the laziness by her husband and son that promoted patriarchal normativity.

Tambudzai was appalled by the role of her mother who acted in complicity with her patriarchal oppression regarding Tambu’s quest for education. Mai Tambu identified more with patriarchal normativity as represented by her father than with Tambu’s interests. After Jeremiah asked Tambudzai to drop out of school and to think about her marriage instead of school, Tambudzai confidently rushed to complain to her mother, seeking her support, only to be shocked to discover that instead of solidarity, “My mother was too old to be disturbed by childish nonsense. She tried to diffuse some of it by telling me many things, by explaining that my father was right” (p.16). Tambu was still young and unaware that her mother was just a victim as Tambu herself who was resigned to her fate. Thus, instead of challenging patriarchal oppression to protect her

daughter, she actually became its spokesperson and agent. Mai Tambu's support for an oppressive system was greatly unsettling for eight year old Tambudzai who "could not follow the sense of my mother's words" (p.16). Her mother seemed least concerned by Tambu's complaints as she counselled and advised her to accept her subordinate position: "What will help you, my child, is to learn to carry your burdens with strength" (p.16). Mai Tambudzai's actions and words inflicted so much pain on Tambudzai who pointed out that instead of her mother's discouragement in her struggle for her independence, "I wanted support, I wanted encouragement; warning if necessary, but constructive ones" (p.20). Instead of such support that her daughter craved for, Mai Tambu stated as a matter-of-fact: "There is nothing else to be done" (p.20). In Tambu's young mind, it was as if her mother "had been listening too devoutly to my father" (p.20). What appals readers is the extent to which patriarchal normativity turns mothers into patriarchal agents who socialise and prepare their daughters into accepting a life of subservience even if, in Mai Tambu's case, she was fully aware that the "business of womanhood is a heavy burden" (p.16). Thus, as part of their roles within patriarchy, mothers were expected to prepare their daughters early for the disappointments that littered a woman's life. This underlines hooks' argument that patriarchy has not only been perpetuated by men "who dominate, exploit or oppress... [but even] by the victims [women] themselves who are socialized to behave in ways that make them act in complicity with the status quo" (1984:43). Johnson has also emphasised that victims of oppression "can inflict injury on themselves and suffer from their position in society" (Johnson, 2014:23).

The critical role of women as agents who advance the interests and expectations of patriarchal normativity is further exposed when Jeremiah's family cannot raise fees for the children. Mai Tambu is portrayed as determined to keep the boy child in school but not the girl child. To raise Nhamo's fees, she "began to boil eggs, which she carried to the bus terminus and sold to passengers.... She also took vegetables - rape, onions and tomatoes - extending her garden so that there was more to sell" (p.15). This is a powerful representation of Mai Tambudzai's boldness and courage to face the family challenges. She did not cringe under the weight of her family's poverty but worked very hard to ensure that her son went to school. The depiction of her boldness and courage to face the hardships defies any patriarchal notions that have demeaned

women as weak and passive. Unfortunately, while she made all these sacrifices for Nhamo, she could not do the same for her daughter whom she urged to accept her lot alongside other women and to “enjoy what you can of it” (p.20). As a dutiful wife, she was trying to educate her daughter on the coping mechanisms: to accept early that to survive patriarchy, she had little choice but to accept her oppressive gender roles. Basing on Mai Tambu’s actions, it is apparent that patriarchy relies on the support and participation of women in perpetuating its inequalities. Looked at from the perspective of her daughter, Mai Tambu’s failure to stand up for her recreates patriarchy and reflects women’s self-sabotage which inflicts so much pain on Tambu. This is the paradox and dilemma that women confront and it is a huge concern.

Drawing from the above, it is clear that the unique dilemma that confronts many women as a result of patriarchal normativity is that many of them are forced not only to police themselves “but also police one another, encouraging compliance with institutions that may oppress” (Shaw and Lee, 2009:71). Decades of patriarchal socialisation have turned women against their interests and their actions signal attempts to escape social censure. Patriarchal socialisation creates “a self-policing world of women” whose fear of the consequences of failing to comply with patriarchal expectations transform them into agents of women’s oppression (Griffiths, 2000:282). In NC, Dangarembga gives a critical appraisal of these issues, showing how the inaction and silences of women who do not exploit their positions in the social hierarchies to promote underprivileged women’s interests has emerged as a huge concern.

Apart from her own mother’s failure to stand up and defend her in her time of need, Tambu describes another incident when a whole group of women in the Sigauke family failed to defend Lucia in her time of need. Lucia had incited the wrath of patriarchy by falling pregnant outside wedlock and risked being ejected out of the Sigauke family and thrown into homelessness. Owing to her desperation, she courted the support of fellow women but the deafening silence from the women was very bold and loud. Although Lucia stood accused, unfortunately for her, she was not invited to attend her own ‘trial’. This shows the oppressiveness of patriarchy which does not want to consider women’s views. The jury “consisted of the patriarchy – the three brothers, who were Babamukuru, my father and Babamunini Thomas, and their sister [Tete]”

(p.136). By virtue of her position as sister to the Sigauke brothers, Tete was the only woman who sat on the tribunal as she was elevated by her relationship as a sister to the Sigauke brothers. The rest of the women sat in the kitchen, far from the 'courtroom' and were reduced (by patriarchy) to eavesdropping since they did not share in Tete's patriarchal privilege.

Despite Tete's privileged position, what shocks many a reader is the psychological violence of African patriarchy has thoroughly 'brainwashed' her so that she does not take her position among women during the family council's deliberations. Instead, Tete took sides with the jury that was determined to find "a good strategy to outsmart" Lucia (p.145). When asked to speak in the meeting, it became apparent that Tete's role was not to side with another woman but to offer advice to the men on how to 'defeat' Lucia. The question Babamunini Thomas posed to Tete makes this point clear as he asked: "Tete, what do you say? You should know how best to handle a woman. What do we do in a case like this?" (p.145). Instead of offering support to Lucia's cause and fighting from her corner, when she opened her mouth to speak, Tete simply said, "this business is beyond me" and so she abandoned a fellow woman in the deep end (p.145). Her passiveness to the challenges Lucia was facing underscores Chukukere's argument: some "Women, afraid of being labelled social renegades ... lapse into fatalist acceptance of male dominance" (1998:144). Such behaviour from women who do not offer solidarity with those women fighting to secure emancipation for themselves and others indicates that there are times when "Men may not be as much woman's enemy as women themselves are when bound by a slave mentality and unable and unwilling to act in a positive manner to improve their lot" (1998:144). Tete's utterance demonstrates her desire to steer within the boundaries that have been prescribed by patriarchal normativity. This reveals her culpability in any miscarriage of justice that could have been suffered by Lucia. bell hooks has urged women to "learn to accept responsibility for fighting oppression that may not directly affect us as individuals" (1984:62). Such an attitude is very important because the "Feminist movement, like other radical movements in our society, suffers when individual concerns and priorities are the only reason for participation" (hooks, 1984:62). This means that in any gender debates, there is need for women to confront the various ways in which they have acted in complicity with the systems of oppression and abandoned fellow women in their times of need.

It is not only Tete who does not help Lucia. The women in the kitchen during Lucia's trial made promises to assist her but all this was empty talk. Mai Tambudzai and some "maininis threatened to become quite violent in their opposition to the system" (p.137) and such utterances breathed hope to expectations of women joining forces to deal with injustice against a member of their sex. However, this show of solidarity was only in word and never in deed. Their "mutterings and malcontent carried on, my mother and aunts fanning each other's tempers" but their rebellion ended there in the kitchen as they never acted on their promises and threats (p.137). Thus, in reality, these women only established "the fierce sisterly solidarity... in the kitchen" and murmured their displeasure with patriarchy within the confines of the kitchen but never developed adequate courage to invade the public space of the 'courtroom' and confront the men (p.137). Apparently, the desire for the transformation of oppressive social structures was there but the powerful grip of patriarchal normativity continued to weaken their resolve and willpower. This is why, in real life, some women become spectators who lack courage to confront the social injustice around them even if they are concerned about it. As long as women continue to lack courage to fight for their needs and concerns, then, women's struggles will remain singular, lacking the power of numbers.

In her time of need, Lucia appealed to Maiguru, the most educated woman in the narrative, a holder of a Master's degree and a teacher, for help and guidance in the matter. Lucia felt that Maiguru's education conferred her an exalted position in the community of women and sought "to draw Maiguru into the fierce sisterly solidarity they had established" and asked: "What do you say, Maiguru? ... So what do we do, Maiguru? We are looking to you to give us a plan" (p.137,8). Use of the words 'we' and 'us' was a search for collective action. The women's group expected leadership from Maiguru who was their 'natural' choice of leader because of her social and class status but Maiguru was unprepared to fight from Lucia's corner as she "grew very distant" (p.138). She

thought that Lucia ought to suffer the consequences of her fecund appetites... [and] preferred all the same not to become involved in matters of the flesh or the earth,

although she did not like this preference to be too obvious since it meant that she was setting herself above the rest of us (p.138).

Indifferently, Maiguru told the women, “This matter is not my concern.... I shall just keep quiet and go to bed” (p.138). Like Tete earlier on, Maiguru chose the path of least resistance and so her privileged position did not benefit women’s struggles against their oppression. The failure by women to close ranks is a concerning cardinal sin in the feminist commitment to fighting women’s abuse and oppression because it leaves many women on their own, exposed to victimization and abuse.

Lucia had committed no crime by her desire for freedom to choose or reject marriage for herself without being dictated to. Her refusal of marriage was her personal choice and right that could not be faulted. It was premised on her realization that she had the capacity “to be strong, capable, self-reliant, and ethical” outside marriage rather than in it (Chukukere, 1998:138,9). This is why she challenged the two suitors during the family tribunal for being incapable to be any woman’s husband:

this man, this Jeremiah, yes, you Jeremiah, who married my sister: he has a roving eye and a lazy hand... he doesn’t want to work.... As for Takesure, I don’t know what he thinks he can give me. What he can do for me, I can do better for myself (p.145).

Thus, her need for independence and desire to have control over her own social and economic destiny was more compelling than her desire for marriage. This is what strengthened her resolve to challenge patriarchal normativity.

Without support from fellow women, Lucia faced patriarchal persecution all alone because the women who could have stood by her and strengthened her rebellion abandoned and deserted her. This communicates that there are times when women’s struggles may call for the individual

woman to take up her personal fight and not depend on women as a collective. Lucia is a very strong willed woman and sought to encourage women's solidarity. She felt she could find power in identifying with the women than with the patriarchal system. Her actions of choosing to speak up defy the assumptions embedded within patriarchy where women are expected to comply and submit in silence. She is unlike Tete and Maiguru who, in choosing inaction and silence, technically became guilty of participating in Lucia's oppression as they demonstrated their conscription by the patriarchal machine to keep silent and not speak up against the oppression of patriarchal normativity. We blame their lack of courage but recognise that they too were victims. Privately, the two women admired Lucia's courage to stand up to the patriarchy and as they discussed Lucia's fearless invasion of the courtroom the following day, the two women "puckered their faces up and dissolved into helpless giggles" (p.148). As she retold the events to Maiguru, Tete's admiration of Lucia reveals itself in the words she uttered as she "wiped the merriment from her eyes" saying, "I tell you, that woman only missed killing me by a very narrow margin. I nearly died of laughter. That Lucia! Aiwa! That Lucia is mad. And Mukoma's [Babamukuru's] face! Truly you'd have thought Lucia had walked in naked!" (p.148). Both women did not support Lucia during the trial, found entertainment in Lucia's actions, but it is clear from the subtext of their dialogue here that they secretly admired her courage and believed she acted right in challenging the patriarchal order. The fact that they could only say it in private shows their own entrapment and victimisation as they could not voice their views in public. In the words of Muponde, "A condition of detached victimhood amounts to being an accomplice in one's colonization and oppression" (2003:125). Thus, the women's failure to assist Lucia clarifies how patriarchal normativity has numbed some women's resolve to support fellow women, dividing women so that they keep quiet and ignore joining in fellow women's struggles against different kinds of oppressive onslaught. Dangarembga shows great concern with women's lack of solidarity in this instance and hers is a call for solidarity amongst women. Through her child narrator, she notes:

it was frightening now to even begin to think that, the very facts which set them apart as a group, as women, as a certain kind of person, were only myths; frightening to acknowledge that generations of threat and assault and neglect had battered these myths into the extreme, dividing reality they faced, of the Maigurus

or the Lucias (p.138).

This underscores Dangarembga's condemnation of women's lack of support for one another which betrays women's struggles for freedom.

Apart from the lack of support for Lucia, Dangarembga also portrays how some women took a leading role in criticising fellow women. This reflects on the divisions that patriarchy has created between women as seen in the manner that Tete led the verbal onslaught against Maiguru, accusing her of cooking rotten food for her brother. It is annoying that a woman is constructed as championing the harassment of another woman. Despite Maiguru's apparent efforts to please her husband's relatives, on this occasion, Tete found flaws and faults with Maiguru's culinary skills, accusing her of bringing her brother rotten food even if Maiguru thought this dish was a special treat for the patriarchy. The irony was that the complaint did not begin with Babamukuru but his sister. It shows how patriarchal normativity has turned some women into its spokespersons in matters that promote male privilege. Dangarembga is illustrating how patriarchal normativity is a fertile ground for disharmony between women to fester. Through Maiguru's experiences, we realise that patriarchy is a thankless system. Nobody seemed ready to acknowledge how Maiguru sacrificed a lot for her husband's family's comfort: the cooking utensils belonged to Maiguru, she had provided the food from her own salary and cooked for fourteen people, Tete included. One would have expected Tete to be grateful, yet, "Tete delicately spat a mouthful of greenish meat into her hand, wrapped it up in her handkerchief and, turning green herself, suggested that Maiguru be more responsible in future" (p.135). Tete's actions "threw my aunt [Maiguru], who was a good woman and a good wife and took pride in this identity, into a dreadful panic" as she had taken the trouble of preparing "a special pot of refrigerated meat for the patriarchy to eat as they planned and constructed the family" (p.135,6). The fact that it was Tete who took upon herself the responsibility to publicly berate Maiguru's noble intentions reveals that, at times, women may be more ardent enforcers of patriarchal values than men. Tete was constructed as one ready to spring to the defence of her brother's interests, indicating how thorough patriarchal socialisation is. By choosing to side with her brother who was forever cast as outlining boundaries for the women around him, Tete cannot be exonerated from her complementary role

in the victimisation of fellow women. Deriving from all this, it is clear that women are not always playing the victim as they, too, have exploited and oppressed others by adhering to the patriarchal normative. This portrays Moraga's argument: "We women have a similar nightmare, for each of us in some way has been both the oppressed and the oppressor" (1979, cited by Shaw and Lee, 2009:207). This is what hooks has called confronting "the enemy within" (1984:46).

Various feminists have called upon women to unite against different systems of oppression that have sought to undermine women's interests (Mama 2001; Abraham 1999; hooks 1984). For instance, Coltri, has urged women to forge alliances, noting how "For a long time, women have been separated from each other, mothers from daughters, white from black, rich from poor, old from young" (2017:11). Many women have suffered in isolation because they have been let down by fellow women who have chosen to side with patriarchy and other systems of privilege instead of defending fellow women enduring hegemonic oppression. Lack of support for one another works against women as a whole as it "results in the fragmented and poor representation of women at all levels of... political and institutional hierarchies" (McFadden, 1999:ii). In NC, Tete's failure to identify with Lucia during her trial was because she did not realise, at the time, that the same 'crime' that Lucia was blamed for would one day confront her own "two pregnant daughters who have no husbands" (p.146). Therefore, defending Lucia now meant defending her daughters. In that sense, the 'trial' of Lucia actually mirrors that of many other women, present and in the future. The message is clear, if women do not bind in solidarity against the oppressions confronting fellow women, many women will be hounded by the same problem in future and their struggles will remain lonely.

It is clear from the foregoing that women's role and participation in the oppression of fellow women requires interrogation. This echoes Hooks' argument that women "could only become sisters in struggle by confronting the ways [through which] women - through sex, class, and race - dominated and exploited other women, and created a political platform that would address these differences" (hooks, 2000, cited in Shaw and Lee, 2009:41). Her views affirm the arguments raised by Moraga decades ago that debates on social inequalities should also stimulate discussions on how women may have (un)wittingly contributed towards perpetuating systems of

oppression because “without naming the enemy within ourselves and outside of us, no authentic, non-hierarchical connection among oppressed groups can take place” (1979:206). In other words, examinations of how the oppression of women has played out calls for everyone to introspect on how his or her actions may have, knowingly or unknowingly, helped recreate patriarchal oppression or other forms of oppression.

### **3.2.6 Representations of the impact of economic and class inequalities on poor women’s lives**

Women have also been divided by social status and economic means. This is a serious issue that undermines women’s solidarity. Bunch has argued that: “[a]ddressing the growing gap between women whose economic and personal status has improved as a result of gains for women and those who have been left behind is another urgent challenge today” (2012:38). This indicates how the class system has privileged some women while undermining the lives of others. Class inequalities undermine solidarity between women because those with access to privileges have often acted in ways that have worsened the experiences of fellow women.

The portrayal of Anna’s deference to Maiguru exposes the sub-human treatment that humanity can subject one another to on the grounds of economic differences. Anna was Maiguru’s domestic worker. The class divisions between Anna and Maiguru are shown in Anna’s deference whenever Maiguru sent her to call Nyasha and Tambu to the supper table. Although she was older than Tambu and Nyasha, she knelt before them. Tambu who had just arrived from the rural areas was shocked and said about it: Anna was

kneeling down to talk to me and not looking at me as she talked but at a spot on the floor a few inches in front of me. The worst thing was that she hardly talked at all, said no more than the few words necessary to convey her message (p.85).

This was the same Anna who had freely spoken to Tambu when both were still in the rural village, when both belonged to the same poor social class, surrounded by the poverty of the rural

areas. No matter how much Nyasha and Tambu castigated Anna for kneeling before them, she continued it anyway and avoided open conversation with them which made her life rather lonely in a house full of human beings. The inferiority complex in which she laboured to treat fellow women and girls as more superior than her made her an enemy to her own liberation. Thus, it is not just the rich women's actions that should be blamed here but even the poor women are implicated as they have a role in shaping their own oppression.

Maiguru's treatment of her maid is revolting and disgusting as it reflects the oppressiveness of class attitudes. Anna did not sit on the table with the rest of the family but ate away from the rest on her own. This echoes Jezile in Mrs Potgieter's house (in ATDD) who, because of racism, was made to eat the food she cooked for the white family separately from them. Such treatment of the domestic worker reveals abuse of material power by the rich African women who flaunt their wealth and whose economic circumstances transform them into pale copies of the colonial white oppressors. Oppression remains unpalatable whether it is perpetuated by a white oppressor or African male oppressor or African woman. It also means that women's resistance story cannot be complete if it does not target at every system that undermines some people, including class structures that are oppressive to some women. Maiguru, a victim of her husband's domination, exhibits economic prejudice for her maid as seen in how, when she wanted to communicate with Anna, she "rang the little silver bell that sat next to her [and the] sound brought Anna hurrying to kneel beside her" (p.82). Maiguru, who may likely have learnt this during her stay overseas, did not call Anna by her name: Anna's behaviour had been conditioned by the sound of a bell, as is used in British or colonial homes for servants. This terrible mistreatment of one African woman by another African woman epitomizes dehumanization that is rooted in patriarchal normativity. Her actions were learnt from the capitalist patriarchal system and, as a reader, I recognise how Maiguru projected her own need and desire for control (which patriarchal normativity had denied her) in her relationship with her domestic worker. It was some kind of securing psychological security by exercising her ability to be in control which, unfortunately, was targeted at the wrong person, another woman. In other words, her actions drew from the values of inequality that patriarchal normativity and other systems of privilege had produced. As a man writing about the emancipation of women from different systems of oppression, I observe that given that it is men

who ultimately benefit if systems of inequalities remain in place, men can only be grateful if they see women complying with systems of privilege. Therefore, women should seek more solidarity amongst themselves and challenge all inequalities as the solution towards ending patriarchal normativity and intersecting oppressions. Feminists have argued that feminism is not about promoting access to privileges for some at the expense of others:

Women need to know (and are increasingly prevented from finding out) that feminism is *not* about dressing for success, or becoming a corporate executive, or gaining elective office; it is not being able to share a two career marriage and take skiing vacations and spend huge amounts of time with your husband and two lovely children because you have a domestic worker who makes all this possible for you, but who hasn't the time or money to do it for herself (Ehrlich, 1981:130).

Thus, feminist scholars and creative writers show that patriarchal normativity and intersecting systems of oppression such as seek to divide women by producing various forms of inequalities which some women may unwittingly comply as expected behaviour. However, action that inflicts pain on another woman still “maintains, in an inverted form, the dominant values” (Fouque, 1980:117,8) and men who are the ultimate oppressors will be grateful to see that happening.

### **3.2.7 Conclusion**

In conclusion, the two novels studied underpin the oppressiveness of the social, political and economic contexts of African women's lives. The chapter has given an intersectional account of the serious impact of different forms of patriarchy which have worked within and alongside each other to undermine and misrepresent the real needs and priorities of African women as well as complicate their lives and their livelihoods. As the analysis has shown, some of these patriarchies have included the African familial patriarchal structures and customs which exploited and abused women in the home, the white colonial/apartheid system that was accompanied by white

supremacist ideas as another and far more oppressive form of patriarchy, as well as class exploitation whose abuse and appropriation of many African women and men's labour worsened African women's experiences of oppression. Capitalism can be viewed as some kind of capitalist patriarchy because men still enjoyed more access to privileges than women. What has emerged from this chapter's analysis is that unequal racial, political, gender and class are causes for serious concern for the African women because the inequities they have produced have exposed them to untold suffering and undermined their needs. They have seriously impacted the fulfilment of various needs, wishes, interests, lives and livelihoods of African women who were the most disadvantaged in the diverse hierarchies of power, particularly in apartheid/colonial Southern Africa. Thus, it can be argued that African women's "urgent need [is] to address oppressive structures in the society" that have left them vulnerable and denied them the opportunity to live dignified and fulfilling lives (Chukukere, 1998:144).

## CHAPTER 4

### **African women's resistance, emerging identities and the impact of their changing roles in challenging patriarchal normativity**

#### **4.0 Introduction**

This chapter examines the literary representations by Ngcobo and Dangarembga of how, in spite of the rural African women's insecurities, material deprivations and diverse colonial/apartheid and patriarchal constraints they confronted (which impeded fulfilment of their many needs, concerns, and restricted their agency), they led their lives with much courage and strength, to improve their conditions. The intention is to understand how, in the process, the women defied gender and racial assumptions and various social conventions about how women should behave. The chapter examines how the women's difficult realities, rather than dissuade them, actually inspired their resistance and acted as a catalyst that energised their refusal of peripheral roles on matters that concerned them. Thus, the chapter explores representations of rural African women's bitter struggles to challenge the colonial/apartheid and indigenous patriarchies that oppressed them, to claim agency and control over their own lives, and the impact of their struggles on their identities and roles. The actions of the rural women depicted by the two novelists are very important to improving women's lives and to advancing the feminist struggles in their homes, communities, societies and world, for as Ngcobo has argued (in an interview with Daymond), "rural women have a lot to teach the so-called educated" (1992:92).

There are two main questions that the chapter attempts to address. The first focuses on how Ngcobo and Dangarembga represent rural African women as powerful agents in the construction of women's changing identities, capable of undertaking diverse forms of resistance. The second concentrates on how African women's changing roles, identities and actions as individuals and groups challenged assumptions rooted in patriarchal normativity and other intersecting systems of privilege. As an extension of this second objective, the chapter will analyse the impact that women's solidarity had in emboldening their resistance.

Patriarchal normativity and intersecting systems of privilege produced gender injustice and denied the majority of women their rights as equal people with desires, needs, interests and concerns. Women in Southern Africa and all over the world have found it imperative to resist the patriarchal and colonial prescriptions to rid their homes, communities, and societies of injustice: “[t]he potential to *not* go along... is always present as a form of power, and dominant groups know it” (Johnson, 2014:189). Breaking out of oppressive gender identities to challenge oppressive people, situations and structures are not easy tasks for oppressed women. That some women have actually succeeded (Johnson, 2014), as this chapter explores, through some of Ngcobo and Dangarembga’s characters, offers better understanding of the great determination women needed to have to transform a range of often intersecting social inequalities and take charge of their own lives and their future.

#### **4.1 Re-imagining and reconfiguring African women’s identities in *And They Didn’t Die***

*And They Didn’t Die* represents the bold actions of poor rural women, most of whom did not get the benefit of education under the oppressive colonial and apartheid regimes, which deliberately underdeveloped African people. To begin with, Ngcobo’s focus on poor rural women disrupts the literary tradition of “the late 1940s [where] the general focus of black South African literature has been a commitment to the struggle of the proletariat against the forces of Apartheid, a predominantly urban setting, and a majority of male writers” (Yiu, 2008:29). In writing this novel, Ngcobo dismantles patriarchy whilst respecting women’s rights by focusing on the critical roles played by rural African women such as Nosizwe, Jezile, Nondo and others, whose participation in South Africa’s anti-apartheid resistance cannot be ignored. There was little, if anything, that apartheid administrators found appreciable and admirable about the rural African women as revealed by Mr Pienaar, the white apartheid officer, describing them derisively as “senseless, unthinking creatures” (p.1) and despising them for being a “strange breed of womanhood, thin and ragged” (p.2). Such descriptions unmask two important sources of Mr Pienaar’s contempt for African women: his racial and masculine bigotry. As a white person, Mr Pienaar did not see the humanity of African women whom he equated to ‘creatures’. As a man, he condemned African womanhood and felt the women required disciplining from their men. The negation of African women’s identities was premised on the wretchedness of African lives in the unproductive reserves where apartheid had condemned them. Ngcobo describes the

reserves as “dumping ground[s]” which “were never meant to provide enough food” (p.43). African women lacked value within apartheid logic and their purpose was “to produce migrant labour” for apartheid capitalism (p.42), as if their reproductive capacities were the only thing worthwhile to the settler colonial project.

In spite of the intersecting oppressions, Ngcobo identifies and portrays something remarkable about African women: their resilience and identities as strong-willed people who courageously confronted the pressure produced by the brutal apartheid and capitalist systems that confronted them. They might only have “gone about pottering and scratching the barren soil” (p.50) in the poor bantustans, with some of them such as Zenzile and Nomawa scarred by their husbands’ neglect and abuse, yet, the “women of the village were... capable, they were strong” (p.17). The negative descriptions given from the white man’s perspective belied the African women’s great courage and their spirits which were not broken by all the oppressions they confronted daily. History shows that for many South African women within apartheid,

the woman’s identity is forged out of her experience of lack and deprivation, the legacy of apartheid laws such as the Land Act, Group Areas Act, and influx control... [The] woman’s identity is constructed within and by the actual circumstances of her historical situation (Gilfillan, 1992:83).

In other words, the actions of resistance of the African women were despite the abject and grim conditions they endured.

There are many ways Ngcobo’s representations of African women challenge patriarchal normativity and its association of women with weakness. This was particularly demonstrated in South Africa after colonialism and apartheid had forced African men into the cities to work under ‘the cheap labour system’ by which apartheid grew very rich (Wolpe, 1972; Kaur, 1994). Ngcobo shows how the men’s long absences from the rural enclave of Sigageni presented African women characters with an opportunity to perform roles that patriarchal logic had

historically reserved for men. In the novel, a woman lived her life “as a water carrier, a wood gatherer, a road mender... ploughing, sowing, weeding and reaping” (p.5). On top of that, women mended fences, ran “after cows” (p.6), herded cattle as “herdswomen” and literally did everything in the home (p.63). The novel begins with representations of a group of about seven women “with hoes slung over their shoulders” (p.2). The hoes the women carried and the multiple work roles they engaged in indicate their productive capacities that patriarchy has often underrepresented while focusing on their reproductive duties. Thus, although the dominant thinking embedded in patriarchal normativity has sought to subordinate women’s productive capacities (Razavi and Miller, 1995), Ngcobo succeeds in challenging this thinking by highlighting women’s productive roles.

Another way Ngcobo disrupts colonial and indigenous patriarchal thinking about women and men’s roles is observed in her presentation of some roles occupied by some women. The portrayal of Nosizwe as a doctor and Tokozile as a journalist addresses the lasting impact of improving the educational, social and economic status of women by challenging differential family roles that have, historically, separated women and men. At the time Ngcobo wrote her novel, there were many jobs which, for many African women, were out of bounds: “Writing or jobs in the media were not only unavailable but were clearly ‘dangerous’ unless the writers intuitively kept away from serious areas of journalism” (1985:85). She further explains that

years of conditioning had taught us [[women] that only men have a voice and are worth listening to. This, over and above the intolerance engendered by Apartheid South Africa in all spheres of Africa. That tutored feeling of ‘less-worthiness’ has been a crippling factor in all my creative thinking” (1985:85).

Drawing from such patriarchal restrictions that historically impeded women’s occupancy of certain roles, Ngcobo’s representations of Nosizwe and Tokozile poses a serious challenge to patriarchal normativity. Even her own decision to become a writer was in spite of what was expected of women. Thus, the portrayal of women’s productivity in ATDD and some women’s occupancy of jobs which were “beyond bounds” (Ngcobo, 1985:85) is significant. It helps

“integrate women into the national economy” (Razavi and Miller, 1995:2), something that patriarchal normativity has sought to deny women.

In the prolonged absence of the African men who had to provide the hard labour needed to build the colonial-apartheid industrial system, the African women tilled the land and even defended their land rights and community’s interests against apartheid aggression (as addressed in the next subsection). The novel explores “what happens when women start asking questions about cattle and the land, about female power, about tradition, about violence, about sex” (*Voice Literary Supplement*, 1999:i). Ngcobo answers this too by showing that the women’s expanded identification with land and cattle issues locates them outside gendered boundaries. They sought presence and self-definition outside the patriarchal space that had confined them to the domestic space. The novel shows that gender has ceased to play a significant role in the types of tasks that the women engaged in in their community. This coincides with Kimmel’s argument showing that masculinity is an evolving cultural construct which should not be viewed as a fixed biological fact since women can also successfully perform the roles that patriarchy has preserved for men (2005). The women of Sigageni could ask questions about cattle and land because it was they who tilled the land and herded cattle. Thus, apartheid’s labour system significantly altered African patriarchal gender roles and relations. It did not only restrict African men from playing critical roles in the home, but also opened opportunities for women to successfully act outside the confines of patriarchal norms about matrimony and maternity, enabling readers to understand women as courageous defenders of the interests of their communities.

Added to the above, the way the roles of women as mothers are represented contests many patriarchal assumptions that have demeaned and undermined motherhood (Johnson, 2014). The subtext of the novel creates pictures of many absentee husbands and fathers. Consequently, many women such as Nomawa, Gaba, MaBiyela, Jezile (particularly after her divorce), and others, brought up their children single handed. Ngcobo portrays in a powerful way “women’s functioning as the effective heads of rural families” (Daymond, 2004:255). For instance, because of the actions of her “weakling of a husband” (p.17) who had deserted her, MaBiyela “had been left to bring up the children single-handed, tend the stock, plough the fields to raise the crops,

mend broken fences, father the growing children” (p.16). She was not the only woman who suffered this predicament because “[t]he women of the village were in many ways like MaBiyela” (p.17). Even Jezile, for whom, earlier in the narrative, “[l]ife without Siyalo was impossible to visualise” after he was sentenced to ten years in prison for stealing milk (p.155) was able to look after her children single-handed. The men’s absence as father figures implies that it was women who shouldered much of the responsibilities in the home that ensured that children were fed. This was no minor achievement in the context of a suffocating apartheid environment. This portrayal of the absence of fathers in the daily lives of their children (which has continued even today) and representations of how much women devoted to the upbringing of the children reflects arguments by African feminists like Aina whose observation has shown that fighting for the families’ survival is a priority for African women (1998). According to Mama, “most African women are trapped in the daily business of securing the survival of themselves, their families and their communities” (2001:60). The significant role of women to secure survival of families, which Ngcobo portrays, makes us question patriarchal normativity and its portrayal of women as inferior to men. Thus, Ngcobo’s narrative challenges men’s monopoly over the tag of breadwinners. Her portrayal of women successfully playing roles that patriarchy had reserved as men’s preserve exposes the emptiness of patriarchal gender attitudes that have confined women to subordinate roles and unjustifiably treated them as if they were inferior to men. The novel shows the potential of women performing the roles reserved for men by patriarchy even better than men.

To rewrite women’s critical role as mothers which has been undervalued by patriarchal normativity, Ngcobo tackles a situation that enables readers to understand the centrality of women’s roles as mothers in life. Upon Jezile’s return from prison, her child whom she had left with her husband was emaciated and in a state of dying: “S’naye was not just thin; she was emaciated. Veins stood out distended and pulsing at the temples” (p.114). Jezile could not believe that this was the same child she had left full of life and asked herself many rhetorical questions:

The bare head - where had all that thick crop of hair gone? – how had its colour and texture changed? – only sparse brown wisps remained.... The skin hung

loose on the body except around the face and head (p.114).

The imprisonment of Jezile temporarily removed her from the home scene. Her imprisonment highlights the oppressiveness of apartheid that separated mother and child simply because mothers demanded their basic human rights. However, her imprisonment also exposed the inability of the husband to carry out his patriarchal gender role as ‘the breadwinner’ in the absence of the wife. On the fateful morning when Jezile was arrested, there was complete reversal of roles between wife and husband, with Jezile venturing outside the home to join other women in protesting against apartheid oppressiveness, while Siyalo remained at home with “S’naye warmly cuddled in her father’s arms” (p.90). Siyalo remained in the domestic space looking after the child, while the wife entered the public space to fight for the rights of the community. Such reversal of roles suggests the “visionary possibilities” that Ngcobo created in the novel about women and men (Daymond, 2004). These possibilities are not limited by gendered responsibilities that have been constructed for men and women. This underlines that “gender is always what is performed rather than being a fixed entity” (Daymond, 2004:150).

To further underline the crucial role of mothers, on the fateful morning that Jezile left the baby in Siyalo’s arms, Siyalo “would have been completely out of his depth if MaBiyela had not taken over completely and mothered the baby herself” (p.105). Handing over the child to his mother depicts Siyalo’s abdication of his responsibility over the child, an abdication of his parental and caregiver roles that has been identified in a majority of men produced by patriarchal normativity. His failure to successfully tend after his own child just for a day is a powerful challenge to patriarchal normativity where “men are assigned all positive traits, giving them power over the women” (Ronquist, 2015:2) while women’s roles as caregivers have often been undervalued (Johnson, 2014). Siyalo’s failure questions patriarchal normativity by exposing the myths of its ideology that has sought to construct male supremacy while undervaluing women and womanhood (Report of the First African Feminist Forum, 2006). This is an important challenge to gendered notions that have viewed women as if they were secondary and subordinate to men. The portrayal of women in ATDD is a powerful response to “women’s disadvantages [which] stem from stereotyped customary expectations held by men and internalized by women” (Razavi

and Miller, 1995:3). As the above analysis shows, Ngcobo's women characters are not held back by the expectations of patriarchal normativity.

When Jezile returned from prison, and saw her daughter in a state of dying, she set about righting the wrong. She was roused into action to save her child's life. "All she thought about was S'naye - she had to live. She robbed her hen's nests and fed her on eggs.... But when no more eggs remained, ... Jezile frantically turned on her hens, killing them off one by one to keep S'naye alive" (p.115-6). Nothing could stand between Jezile and the survival of her child. That the child's health magically improved and she survived is a powerful testament of the critical roles of women as mothers to the survival of families. It shows that the role of the mother is one that can never be trivialised. In light of this, society should be reformed to enable women to freely participate in the public sphere to guarantee the survival of families, particularly as this novel has shown that many men (such as Mthebe and Nomawa's husband, who abandoned their families) cannot be trusted with this important role.

The important role of women as mothers is also evident if we consider the time that Jezile had marital problems and was engulfed by her sense of failure to conceive. Constantly harassed by MaBiyela, her mother-in-law, she often "fled back to Luve to be with her mother" (p.4). She chose to be with her mother, a source of her comfort in times of distress. Similarly, when Zenzile found it a burden to look after her own children, her own "mother came and took them" to look after them on her behalf (p.53). Through these examples, the resilience of mothers and their important role is brought out. The sacrifices that women put into the survival of families, makes it unjustified that women are poorly treated and portrayed within patriarchal discourses as if their roles are subordinate because they are not (Edholm, 1992). As a male reader, I am jostled into rethinking the verity of so many socially-constructed assumptions about women being inferior and subordinate to men. I am roused into realising and questioning the duplicity of exploitative patriarchal customs mirrored in the novel where "[b]eing a mother did not put a woman centrally at the home of her in-laws. She could decide nothing about her life; where to live, where to go, with whom and when" (p.55). All this calls into question traditional gender roles that have been

blind to the critical contribution of women who should be given more room to do much more for their families.

Given women's commitment to the survival of their families, the injustice of African, colonial and apartheid patriarchal normativities combining to deny them custody of their children should be questioned. For instance, Siyalo coming after his ten year jail sentence to lay claim of custody for the children by taking them from Jezile reveals gross injustice of patriarchal normativity against women in society. Here is a man who earlier on literally abdicated his parental responsibility when his wife was imprisoned and failed to be creative to ensure the survival of a single child, yet was now given custody of two children by patriarchal 'wisdom'. Exposure of all this unfairness communicates that change and social transformation of patriarchal thinking are necessary to rid society of injustice. Jezile's husband's family had not done anything for the children while Siyalo was in prison but the patriarchal law that granted Siyalo custody of the children seemed blind to all that. The patriarchal custom cruelly mistreated Jezile as if she was just important as "a mere vessel, a vessel to carry humanity - to carry the Majolas and only the Majolas - [as she] was now unable to claim for herself her own flesh and blood. They were Majolas and she was a Mapanga" (p.227). Jezile wondered about the unfairness in the patriarchal system and asked herself: "Where were the Majolas when she and her children had cruelly starved so that she had to leave her children and work in other people's houses and look after other people's children and be so exposed to abuse?" (p.226). Even the children being taken away looked at their mother's "eyes pleading for her not to let them go with strangers.... They remembered little of the Majolas - and they would not have known Siyalo, their father, if he had appeared in front of them" (p.227). All this enlightens "the reader of the faults of patriarchy" (Ronquist, 2015:1). However, the fact the children could still visit and stay with either parent whenever they felt like visiting indicates potential triumph over patriarchy and its custody laws.

#### **4.1.2 Ngcobo's portrayal of African women's political activism and their identities as defenders of their communities**

The reconstruction of women's identities in ATDD is also depicted through women's active involvement and great visibility on the political arena where their valour, toughness, sacrifice and resilience are highlighted. This underscores the emerging identities of the many courageous African women who were not just central in upbringing children but, in the absence of most of the village men (who were away working), also assumed political leadership positions to *defend* their community's interests which the apartheid administration had continued to trample upon.

The narrative is ushered in by scenes of protesting rural African women who had persistently emptied the dipping tank and were refusing to dip their cattle "in spite of the threats" (p.1). The women's commitment to resistance was revealed by the weekly sight of "dip mixture [which] lay green, drying in trickles and splashes on the grey clay soil" (p.1). They refused to dip their cattle "because authorities often 'culled' or destroyed cattle that were judged too numerous for the meagre land on which they had to graze" (Daymond, 2004:264, citing Walker, 1991). The women reasoned that the solution lay in them getting "more land to graze our cattle which are dying from lack of grass and water" (p.81). Though emptying the dip mixture was considered a "criminal behaviour and a serious matter" (p.64), the women were daring and unrelenting: "[f]or many months now they had religiously emptied the dipping tank some time between Tuesday night and Thursday morning of every week" (p.62). Despite their poverty and the little space allowed them, squeezed as they were between patriarchal and colonial imperatives, the women enacted their courageous determination to change the courses of their families' lives by voicing their presence as important players who could not be ignored in the politics of their land. Their appalling conditions of want and grim deprivation did not deter them from inventing their own discourses on political resistance where sabotaging dipping tanks was not a trivial matter but a powerful pointer to political agency and intention to be heard. The capacity of women, particularly poor rural women who were less educated, to stand up against the might of apartheid organisation, notoriously known for its oppressiveness and atrocities (Vosloo, 2020) highlights their powerful resilience. The liberation struggle in Africa has often been associated with men and the educated, but the powerful claim that Ngcobo makes is that "the contribution of [poor]

rural women to political struggle must be recognized” (Daymond, 2004:256) because they did not take a backseat in the struggle for independence. The dipping tank was a symbol of apartheid control and the rural women’s acts of sabotage against it pointed at protest against apartheid rule itself. Emptying the tanks was an overt expression by the African women of their anger and “[w]omen’s anger is an important engine for change” (Johnson, 2014:200).

That the women’s rebellion happens right at the beginning of the story demonstrates how the plot is a potent tool deployed by Ngcobo to emphasise the kind of women her novel is about. This makes the plot very important in reconstituting African women with agency right from the first page of the story. They had meagre resources and draped as they were in rags, could not afford guns. Nonetheless, their capacity to organize themselves confounded their material realities, with the apartheid authorities unable to identify the culprits. Though their resistance was not an armed uprising, it was still very powerful. Feminist scholars have pointed out that women’s “[r]esistance has been armed or unarmed... though never disarmed if it was really resistance” (De Laurentis, cited in Abrahams, 1999:8). Therefore, emptying dipping tanks cannot be dismissed as insignificant but a metaphor of powerful resistance and political voices against the injustices of apartheid rule. It was a form of resistance that connected with the specific environment of the rural women. Initially, “Mr Pienaar, the dipping officer - [and] the only white person whose duties brought him regularly to the black reserve of Sigageni” (p.1) trivialised the women’s acts of rebellion as “nothing serious - [but] childish pranks” (p.1). However, after the women’s unrelenting revolt, he was forced to reconsider his earlier estimation of these women: “[i]n spite of what others think, it is these women we have got to deal with not those far away men in the cities” (p.2). Resistance is the only language that exploiters of the other will understand and force them to rethink their abuse of the other (Abrahams, 1999). The women’s daring acts revealed to him so much courage and his realisation of the strength of African women’s spirit of resistance made him admit that these women were a “strange breed of womanhood” (p.2). Such an admission, coming from a white official, is a noteworthy acceptance by an apartheid officer of the power of resistance. It shows African women cannot be ignored in the politics of the land. All this creates a sense of emerging African women who refuse confinement by conventions set by patriarchal normativity and apartheid racial systems.

The African women's resort to acts of lawlessness was a rejection of apartheid closure of the democratic space in South Africa. They demanded to be heard and Jezile's statement: "Let them come, then perhaps they'll listen to what we have to say - we must tell them" (p.3) shows African women's refusal to keep words to themselves. Their desire to speak and be listened underlines the imperativeness of subjectivity, inclusion and participation in human life. Frustrated by the apartheid administration's denial of African people of land rights and the subjection of the African women and men to perpetual servitude and poverty conditions that threatened their survival, the African women boldly struggled for the rights to have a voice that determined the direction their communities were governed. Pienaar's psychological distress and sense of helplessness due to the women's rebellion are seen by his non-verbal behaviour: he "hissed looking at his feet", "raised his voice and threw his head back as he shouted again" and "stamped hard on his right foot" (p.1). As he "slowly walked around in circles" in confusion, he began to talk to himself, consumed by fear of loss of his job: "[w]hat more was he to report to the authorities at Ixopo... He wanted nothing to tamper with his job" (p.1). Clearly, through such portrayal of African women's actions psychologically destabilizing Mr Pienaar, Ngcobo upsets 'conventional' notions about gender and race. This debunks the gendered claim that women are weak and passive.

Pienaar represented both masculine and apartheid racial power. However, to demonstrate the women's lack of fear and their challenge of these sites of power he represented, "a group of about seven women approaching [Pienaar]... were going to pass him by as though they had not seen him" (p.2). They did not betray any interest in him and intended to ignore him, registering their resolve to undermine the apartheid representative's imposed sense of superiority. Such pointed refusal by the women to accept being dominated shattered Mr Pienaar's sense of superiority even further as seen in the way that his frustration at being unnoticed led him into driving his car straight at the women from behind in anger. Significantly, the fact that Ngcobo's novel revolves around women protagonists refusing to bow and submit to apartheid authority portrays women as the pillars of strength of the community, unafraid of the colonial master. Ngcobo's narrative, as shown above, shifts from patriarchal normativity's focus on women as if

they lack agency, by portraying them as people who powerfully defied apartheid authority to the surprise of the colonial authority. By so doing, the women acted contrary to racial and patriarchal norms.

The rural women's actions of emptying the dipping mixture nudged apartheid authority to take them seriously. "Finally... an announcement from Ixopo had been read in church. The officials from Ixopo would come the following Thursday to discuss certain issues pertaining to the whole community" (p.62). The apartheid establishment had, all along, declined to come to the negotiating table but after successive weeks of unabated protests by the rural women, the authorities were forced to reconsider their stance. This signals victory on the part of the women and the impact of their agency in making apartheid oppressors come 'down' to meet and talk to them. Thus, their acts of rebellion asserted their new identities as the defenders and pillars of strength of their communities. Such literary re-imagination of women reverses the thinking that has been perpetrated by patriarchal normativity about women who have often been misrepresented as weak and docile.

It is unfortunate that women's courage and political participation in Africa's liberation struggles have often been diminished and misrepresented in many literary accounts as underscored by Cawthorne:

authors and accounts of the war such as and edited by Irene Staunton (1990), Leda Stott (1989) and Jane Truscott (1988) argue that although women did fight in the war, the majority of women supported the struggle through traditional roles. That is to say that women cooked, carried food, washed clothes, carried water, collected firewood and provided sex (1999:61-2).

In her study of South African women's representations on the political scene, Colleen O'Brien has similarly exposed that there has been

myth surrounding the nature of South African women's participation in the struggle

against apartheid. It is one which erroneously assumes that women, who must undertake almost complete responsibility for the welfare and survival of their families are so limited by being passive, nurturing and motherly that they cannot at the same time be powerful, independent and politically active (1994:147).

The power of rural women has often been underestimated due to patriarchal normativity's misrepresentations. In contrast to what patriarchal normativity says about women, "when they have been roused to action the women have displayed qualities over and above those of the men: a courage as great, often greater... a longer, stronger tenacity" (Bernstein, 1978:43). This is affirmed by Ngcobo's representations of the political activities of her women characters, highlighted through Tokozile's report about women "in many parts of the country... [who were] rising up" (p.48) and her exposure of their powerful response to apartheid aggression:

While men are away in the cities the government officials sneak up on the women, hoping they will find them alone, weak and defenceless. But the women of Tzaneen have engaged the enemy for months and are not about to give in (p.48).

The women's fearless actions show that they cannot be excluded in South Africa's anti-apartheid narratives as participants. , Ngcobo's story of resistance is not about alienating one gender but inclusion of both in the liberation struggle. Siyalo says: "All men... and women, can see the injustice of it and are fighting in every possible way" (p.83), implying that both participated in the struggle. In spite of this inclusion of both women and men in Ngcobo's story of African resistance, what makes the story more refreshing is that there are more heroines than heroes. Whether in the city or in the rural areas, women are portrayed at the centre of the struggle. It has been argued that Ngcobo's work ranks amongst few literary texts that "have radically revised the historical agency of women by placing their protagonists at the centre of an indigenous resistance to the colonial and apartheid measures by which the land was appropriated and controlled" (Daymond, 2004:138).

Both rural and city women separately engaged in brave acts of political defiance against white colonial misrule. Instead of the women being deterred by the brutal victimization they faced, it was apartheid “[a]uthority itself [that] seemed nervous and uncertain in the face of this unlikely challenge” (p.33). They had not expected women to rise up, underestimating their power owing to patriarchal normativity’s social construction of women and womanhood. The picture of protesting city women in the streets of Durban, captured on the front page of a national newspaper, *Ilanga Lase Natal*, women “on the rampage, fighting, marching and making representations” further reconfigures and challenges the patriarchal stereotypes that have demeaned women and womanhood (p.33). The women “had assaulted a whole crowd of men drinking beer, causing chaos inside and outside the beer hall” (p.30). They targeted municipal beer halls and flushed out African male patrons. The descriptions of women “wielding heavy sticks and chasing after some men... the men running helter skelter in different directions” (p.30) shows women’s preparedness to assert their subjectivity against their own men who chose to side with ‘the enemy’ by drinking in white-controlled municipal beer halls against the women’s word. According to Daymond, in writing ATDD, “Ngcobo works as a historian” as her novel transmits history by fictionalising the political protests of African women in Natal (1998:251). History has shown that the city women’s protests were not entirely limited to making African men stop drinking from municipal beer halls. Ngcobo’s novel draws from history, including the 1959 uprisings around Natal:

Contemporary historians debate the significance that can be given to women’s leadership of the 1959 demonstrations [in Durban], the causes of their action, and their place in organized political movements such as the ANC (Walker; Lodge; and Edwards). All, however, support the view implicit in *And They didn’t Die* that the events of June 1959 were not just about beer: they were part of a popular uprising against a whole complex of oppressive measures, and these events formed a turning point for African women in politics in Natal (Daymond, 1998:265).

The picture of protesting Durban women on the front page of the colonial newspaper played a significant role of making women’s political agency more visible by moving them to the front of

the struggle and national debate. It made them the face of African people's revolt against colonial injustice. Theirs was not a supporting role but a leading role. Their valour and defiance are underscored even more by their daring to challenge policemen on horseback, leading to the death of nine policemen but none on the side of women. Because of the brave acts of revolt from women and their singularity of voice against apartheid oppressions, "[t]he whole country rocked with shock. They could no longer ignore the women or their demands" (p.34). Now everybody was forced to notice and to take African women seriously. This helps reverse masculinist notions in the African story of the liberation struggle. In this (re)presentation of women's political participation in the struggle for independence in South Africa, women are essentially centrally positioned in the narrative of the South African nationalist heroic.

The actions of the city women provide interesting room to analyse the disruption of patriarchal normativity. "According to traditional gender roles of a patriarchal society, men are strong and powerful.... Women, on the other hand... are weak... and submissive. They are portrayed as inferior to men" (Ronquist, 2015:1). However, these assumptions about women and men are completely challenged by Ngcobo's representations in the novel where the women were "fearless of opposition from any quarter. They were prepared to take on anyone in their fight for better living standards" (p.33). The women "heckled and silenced any doubts on the trains and on the buses... [and] commanded a following without stopping to enlist anyone" (p.33). In contrast,

[i]ndividual men sank into silence and where there were two or more of them they preferred to engage in quiet mumbling conversation - quiet because there was no way they could drown the ping-pong exchanges that raged across the train compartment. Quiet also because it was best not to seem to oppose the women, lest one became the target of abuse if not physical violence (p.33).

While the men suffered muted voices, the city women were "large and loud, [and] talked, fearless of opposition" (p.33). The women eclipsed the men in both body size and loudness of voice. This reversal where women are constructed with voice while men are voiceless repositions women in the gender and colonial debate. It helps men realise the full extent of the

oppressiveness of being silenced, desiring to talk but not allowed to, an evil that they have imposed on women for very long. In this way, Ngcobo does not just dismantle patriarchy but also respects and defends women's rights. However, the actions of the women do not undermine African feminist goals for African women and men to work together. Actually, "there were many men among the women as well" (p.33). Some men like Siyalo justified the women's actions as he pointed out: "[t]hese women are right; and our women in the country are right to fight back. Something has to be done to stop the crippling of our lives" (p.32). This reveals some men's realisation that women did not consider them as enemies but as siding with the oppressive system: "[i]f the men continued to drink at the municipal beer halls, that meant they were against the women, it meant that they stood with the enemy, and it was therefore right that they should be the target of opposition" (p.33).

The rural women showed great capacity to organise themselves against apartheid. It took great commitment and sacrifice from Dr Nosizwe, "their political leader, the guiding spirit in the whole district of Ixopo, not just Sigageni" (p40) to organise and mobilize the people. She "took turns visiting various women's groups from week to week" (p.40). The women held political meetings under the pretext of conducting church meetings. During their Thursday church meetings, the women educated each other, planned and organised their anti-apartheid resistance, drawing inspiration from biblical women characters like Ruth. Religion was the springboard for African women's mobilisation and political education in the novel. Through prayer meetings, they forged spiritual solidarity and invoked divine intervention and justice. Thus, "prayer had assumed a much wider meaning over and above the strictly religious intention. They still sang and prayed and cried, but they also talked and discussed the causes behind their beset lives" (p.41). The rural women's resilience was seen in that some "walked for miles from other reserves to hear Nosizwe" their political leader (p.41). The critical role of educated women (such as Nosizwe and Tokozile, a journalist by profession) in creating platforms for political mobilisation cannot be understated. Their meetings raised their consciousness as the women of Sigageni "took away a new insight" (p.50) and now "looked at one another like strangers" (p.48). They began to have deeper understanding of issues they "knew vaguely about" before (p.48). It is apparent that educated women have a critical role to play in the struggle against oppression

particularly as “the women who contend with oppression do not [always] share a common dialect” (Daymond, 2004:148). That is why feminists have argued that feminism should encompass “both a political activism and an academic or theoretical stance” (Aina, 1998:65). It is possible for some women to engage in activism and, as Nosizwe highlights in the novel, to “suffer and fight back without the full understanding of what is going on, why it is going on, and where it is taking us to” (p.42). Thus, African feminists “cannot afford to ignore the importance of intellectual work, especially in the 21<sup>st</sup> century when knowledge and information define power more than ever before” (Mama, 2001:63). These views confirm the crucial role of feminist intellectuals in helping fellow women achieve full conceptualisation of the diverse ways of oppression. In Sigageni, the women’s resistance strategies were not limited but varied, dynamic and complex, ranging from emptying dipping tanks, refusal to take passes and resisting all aspects of apartheid domination including “the question of dividing the land into fenced-in allotments” (p.168). Some of the people had even “cut down the newly erected fences along the river’s edge... [and] resisted every change that has so far been suggested” by the apartheid administration (p.168). They strategized within the racial and patriarchal constraints, affirming Kandiyoti’s argument that, in the face of oppression, women have engaged in different strategies to maximise security and optimise life options with varying potential for active or passive resistance (1998).

An apt example of the rural women’s organised resistance is depicted through their collective struggle against the passbook system and its overarching hold on their mobility and agency. The passes had created chasm between wives and husbands and restricted women’s movement and so they resisted taking them: “[w]omen in many parts of the country are rising up against the issue of the passes” (p.48). In Sigageni, early in the “morning of the 15<sup>th</sup> of April, the appointed Thursday” when they were supposed to receive their passes, the women revealed a strong sense of community in their collective refusal to get the passes. Though the apartheid officials arrived very early in the morning and pitched their tents, the women did not come out of their homes to receive the passes.

As the sun rose higher, the officials could be seen walking up and down between the tents, or standing in groups of twos and threes, talking and generally surveying the

area. The footpaths looked quite deserted - there were no people going up and down to Umzimkulu or Ixopo or to the fields. There was a silence that felt like a presence. The hours crawled by and people continued to observe the scene from the shelter of their pondokies (p.78).

The women's political resistance against the passes threw apartheid authority into confusion. Armed policemen were called in and drove to the African homes trying to drive them out but they found all the homes deserted. It remains unclear how they had organised themselves to act in unison. The homes were deserted as the women had gathered at the dipping tank from which they watched the whole drama and police puzzlement. When the police finally came to the dipping tank, the women's actions fully unmasked their courage to rebel against armed policemen:

As the police waited for the last of their number, the women drew closer and formed a ring around Jezile. A group of about twenty women quietly dropped their pass books at her feet and sat around shielding her... [and Jezile] stealthily set the pile of books alight (p79).

Their unity of purpose was remarkable. The burning passbooks were met by "a sudden cry of triumph from the women who were mingling and dancing, some ululating and others shouting slogans. The police were thrown into total confusion" (p.79). This confirms African feminist arguments that have located women during apartheid South Africa as "the driving force in political demonstrations, particularly to oppose pass laws and in strikes for better wages" (O'Brien, 1994:149). Their powerful opposition to the passbook portrays women "as [important] participants in the historic struggle for national liberation" (Gilfillan, 1992:84). Thus, through Ngcobo's novel, patriarchal construction of womanhood as passive and weak is powerfully challenged, proved wrong and cast as a misrepresentation of reality. The fact that the women hooted in joy as they celebrated their opposition before armed policemen reveals a group of fearless women. Before the police could say anything to the women who continued to celebrate their victory, "the women swooped and picked up their children and placed them on their backs

and carried their water jars back along their narrow paths against the setting sun” (p.79). For the apartheid officials, this was a day wasted where their show of power did not have the desired effect of frightening these rural women. What the women’s collective defiance demonstrates is that there is power in numbers and in unity. For women like Jezile who were self-critical for having taken up passbooks earlier in their lives (when she wanted to visit her husband in Durban), this act of burning their passes provided room “to be reconciled with the other women” (p.78). Jezile’s capacity for self-criticism for her early act of betrayal of the women’s cause when she took the pass (due to patriarchal pressure on her to have a baby) makes the novel appeal to an earnest search for true solidarity where those who have inflicted injury on women’s causes show remorse for their actions. Her sense of shame was sparked by Nosizwe’s explanation of what was at stake during their church meeting, which inspired her realisation that “if people were dying for their principled stand against apartheid, perhaps her baby should have waited, perhaps her need was not of paramount importance” (p.49). This encouraged her to realise the need to set aside one’s individual interests if they conflict with group interests. Unity is, therefore, one of the greatest needs that women require as it fuels their sense of resistance.

In the women’s anti-apartheid struggles, music and prayer occupied important roles. The women’s spirit of resistance was infused within various songs that fortified their resolve to stand up to apartheid cruelty. Songs can be viewed as a stylistic element deployed by Ngcobo to underpin how women raised each other’s consciousness about the cruelty of apartheid and affirmed their own strength to withstand different forms of oppression. For instance, when Chief Counsellor Duma, a sell-out imposed on the people by the apartheid authorities, came to address the women at church seeking to find what their thoughts were so that he could provide information to his apartheid handlers, the women read through his façade of pretence to be on their side. In the angry outbursts that followed, Nosizwe quietly started a hymn “Sikuyo Indlela Yelizwe Lobomi - we’re on the road of life” (p.169). As the women sang, “The words stuck home and the tune was catchy and soothing” (p.169). Their ability to compose songs that strengthened them to be calm in the face of excessive brutality reveals the strength of songs. The lyrical content of one particular song that the women broke into is equally interesting. After Nosizwe had addressed the women and showed them the dangers that littered their path of

resistance - possibilities of assault, imprisonment and land dispossession - “she heard a strong voice singing ‘Malibongwe Igama Lama khosikazi’ (Let the name of Women be praised). The women picked it up with gusto and the overwhelming feeling of helplessness left them and they sang on and on until they felt strong and equal to any task” (p.49). Before the song, the “air was sombre... [and] grew still but distended” (p.46). However, the song extolled women’s courage and their participation as the chief architects of the struggle for liberation. This morale-raising song, especially dedicated to women’s courage, encouraged them to stand up to apartheid aggression. The fact that women easily bonded in solidarity and felt strengthened by their politically-charged songs underscores the role of songs during the liberation struggle as “a force for mobilizing a collective response to occupation and domination” (Harlow, 1987:34). The song fortified their determination to go through the ordeal for the sake of their national liberation. They were ready to choose “imprisonment and banishment and even death” (p.48). The power of music in strengthening resolve to fight can also be seen while the rural women of Sigageni were being whisked away to their Pietermaritzburg prison in police vans. Instead of being affected by the plight that awaited them, they “sang their church songs and their political songs, one after another” (p.94). Ngcobo perhaps exaggerates the power of music a bit to emphasise its impact: even “the vans rocked from side to side with the women’s song” (p.94). Thus, the songs of defiance inspired fearlessness and asserted women’s determination to face whatever challenges awaited them in their fight for their rights.

#### **4.1.2.1 Women and political leadership**

Many women characters are depicted inhabiting political leadership positions that enabled them to lead their communities’ political liberation. Within patriarchal normativity, leadership has been largely a preserve of men (Johnson, 2014). By writing about women’s political activism, Ngcobo subverts narratives about the nationalist struggle against colonialism where the liberation struggle “was primarily seen as a struggle between men” while women’s roles overshadowed (Parpart, 2007:108). Ngcobo counters such narratives by showing women’s assumption of leading roles in the nationalist struggle against apartheid. For instance, Nosizwe was the

political leader... in the whole district of Ixopo, not just at Sigageni. They hero-

worshipped her.... She understood not only the harsh extremes of their lives, but also the merciless system of white oppression that left them cruelly exploited (p.40).

Despite the little space allowed her by different systems of oppression, Nosizwe exhibited exceptional leadership qualities. She never tired of “visiting various women’s groups from week to week” (p.40). Her sacrifices to visit women in different parts of Ixopo district in turns, planning with them and keeping them posted on developments elsewhere kept the fire of resistance alight. Her leadership style was not dictatorial or domineering as different women also had room to express their experiences. For instance, during one meeting, she announced: “When I finish here, two women will give brief reports of what women are doing in different parts of the country” (p.46). Even less educated women like MaBiyela, despite lacking in “eloquence in her words” (p.49) had room to share with the rest of women. This inclusivity of different voices is in stark contrast to the ethos of patriarchal normativity that has sought to silence some people’s views. Nosizwe’s leadership and coordination ensured that even if the women of Sigageni were far removed from women elsewhere, they still kept “a tryst with a large number of other women from the length and breadth of the country” (p.40). Portrayal of women’s capabilities in leadership positions is a way of challenging gendered views which have denied women “a vital place in the scheme of things” (Sofola, 1998:53). African feminists, like feminists elsewhere, have rejected patriarchal normativity’s “tendency to categorize human qualities or determine and valorize capabilities according to sex and gender” (Chukukere, 1998:139). They have contested strategies rooted in patriarchy that undermine women’s organisational capacities, highlighting how during the apartheid/colonial struggle, the women “led the way from the grassroots level and up; they strategized, organised, networked, went on strike and marched in protest whenever it was necessary” (Wanyeki, 2017:3). Therefore, Ngcobo’s depiction of African women’s remarkable leadership roles during the anti-apartheid struggle is a feminist statement that significantly alters traditional gender assumptions about women and men. In this way, Ngcobo’s work can be viewed as writing back in order to restructure gendered conversations about political representations of women. Ngcobo’s argument in *And They Didn’t Die* is that as long as the narrative of the African national struggle for independence excludes the heroic contributions of

women as leaders, while reflecting only the contributions of men, then it ceases to be national in its character.

Nosizwe's authority and leadership extended beyond the circle of women. African men also accepted her leadership. She led a political resistance that did not exclude the interests of the men, reflecting the goals of African feminism (Aina, 1998). Men recognized Nosizwe's authority and leadership in the politics of their land as they looked up to her for assistance, direction and guidance. For example, when Siyalo was arrested for stealing milk, he enlisted her assistance in organizing a legal defense for him. He said to his mother-in-law from behind bars, "Remember to tell Nosizwe" (p.151). Nosizwe represented Siyalo's best and last line of hope. Such representation of women in literary works is critical not only because it corrects the history of patriarchal and colonial misrepresentations. But also because it actually identifies women with positive identities and leadership roles they have assumed in real life. Representations of women occupying leadership positions invites readers, as Wilson-Tagoe has said, "to imagine a possible re-constitution of leadership, authority and the social order" (2002:163). This is important to reverse the negation of women produced by patriarchal normativity.

Nosizwe was not the sole leader in the novel. Young school girls are also represented occupying influential posts from which they provided political leadership. For instance, Nondo, Jezile's "vivacious... and very outspoken" second daughter whose political activism began while a student at Zotheni secondary school, was a student political leader at her school (p.231). She helped organise and direct a successful students' campaign against apartheid injustice and was conspicuous by "her remarkable ability to mobilize the other students to the attack. When the police began to open fire she fought on fearlessly as though she had nothing to lose" (p.234). This paints a picture of courage and leadership abilities in the young girl who led from the front. Her leadership of student activism provides adequate credit to the roles women of all ages played in the struggle for majority rule in South Africa. The assumption of leadership roles by young girls ensured that women's resistance did not end with the older generation but the spirit of resistance was handed down to the next generation. Ngcobo's account of high school students resisting apartheid oppression who "were shot, gassed, beaten up, bitten by police dogs... but

fought back” (Molteno, 1979:54) reminisces the historical Soweto uprising of June 16 1976 (Molteno, 1979; Kruger, 2017). This makes the issues that Ngcobo presents in her novel familiar, having been recorded in South African history. “The relationship of Ngcobo’s novel to the written record might suggest that it is to be read, as J.M Coetzee has put it, as a ‘supplement’ to the history which gives a ‘dense realisation of the texture of life” (Daymond, 2004:142, citing Coetzee, 1988). In the novel, Ndonga’s occupancy of a key leadership position in the students’ activist movement equally subverts patriarchal normativity and its concepts of women as passive followers (Tollefson and Christian, 2017). The “manhunt” for the ringleaders of the students’ political movement is ironic. It should be viewed as a ‘womanhunt’ because Ndonga was at the top of the wanted list, a clear indication of how she had become synonymous with the students’ struggle. She is constructed with near supernatural powers, fearlessly travelling at night and quite elusive as the armed government soldiers found it difficult to establish her movements, let alone capture her. All of this further underlines the view that Ngcobo’s representations of women’s occupancy of political leadership positions disrupt and contest patriarchal assumptions or knowledge about leadership and authority which have been largely viewed as the purview of men by patriarchal normativity (Johnson, 2014). In this way, Ngcobo’s novel reconstructs the nationalist figuration of women in the larger South African political struggle as she casts her women characters not only as key participants in national politics but also as its political leaders and thought leaders.

Over two decades ago, commentators in Western societies with a long history of feminist activism were pointing out patriarchy’s attempts at excluding women from the assumption of leadership roles: “Female leadership in secular life is still relatively rare and contentious, despite the advances of feminism” (Puttick, 1997:175). The exclusion of women from leadership positions has been a continuing trend: “Female leadership has been [and still is] a contested issue, no matter where on the globe we are located” (Tollefsen and Christian, 2017: 8). However, in ATDD, as the above analysis has demonstrated, it was women whose contribution as leaders ramped up much pressure against the apartheid administration. Therefore, representations of women’s assumption of leadership roles in this novel respond to the misrepresentations that women have often suffered in the African liberation war narratives where “[t]he war was largely

framed as an opportunity for ‘real men’ to end white/ male domination” (2007:108). In this way, Ngcobo’s novel seriously counters the patriarchal exclusion of women from the national narrative of the liberation struggle of African countries. This contrasts it sharply with novels on the African war of liberation which have been conspicuous by the absence of women soldiers (or gave only insignificant peripheral roles for them) as demonstrated by Isheunesu Valentine Mazorodze’s *Silent Journey from the East* (1989). Thus, Ngcobo’s inclusion of women in the nationalist struggle significantly alters gendered views about women and demonstrates the impact of their agency. The novel evokes ideas of women penetrating the restrictions imposed on them by patriarchal culture regarding leadership positions. Social transformation can only become a reality when women are depicted as key participants in political matters who wield powers to change the face of things.

#### **4.1.3 Portrayal of the triumph of African women’s unity and solidarity in *And They Didn’t Die***

Solidarity between women is a critical issue within feminism particularly as diverse forms of oppression have attempted to separate women from each other: “For a long time, women have been separated from each other, mothers from daughters, white from black, rich from poor, old from young” (Coltri, 2017:11). Thus, women’s solidarity is critical because it “strengthens [their] resistance struggle” (hooks, 1984:44). hooks has further shown how “[w]omen are enriched when we bond with one another” (1984:45). This is why women’s solidarity has been viewed as crucial in empowering and fortifying resistance against systems of oppression (hooks, 1984; Muwati and Mguni, 2012).

In ATDD, Ngcobo counters the divisions that have sought to separate women from each other in various ways. The power of her novel is generated by African women’s bonds of unity against oppression. At the beginning of the narrative, the women’s solidarity was demonstrated in that they spilled the contents of the dipping tank as a group and celebrated their victory as a collective. The women’s sense of community after emptying the dipping tank was clear as the authorities were not able to find the culprit(s). “It was to the credit of the community that not

once had anybody revealed the identity of the ‘culprits’, so high was the spirit of solidarity” (p.62).

The Thursday prayer meetings helped build solidarity and unity of purpose among the women. The women’s sense of community is apparent in the uniforms they wore: “The women came from all over, in ones and twos and threes. They wore their unmistakable uniform of red blouses, black skirts and white hats” (p.40). The uniforms were a symbol of their collective struggle. During these prayer meetings, women’s unity was further demonstrated in that, as they knelt down in prayer, “as if by some unseen signal, all at once, the women began to pray” (p.49). As they prayed, they “took courage in knowing that they shared these moments with other women at the same time - helping to concentrate the mind of God on their needs and their struggles” (p.41). “Their prayer rose in a crescendo, high above, into screams or incoherent cries, a confrontation between God and women” (p.49). Thus, solidarity emboldened women in their resistance.

Women’s remarkable spirit of solidarity was also evident within prison walls. Their sense of oneness was despite the awful inhumane treatment the women prisoners received: there were pictures of women “covered in blood, being driven in like cattle” (p.103) and “naked parades” of women prisoners (p.101). The harsh prison conditions included women being publicly shamed by being asked to bath in the full glare of their captors and had “to crush great big quarry rocks with steel hammers, and crush them fine” (p.98). This reveals the madness, brutality and callousness of the whole apartheid system. Without solidarity, the women would not have survived. For instance, Nosizwe had been strong in many respects outside the prison walls, being the brains behind women’s political resistance. Yet, she now found the sheer size of the prison task to pound rocks difficult for her. Her hands “were blistered in the first hour” because, as a medical doctor, she was unaccustomed to this hard work (p.98-99). She was targeted by prison officials. What helped her survive her prison ordeal was the solidarity shown by fellow women who were “accustomed to hard work in the fields” (p.98). Out on the hills where they were pounding and crushing rocks, the women demonstrated their unity when those

women around Nosizwe drew closer, so close that from a distance the watchful

guard could not count her flagging strokes. In quick, deft movements Jezile dragged a mound of broken pieces in front of Nosizwe, a pile larger than any in front of the others. That evening, the women went back to prison happy that they had shielded her from the prison guard (p.99).

This shows how much women's solidarity was a source of strength that shielded many of them such as Nosizwe from feeling the brutality of apartheid oppression so that they could not spiral into depression. The women's store of courage was amazing. Despite the physical ordeal that Nosizwe suffered which left her "thin and pale... leaving her eyes large in their sockets... her eyes still sparkled with a deep fire that mirrored the power within" (p.102). It was not the physical condition that mattered but the spirit within.

Within the prison, Nosizwe encouraged solidarity and oneness between the city women prisoners and their rural counterparts who had, at first, looked at each other with suspicion and contempt. Rural women treated city women as "their traditional rivals... who took their men when they went to work in the cities, or so they thought" (p.102). The city women, in Jezile's view, "thought they were superior" and such views meant "the tension between the two groups of women grew" (p.102). Clearly, the apartheid government had "succeeded... in dividing rural and city people... [who had] never been willing to understand each other. Rural people, with their traditional integrity, their sure sense of who they are, have always looked down on the city people" (Daymond, 1992:89). Instead of condemning the government that had distanced them from each other, they were busy erecting walls of division. It took the arrival of "politicised new arrivals" (p.104), women from the city who "had known all along [from newspapers] about the [heroic] stand that the women of Sabelweni had taken" (p.102) to dissolve the tensions that had divided the city and rural women in prison. Soon, within the walls of prison, solidarity triumphed and "the old divisions collapsed and the women of Sabalweni accepted that they were among friends... [and] the 'them-and-us' attitude died a natural death" (p.104). Feminists have urged women to triumph over divisions sown by systems of privilege as this is critical in the fight against all forms of social injustice (hooks, 1984; Tollefson and Christian, 2017). It was to their credit that both rural and urban women realised that women everywhere faced similar oppression

and learnt to bond together. Solidarity was able to paper over the cracks, fissures and the suspicions that had existed for long. “That Sunday they all sang together through those thick walls... they sang more political songs than hymns” (p.104). The walls could not separate them, neither could they be deterred by the harsh crippling conditions of the prison. Solidarity was a source of their power. Feminists have argued that “singing in prison... [is] a sign of protest” (Nnaemeka, 1998:20; citing Pamela Ryan’s analysis of Caesarina Kona Makhoere’s *No Child’s Play*). Thus, singing as a group signalled the collective power of their protest. Hard labour in prison was meant to break them, to make them tired and exhausted to go on another uprising but the prison conditions did not break their spirit. Instead of breaking them, the women “pounded the [prison] walls and shouted slogans” (p.103) and sang together in spite of being in separate cells and the narrator says: “These were political rallies that defied closed doors and high walls” (p.104). In this way, they strengthened each other, embedding the feminist argument that women “must learn to live and work in solidarity” (hooks, 1984:43) to defeat systems of oppression. The collapse of the old barriers and divisions between the city and rural women carries Ngcobo’s own hopes for intra-gender unity between women.

#### **4.1.4 The complementarity of women and men in *And They Didn’t Die***

The inter-gender unity between African women and men in anti-apartheid resistance is another interesting subject that Ngcobo creatively dealt with in ATDD. Kadhim Rawaa has pointed out that, generally, “[w]omen’s participation with men in life has not been properly acknowledged” (2018:229). African feminists, including Nnaemeka and Sofola have argued for women and men to work closely together in tackling the challenges that assail them: “African feminism resists the exclusion of men from women’s issues” (Nnaemeka, 1998:8). This has been echoed by Sofola:

The world view of the African is rooted in a philosophy of holistic harmony and communalism rather than in the individualistic isolationism characteristic of European thought. The principle of relatedness is the *sine qua non* of African social reality (1998:54).

In other words, African feminism “invites men as partners in problem solving and social change” (Nnaemeka, 1998:8).

Ngcobo embeds African feminist views about the complementarity of African women and men as her novel portrays the close alliance between African women and men that saw them speak with one voice against racial injustice. As an example, when African “women in Durban were on the rampage, fighting, marching and making representations” against apartheid injustices, Jezile and Fakazi who attended one of the demonstrations organised by the African women noticed that “[t]here were many men among the women as well” (p.33). Similarly, when the rural women of Sigageni were arrested and brought to court, “there were men and women who seemed to come from nowhere, who buzzed round, coats flapping, exuding confidence, trying to whip up some cheerful air among the captive women” (p.95). These examples show that the African struggle against apartheid oppression was leveraged against the collective efforts of women and men who realised that they suffered the same oppression. In his comments about the political actions of African women, Siyalo reveals the interconnectedness of African women’s interests and those of the men: “[t]hese women are right; and our women in the country are right to fight back” (p.32). His support for women’s actions confirm feminist arguments: “[i]t is misleading... to see women’s interests as entirely separate from those of other household members” (Razawi and Miller, 1995:16). Thus, complementarity and solidarity between African women and men are critical to secure their survival.

Inter-gender solidarity is also revealed when the Sigageni community was threatened by land dispossession and displacement. In the absence of the African men, the women stood up to apartheid threats on their own. However, as the threats grew in intensity by the day,

Men who were able to leave the cities at short notice were called back to augment the numbers in the defence of their land and their rights. They came back in ever-growing numbers to stand side by side with the rest of the community [women] who had for so long maintained a stand against the assaults on their families (p.170).

Clearly, the struggle against land dispossession was not about women *or* men but about women *and* men identifying with each other and fighting together. Their need for each other in transforming oppressive systems is underlined by the simile that Ngcobo deploys: “each hand is useless without the other” (p.177). Such African feminist views challenge some gender discourses from the West that have portrayed women and men along a cline of binaries as if they were sworn enemies without potential for working together amicably (Muchemwa, 2002). Ngcobo’s textual portrayal of African women-men relations rejects the European thought where women and men have often been situated as if they were inherently opposed to each other. This highlights that “the path to full feminism in the Third World might not be the same as in the West because of differences in emphasis and priorities” (Aina, 1998:84). Ngcobo’s portrayal of women and men working together affirms hooks’ argument that the life experiences of

many poor and working class women... [have] shown them that they have more in common with men of their race and/or class group.... They know the sufferings and hardships women face in their communities; they also know the sufferings and hardships men face and they have compassion for them. They have had the experience of struggling with them for a better life” (1984:68,9).

It shows that the two groups need each other to face the challenges of life.

The crucial role of African women and men’s solidarity is further depicted by their unity against their chief, Siyapi who, with government support was “threatening to refuse them the right to plough their arable allotments the following spring” (p.170). Apartheid had distanced the chiefs from their people, turning them into apartheid instruments in the dispossession of the people: “Chiefs were given powers to banish people and to do what they pleased with the immovable property of those they banished” (p. 219). However, the people - women and men - demonstrated their collective determination to deny the system to usurp their land rights. They “were not going to let it happen that easily” (p.170). Men left the cities “to augment the numbers in the defence of their land and their rights” (p.170). Their unity with the women ensured ploughing could not be

stopped. “Throughout the ploughing season the spans were accompanied by a contingent of armed men. Siyapi proved powerless to carry out his threat and stop the community from tilling their lands” (p.170). Representations of women and men fighting alongside each other portrays the power that solidarity across gender holds in the struggle against all forms of domination. Commenting about the importance of unity and cooperation between men and women in fighting against colonialism, African feminists like Aidoo have pointed out:

When people ask me rather bluntly every now and then whether I am a feminist, I only answer yes but I go on to insist that every woman and every man should be a feminist, especially if they believe that Africans should take charge of African land, African wealth, African lives and the burden of African development (1998: 47).

Thus, the novel underscores the goals of African feminism. The strength of the African women and men’s common will made their revolution family-centred. Together, they showed resilience against apartheid attempts to dispossess them. Therefore, although Ngcobo’s novel generally celebrates the legacy of African women’s insurgency against apartheid aggression, it also represents the potential for women and men working together against oppression. It demonstrates the “need for a place where [African] men and women can come together in solidarity” (Yiu, 2008:29).

The climax of the African people’s collective defiance and solidarity against their apartheid system was when they burnt their apartheid-imposed chief, his counsellor, their whole families and animals. The chief was supposed to be a symbol of their traditions but once he took sides with the colonial establishment and became its agent, they had no choice but to eliminate him. The collective anger of the people was unmistakable on the day they killed him:

[a]s they surged up the incline, Siyapi’s entire family and gaggle of servants came out to see advancing up the slope a heaving, rising human tide.... But when he heard their fury that threatened to engulf him and all that he owned, he turned tail. With his braces hanging loosely and flapping at his sides and his snow-white vest suddenly wet with sweat, he raced back to the great house, gesturing frantically with his arms for his children and grandchildren to go into the big house, his fortress (p.173).

Use of words such as ‘heaving’, ‘fury’ and ‘human tide’ underscores the power of the people’s collective action. The picture of the once powerful chief running in fear demonstrates how no power can withstand the might of collective action. Chief Siyapi’s horrendous death through burning in fire evokes ideas of divine punishment and justice where God annihilates sinners in the fire of hell. Even the flames that engulfed the ‘fortress’ are described as “angry flames” and “leaping flames” and this resonates with the rage of the community (p.173). Killing the village leader and his whole family, “the chickens that were drifting to their coop... the pigs in their sty and the calves that were tethered on the green grass behind the great house” is poignantly significant as it marked African women and men’s total annihilation of and collective triumph over an instrument of their oppression. It was a sign of their desire to reclaim control over their own lives and not be other-defined or be dominated. By demonstrating that there is potential for women and men working together to rid society of evil, Ngcobo’s novel participates in the larger African feminist struggle where both women and men have a role to play in dismantling oppressive systems. Therefore, like many contemporary African feminist writers, “Ngcobo does not simply echo the socio-political criticisms that Western feminists make” (Daymond, 1998:252). Rather, she also interrogates possibilities of women and men working together against their challenges.

The complementarity of African women and men was illustrated even more after the death of Siyapi, when the apartheid “authorities were on the war-path” and patrolled the villages (p.175). Some men, led by Ntonga, fled into the mountains and from these mountain bases, a committee known as ‘Ntonga’s Mountain Committee’ organised their village resistance. The women supported the men in the mountains as they “took food, without fail, to them. They showed great ingenuity and courage in the face of the enemy who were on surveillance day and night” (p.175). African women’s commitment to the survival of the men up the mountains was quite remarkable, affirming hooks’ assertion that, in spite of “the prevalence of sexism in black communities, the role black women play in social institutions... [and in the political struggle] is recognized by everyone as significant and valuable” (1984:69). It is unfortunate, as hooks puts it, that “Bourgeois white women cannot conceptualize the bonds that develop between women and men in liberation struggle and have not had as many positive experiences working with men

politically” (1984:69). The persistent depiction of African women and men working together indicates great potential to transform oppressive systems when both women and men are involved.

Men have a lot to gain from unity with women. In the novel, when the members of Ntonga’s Mountain Committee were attacked resulting in eleven deaths, the response of the women was quite alarming. They defied gender expectations by shedding no tears. They were not weak and did not betray any emotions, contrary to gender misrepresentations which expect women to be emotionally expressive (Chaplin, 2015).

The men who brought the news looked at the women in astonishment.... In the stunned silence that followed some women suggested that a collection be made so that they could buy wood for make-shift coffins. The men stood up perplexed, watching as the women take the initiative (p.177).

In order to bury the dead men, the women “loaded the poles on their heads and carried them up the hills where they hacked them into crude coffins” (p.178). All this resonates with the goals of African feminism which emphasises the potential of women and men co-existing in harmony and uniting against challenges that confront them as human beings. “The African perception of the gender question is thus more healthy, positive, and allows for a wholesome development of human society” (Sofola, 1998:53). The *UNESCO Advocacy Brief* has reflected on how men have much to gain from a gender equal society since many men have also suffered from socially constructed gender stereotypes especially during colonialism and apartheid (2004). In the literary text, men benefitted from women’s efforts because it was women whose ingenuity and creativeness provided food for the men and coffins for the dead men rotting in the mountains. Without the women, the men in the mountains (who needed food) could not have survived; the injured were tended to and the dead buried. This is why African feminism has located as crucial “improving relationships between women and men [and emphasised on] ways for men and women to work together to unlearn sexism” (hooks, 1984:76). Women and men working together confirm the African feminist worldview where “the African sees the human society as an organic, holistic reality whose existence and survival can be achieved only through a positive, harmonious social organisation in which all the members are relevant and effective” (Sofola,

1998:53). African women giving their men support reflects how, within the African community and African feminism, the family is an important unit. In other words, the African feminist is not merely concerned for herself and fellow women but the good of everyone. There is a lot of evidence in the novel that shows how much African women and men need each other to strengthen the struggles against challenges to the human race.

Given that the novel highlights African women's concerns for their men, it is very unfair and quite ironical that the same African men who benefitted from African women's contribution in the struggle against racial oppression have often gone on to oppress the women. This is an injustice that should be addressed. Nnaemeka has given an interesting assessment of the gender dynamics in Africa:

In assessing gender relations in Africa, it is equally important to emphasize the danger subtending the unexamined exaggeration of gender complementarity that masks real and insidious gender inequalities and conflicts... in intra-group relations (1998:20).

In other words, the primacy of addressing the racial subordination of the African people should never mask the urgency of tackling the impact of African and colonial patriarchy in oppressing African women. As African men, we need to address areas where we have also contributed to making life oppressive for the women and not just condemn racial patriarchy when our own familial structures are also oppressive.

#### **4.1.5 Changing women, the agency of voice and their sources of power**

In her novel, Ngcobo raises critical questions about the agency of women's voices in society. A major obstacle to women attaining freedom, that feminists have castigated, has been men denying women the agency and power to make own decisions (Obbo, 1986). Patriarchal normativity has imposed expectations for women to wait for men to provide a programme for action for them. Thus, women need to subvert patriarchal normativity's expectations for them to defer to men.

Ngcobo's pull towards valorizing ideas of African women and men's solidarity against the apartheid system, discussed above, did not obscure her from carrying out a critical analysis of the ways men have continued to undermine women and to challenge these. She represents women emerging from men's shadows and refusing to wait for men to make decisions for them. At the beginning of the novel, Ngcobo creates a picture of waiting that frames the opening chapter. The word 'waiting' is ubiquitous in the first chapter, with the verb 'wait' and its linguistic derivatives such as 'waiting', 'waited' or 'waits' used eleven times in the first chapter alone and a total of nineteen times in the first two chapters. With their men away for a whole year, the women's lives "constituted long periods of waiting, all that the women of Sigageni ever did was wait" (p.6). Like many other women, Jezile, the protagonist, also "went back to her routine and waited" when Siyalo, her husband, returned to Durban (p.6). Use of the word 'routine' demonstrates that waiting was a major characteristic of her life at this stage.

As a reader, my curiosity was roused by the pervasiveness of ideas of waiting and questions that demanded answering early in my reading were: 'what or who are the women waiting for? Do they have the patience to wait or not? Whose orders will end their waiting? When will this waiting come to an end?' Clearly, women cannot wait forever or they will be displaced from history since lack of agency has the potential of making them less visible by excluding them from access to material.

The metaphor of 'waiting' is a predominant motif in many Southern African black women-authored novels. For example, Yvonne Vera's novel, *Butterfly Burning* (1998) begins with the words: "There is a pause. An expectation." What Vera's narrator calls a 'pause' or 'expectation' creates a gap that amounts to some form of 'waiting'. Again, a critical question that readers can ask themselves is why there has to be a pause. Another of Vera's novels, *Under the Tongue* (1996), also ends: "*They had waited*" (p.113). This makes the idea of waiting which frames ATDD require literary analysis.

Two different interpretations can be made regarding the use of the word ‘waiting. According to Ziwire, “[w]aiting... implies existence in limbo where everything is in abeyance” (2019:10). Such a definition is synonymous with inaction, passivity, lack of voice and agency. In ATDD, this definition is revealed in the way that women’s lack of initiative to influence things is initially played out in the subtext of the narrative with women of Sigageni falling into a pattern of waiting in the absence of the men. The women “made decisions but... waited for their husbands to give them the final go ahead” (p.81). It is as if women lacked freedom to stray from patriarchy’s socially-constituted frame that has historically situated men with control and dominance. That definition of waiting would represent women as passive.

However, there is another interpretation of the idea of ‘waiting’ that resonates with this study. As Ziwire shows, waiting “also suggests expectation and anxiety” (2019:10). This definition gives a new dimension to my conceptualisation of women’s waiting in ATDD as it accompanies expectancy. This kind of waiting that is characterised by expectation does not signal passivity. On the contrary, it suggests that in waiting, the women are biding their time with bated breath for something huge and dramatic to happen. Ngcobo’s narrative voice portrays African women “waiting for change in the fullness of time” (p.50). Thus, as readers, while the women wait in the narrative, we also wait in anticipation and expectation with them for whatever is about to happen. This meaning of waiting invokes in the reader feelings of impending change: “At some point in their long wait something had stirred, something deep down - ever so imperceptibly at first, but there had been no mistaking it” (p.50). Once the women’s wait was over and the women acted, no one could stop them. We begin to see changing representations of women who waited no longer but were proactive. Once the wait was over, the women of Sigageni no longer existed in limbo (waiting for the men to arrive) or waited for men to make important decisions for them but made these decisions themselves:

Something had *changed* - they could not say when it had *changed*. These women, who had, up until now, made decisions but *had waited* for their husbands to give them *the final go ahead*, were *not talking any more* about writing letters or the return of those far away men. They were *making decisions* and they were going to *implement* them (p.81; emphasis mine).

This represents women moving from an oppressive gendered past (where they deferred decision-making to men) to a liberated identity. Change can only happen if the women do not wait for the men in town or do not postpone their resistance for some other time. Ngcobo exposes how waiting without being proactive proved costly to many women in ATDD: it was because of her waiting and inaction for far too long without being proactive that Nomawa lost her husband to a rival woman in the city. When she finally decided to follow her husband, he was already married to another woman who beat her up. Zenzile makes another statistic. Zenzile's unremitting life of waiting for her never-returning husband who worked in Durban, "that good-for-nothing Mthebe" (p.5), ruined her life and marriage as she became a 'widow' soon after her marriage. As a result of waiting, Zenzile led a life of loneliness and disillusionment after her husband abandoned her and the children. Haggard and decimated by ill health, as she waited, Zenzile was now more of "a captive in her house, with children who whimpered and hung around her skirts" (p.5). This description of a passive waiting Zenzile casts a contrasting picture to her representation before her marriage from "that young, pretty, intelligent girl who had laughed joyously.... [Now,] Zenzile no longer laughed at anything - only a smile, when she could summon it, would play on her joyless face" (p. 35-6). She was no longer her old exuberant self. Thus, for Zenzile, waiting in passivity without taking action made her exist in limbo and robbed her of independence and voice.

Unlike Zenzile, Jezile is a powerful character who refused to allow others to make decisions for her. Torn between the dictates of the apartheid structures and the demands of patriarchal customary beliefs, Jezile's conscience awakened to the realities of her trapped existence and realisation that all along she had been waiting for others (her husband and mother-in-law, for instance) to make decisions on her behalf. However, something pricked her conscience as she realised that in life women did not get justice but had to fight for justice. She was determined to change all that: "suddenly, it rose like a burp - a thought-burp. She stopped pacing; something was resolved inside her, had fallen into place. She, Jezile, would wait no longer for other people to do things to make decisions about her life" (p.10). She had allowed social custom and the

colonial setup to restrict her agency but not anymore. Regaining agency and the power to make own decisions were her sources of power.

To alter her continued state of childlessness and the harassment she suffered at the hands of her mother-in-law, Jezile initiated her move to join her husband in Durban by inviting herself to town. She did not bother to seek her husband's approval first before making all the necessary arrangements to join him in Durban. She wrote the kind of "letter that her husband ought to have written a long time ago, asking her to go to Durban for a medical for her failure to conceive" (p.10). This was a bold move dramatizing her pursuit of a voiced existence and desire to take charge of her own life. This was a courageous path of self-determination that Jezile embarked on in protest against the cultural hemming and the colonial restrictions imposed on women's movements. Jezile resolved to take charge of her own life and not allow others "to make decisions about her life; she would make them herself. Why, it did not even need thinking about. It was the most natural thing in the world (p.10).

Writing herself a letter which *only her husband* could write, and signing it in his name reflect her agency and emerging identity as an independent woman (a strategy she adopted to survive the oppressiveness of apartheid). Her assumption of a role that was supposed to be her husband's illustrates rejection of subservience. "It felt wonderful taking charge of her own destiny, she had not done it before" (p.11). Afterwards, she even "wrote a *short* letter to Siyalo; almost *curt* in its *instruction*" (p.10; emphasis added). Instead of seeking permission from Siyalo or discussing with him as a 'good' wife would do in the dictum of patriarchal ideology, Jezile *instructed* and *informed* him, telling him that "[a]ll he was to do was to wait for her in exactly two weeks' time ... unless she wrote and informed him otherwise" (p.11). From birth, women are socialised to accept marital domesticity (hooks, 1984) but Jezile's actions here seek to reconstruct womanhood. We witness her inversion of patriarchal custom, with the husband the one expected to wait for the decisions the wife would make. The 'old' Jezile who used to act on orders was, figuratively, 'dead' and she acknowledged that henceforth, Siyalo "would have to live with a

changed wife” (p.11). Her success against an obdurate apartheid system was acknowledged by Siyalo who confessed that Jezile “had moved mountains for them to be together” (p.23). The fact that Jezile succeeded to conceive after her own initiative and effort testifies her triumph against the oppressive systems that had hindered her agency: patriarchy and apartheid. It is a statement that for women to succeed in life, they have to start taking the initiative.

Jezile’s action and agency are reminiscent of the general changing image of her fellow women in rural Sigageni who also enacted this new identity of women as decision makers: “These women, who had, up until now, made decisions but had waited for their husbands to give them the final go ahead, were not talking anymore about writing letters or the return of those far away men. They were making decisions and they were going to implement them” (p.81). Their actions point to the emergence of new identities of autonomous women with voice and agency, women who waited no more. They did not wait for men to transform on their own but were the agents of their changing conditions. “In giving voice to silenced women Ngcobo helps restore them to the public realm” (Daymond, 1998:251). Agency of voice allowed the women equal powers with men. Thus, in a powerful way, Ngcobo intervenes to redress oppressive gender issues as her narrative liberates her women characters from the clutches of patriarchal normativity.

To exercise her new found agency, Jezile did not bother ask for permission from MaBiyela before she visited the BAD offices for the pass to go to Durban. This marked her rebellion against patriarchal custom that stipulated that in the absence of Siyalo, MaBiyela, as mother-in-law, was the centre of patriarchal authority in the family. MaBiyela’s protests that Jezile ought to have asked for her permission in accordance with patriarchal custom incited a hot exchange as Jezile was in no mood to allow tradition to rule over her destiny and desire to become a mother. The two women were unsparing in their accusations and counter accusations. Although “MaBiyela had so much power... armed with authority and custom”, on this night Jezile “was in no mood to conform” with oppressive patriarchal customs that had ignored her interests (p.16). Her desire to break free evokes ideas of a daughter-in-law’s radical shift from many patriarchal discourses where daughters-in-law have been represented living in the shadows of their mothers-in-law and husbands. The emerging Jezile was determined to chart her own destiny as she

asserted: “Nobody would ever take away that power from her - not his mother, not her own mother, not anyone” (p.11). This was a statement of autonomy. As a representative of the new generation of women, Jezile chose to be different from the older generation of women, including her own mother and mother-in-law, who “had never had that power over their own lives - they had both sat and *waited* for their husbands; both had lost them in the *waiting*” (p.11). The desire to be different set Jezile apart from them as an epitome of emerging independent women who desire to discontinue the oppressive customs embedded in patriarchal normativity and gender practices.

Once Jezile joined Siyalo in Durban, there were many other changes that became evident in her behaviour. One noticeable change was in the portrayal of her sexual autonomy once she set foot outside the confines of Sigageni. Unlike Zenzile whose husband exercised control over Zenzile’s body and made her bear a child yearly even if she no longer wanted babies, Jezile demonstrated fascinating control over her body that first night in Durban. She firmly denied Siyalo his conjugal rights on that first night despite the riot in her husband’s blood that had been triggered by the sexual encounter between Dlamini and the nameless woman in their communal bedroom. In spite of Siyalo’s promises to be gentle, Jezile “ignored Siyalo’s fumbling hands” and his “instinctive thrusts” (p.26). She was in control and dictated when and where to have sex. (In *Revisiting Female Power and the Notion of African Feminism*) Naidu has argued that an important aspect in African women’s search for their liberation

is that of proprietorship and ownership of body and [their] sexuality. This core issue of the right to perform and enact one’s body within personally chosen sexual scripts is fundamental to owning that citizenship passport (2013:148).

In feminist debates, questions on who controls the woman’s body have been cited as very crucial and feminists have argued that it is important for women to refuse men control over their bodies (hooks, 1984; Cixous, 2009). According to hooks, “A central issue for feminist activists has been the struggle to obtain for women the right to control their bodies” (1984:52).

Patriarchal normativity has represented women as having inhibiting sexual expressivity (Cixous, 2009). Ngcobo debunks such views in her portrayal of African women such as Jezile whose actions challenge Freud's outdated view of women as having an inhibited libido (Cixous, 2011). One of the women that Jezile came across on her first night in Durban in the African men's communal bedroom was the unnamed woman who demonstrated sexual expressivity that left Jezile shocked. In the middle of the night, the woman tore the peace of the communal bedroom full of men by expressing her sexual pleasure: she "screamed, oblivious to where she was... [giving] cries of ecstasy, an ecstasy that would not wait" (p.25,6). Her actions dismiss and challenge the myths of the Freudian argument that has suggested that "there is only one libido, and its essence is male" (Cixous, 2011:286). Dlamini, the woman's partner, attempted to muffle and strap the woman's cries. However, the woman rejected silencing and emerged victorious as she still persisted in voicing the sexual ecstasy that patriarchal normativity has sought to rob women of (which Cixous has called '*jouissance*'). This *jouissance* is seen when she gave "that final cry again, from throes of delight, 'Fuck me, fuck me, Dlamini!' The scream filled the room long after she was silent" (p.26). According to hooks, for women, among many other things, "Sexual freedom can exist only when individuals are no longer oppressed by... guilt, shame, dominance, conquest" (1984:149). Thus, the fact that the echoes of the woman's voice on a socially-tabooed subject (within patriarchal discourse) lived long after she grew silent depicts her victory against efforts to muzzle women's voices in matters of sexuality. The woman's freedom of sexual expressivity disregarded the patriarchal code on what was (dis)allowed. She did not feel embarrassed but expressed herself without feeling inhibited. Jezile, still entrapped by the mores of rural Sigageni and their censure on the subject, was herself shocked by the woman's lack of libidinal economy: "She had never known that some people were transported that far – far beyond self-control or awareness. Did it mean that their pleasure was greater, far in excess of what she, Jezile, had ever experienced" (p.26).

Discussing sex and sexual pleasure in this narrative illustrates African women writers' success in challenging African patriarchal normativity that has tabooed the subject (Tamale, 2011). Exploring issues of sexual encounter is victory for Ngcobo who, as a woman writer, unapologetically addresses a culturally-tabooed subject without any inhibitions. The mere fact that her novel represents issues about sexuality is a statement of victory in itself which signals

women breaking the cloak of silence by broaching this tabooed subject. Sylvia Tamale has averred that “it is an enormous challenge for us [women] to create a relatively free and safe space... breaking through the hegemonic moral code that associates sexuality with shame and guilt” (2011:315). What this implies is that discussing sex-related issues has traditionally been viewed as unwomanly. Thus, in spite of the social moral code denying or limiting women expressivity in matters of sex (Cixous, 2011), the fact that Ngcobo still does that makes her novel revolutionary. It is a pointer to emerging identities of women, and of women writers choosing not to be frozen within the confines of patriarchal tradition’s boundaries.

On her part, Jezile refused to give in to Siyalo who wanted them to have their sexual encounter in the hostel full of men. She felt inhibited within the suffocating walls of the hostel and this forced Siyalo to look for a conducive house in KwaMashu. To some extent, Jezile’s ability to refuse her husband his conjugal rights because she felt that the conditions were not convenient for her echoes Ellen Willis’ assertion: “From a radical standpoint, then, sexual liberation involves... the positive presence of social and psychological conditions that foster satisfying sexual relations” (1982:10). In this way, Jezile was not just refusing her husband sex but, most importantly, she was subtly challenging the apartheid system for its failure to provide conditions for healthy conditions that allowed African married couples to exercise ‘sexual freedom’. Though Jezile exercised control over her body that first night, she had been changed by her encounter with the unnamed woman. When she finally decided to have sex with Siyalo, she surprised herself as she got “wild” in her sexual expression (p.29). “Away in the city, distanced from the strictures of custom, the inhibiting do’s and don’ts, they felt free like children – free to explore” (p.29):

Their first night was wild - they lashed and loved each other as they had never done before.... She was going to give him till it hurt, till it exploded in his head, till he cried like the woman at the hostel (p. 29).

In a way, Jezile, like the unnamed woman, also triumphed against patriarchal normativity. She refused to be frozen within the culturally imposed limits of a patriarchal consciousness that has historically denied women sexual expression. She shocked herself with her own sexual expressivity. “Advocates of sexual liberation often imply that any individual who is not

concerned about the quality of their experience or exercising greater sexual freedom is mentally disturbed or sexually repressed” (hooks, 1984:150). It is as if Jezile’s location in the city was important in determining the extent of her freedoms as she did not suffer from inhibited sexual expressivity. Her movement from rural Sigageni into Durban can, therefore, be viewed as a signifier of movement from an identity of inhibition to a different identity of expressivity. Daymond highlights that “By the time that Jezile returns from Durban, her voice is markedly more distinct, complex, and present” (1998:255). Thus, Jezile’s mobility into the city can be viewed as a process of her becoming and that of her assumption of a new identity, including an enlarged political consciousness. While in Durban, she was exposed to many things that changed her perspective of life.

There are other sources of women’s emerging power and agency. For Nosizwe, her education and her job as a doctor provided the critical analysis tools and economic liberation that informed her decision to empower people through her political knowledge, voice and leadership, and she gained the respect of both women and men in the whole of the Ixopo district. According to Uwakweh, “Education is critical to female independence. Socially, and often symbolically, it transports women beyond the reach of traditional shackles” (1998:13). Education has been a liberatory tool for women’s journey out of oppression as it “increases that person’s capacity to think for herself, to go against the norms of the culture, and to conceive of alternatives for society - all of which are fundamental to acting politically” (Bunch, 2012:3). Through Nosizwe and Tokozile, a journalist, Ngcobo shows the power of education in articulating critical issues and in empowering resistance. Nosizwe’s education and economic status empowered her to be the agent of change as shown by her clear enunciation of the concealed modes of apartheid oppression that undermined African women and men’s lives. It has been argued that “women’s primary ‘enslavement’ was an economic one, the removal of her freedom to find her own food.... [which] made [her] ‘dependent’ upon the male in individual economic relation” (Thornham, 2000:21). However, Nosizwe is represented here as no ‘ordinary’ woman but one with economic means as indicated by how she drove and lived in the exclusive community of Umzimkulu, detached from the rest of the poor African families of Sigageni. The name of her district, ‘Umzimkulu’ which literally means ‘a great home’, suggests her economic

independence. Her sound economic means implied that she did not depend on any man for survival.

The role of a woman's economic self-sufficiency as a source of her liberty was also raised by Gaba who told Jezile: "Don't let your love ever enslave you to a man" (p.159). After Siyalo was arrested and received a ten year prison sentence for stealing milk, Gaba provided strength to Jezile and encouraged her self-sufficiency: "You'll kill yourself thinking about men. You have a life to live and children to keep happy" (p.158). This situates women as powerful agents in the construction of fellow women's emerging identities. It also reveals economic independence as critical for the meaningful transformation of women's lives by fostering women's productive engagement outside the home. Thus, economic independence, like education, is a turning point in women's search for emancipation.

Ngcobo's representation of Gaba and Nomawa surviving single parenthood makes a strong, though subtle, argument that African women do not just need to be liberated from racial oppression but even from the patriarchal social beliefs and economic structures that have pivoted around ideas of women as reliant on men. Gaba and Nomawa epitomize single women who emerged from their marriages stronger because they were able to "fend for themselves without husbands" (p.156). As Hilda Bernstein has argued, "The concept of the independent wife [woman] cannot take shape... [unless] women receive modern education and participate, along with the men, in productive activity outside the home, before they can assert claims to equality of status" (1978:19). Owing to their economic independence, Nomawa and Gaba survived from their positions of single parenthood. In all these cases, economic independence was a key driver of their agency. In spite of being without husbands, a situation occasioned by being abandoned by the husband or the husband being dead or imprisoned, the women 'didn't die' but demonstrated self-reliance and capability to fend for themselves and families. Their resourcefulness enabled them to survive the harsh conditions and create informal employment for themselves from nothing.

In ATDD, women are constructed as agents who strengthened fellow women to stand up against oppressive conditions. When Siyalo was imprisoned, Gaba whose “husband had died in Johannesburg and Nomawa... [whose husband] had simply disappeared, again in Johannesburg” (p.147) helped Jezile become self-reliant and resourceful so as to get an income that helped her family survive apartheid cruelty. They helped her realise that she had to make important decisions for herself to ensure the survival of the children and herself. Jezile was still trapped by patriarchal mores, where MaBiyela, as mother-in-law, continued to dictate her life. In response, Gaba and Nomawa responded:

MaBiyela, footsek!.... Look, from now it's you and you alone that you need to consider, whatever decision you're making.... MaBiyela has no money to give you and MaBiyela must shut up” (p.159).

Their role in Jezile's process of development was very critical. It demonstrates, once again, representations of women as powerful agents in the construction of fellow women's emerging identities. The solidarity of these 'husbandless' women attracts adulation as their actions challenged apartheid and patriarchal myths that have encouraged men's monopoly as the breadwinners of the families. Unlike Zenzile who was crushed by the demands placed on her to bring up her children all alone after her husband deserted her, Gaba and Nomawa gained some form of economic independence as they 'won' the bread themselves. They did not mourn for husbands. They might have led exposed and vulnerable lives, yet were able to look after themselves and their families without men's assistance. Instead of mourning their circumstances, they set about re-ordering their lives as single mothers. Thus, through the help of her friends, Jezile was able to survive Siyalo's absence when he got imprisoned. In this way, solidarity is deployed as a transformational agent that was critical for women to rethink their social status and roles. While Siyalo was languishing in jail, Jezile was the sole provider for her children. Her ability to fend for herself and children had been learnt from Gaba and Nomawa and this allowed her to survive.

Drawing from the above, the role of women in the process of development of fellow women is clear. Gaba and Nomawa were the agents who helped construct the new resilient Jezile. When Jezile was later forced to leave her matrimonial home with her three children to live amongst her people, she “began to want a small place of her own” so that she would not be dependent on her mother and relatives’ charity (p.220). Jezile was very industrious and

[t]o keep herself busy and to earn a little money she began to knit jerseys and sell them. But jerseys were a very seasonal business and so when the weather turned hot she switched to sewing and embroidering pillow cases and children’s dresses.... When she was not sewing she was in her mother’s vegetable garden which she loved (p.221).

As a result of her hard work, “[m]oney poured in and Jezile could not believe her good fortune” (p.222). For Jezile, her home ceased to be a symbol of her subjugation. Instead, she turned it around into a strategic fort for her economic empowerment. She “took in some washing from a young white couple in Umzimkulu to ensure that she had a more regular income” (p.230). Because of her resourcefulness, “she and Lungu never went hungry” (p.230). Jezile “did not want to gamble with the children’s future... [and] was determined that they should never need to work for the Potgieters of this world” (p.230). It is clear that Jezile was working for her children and in the end, she was able to send Lungu to Mansfield School for Boys. This underscores the argument that, “For women everywhere the achievement of economic independence is a liberating force” (Bernstein, 1978:36).

As a single parent, Jezile’s process of development continued and she soon learnt to defend her family. The old Jezile was afraid, especially after Siyalo was arrested, as revealed in her discussion with Nomawa: “What if you’re always afraid, Nomawa... afraid of the police, of murder... of white people’s hate and all those things? I’m always afraid” (p.182). However, the moment she assumed the family responsibilities as sole parent, she gained strength to fight her fear and helplessness. Ngcobo assigns her the role of family protector and defender, roles that have been traditionally associated with men. As defender of her family, Jezile confronted the

appearance of another white rapist in her life with a crushing response. She killed her daughter's would-be rapist to deny him control over her daughter's body. She might have failed to prevent her own rape but managed to protect her daughter. The white soldier's death symbolises hope for an end to white men's domination. Jezile had been afraid but was now capable of undertaking powerful resistance against men's treatment of women as sexual objects. As a mother, she was ready to kill and face the consequences of her action. Her actions portray motherhood in very positive light, as an identity women have to be proud of as it gives life. By killing the white rapist, Jezile demonstrated that women can enact their resistance and protection of their families independent of men. In a way, the death of the rapist symbolises women's power and ability to defend themselves. His death was "her final act of redemption; it also serves as her own death sentence" (Daymond, 1998:272). It reflects the preparedness of women, as mothers, to sacrifice their lives for the sake of their children. That representation of women's great commitment to 'die' so that the children live exposes the hollowness of patriarchal normativity that has undervalued women and womanhood.

The race and gender of the rapist give the soldier's death a double significance. As a man, he represents patriarchy and as a white soldier, he represents racism and apartheid – some of the oppressive systems between which African women are trapped. That he was not an ordinary man but a white soldier is a loud statement about the depths of oppression suffered by African women, and Jezile's fearlessness and courage to defend her daughter. The death of the rapist-soldier has a larger meaning: "the once victimized women of Africa will rise to heroic action against their oppressors" (Daymond, 1998:272). This view is underscored by Boswell and Collins-Buthelezi: "[t]he political agency of characters like Jezile sends a clear message: that black women in late apartheid would no longer tolerate their treatment by the apartheid regime; that they were justified in taking up arms to defend themselves" (2017:2). Thus, the climactic ending of ATDD provides a fundamental message: it enables Jezile's recovery of her agency which Potgieter had temporarily deprived her of by raping her, imposing a child on her life, undermining her credibility and her relationship with Siyalo for some time.

Jezile's powerful and courageous response to white men's violation of African women's rights contrasts her early representation as a vulnerable woman who "stood petrified" when she found Potgieter lying on her bed the night he raped her (p.204). As a victim of rape and having witnessed the rape of women during her stint in prison, Jezile resolved not to allow this violation to continue and spontaneously took the law into her own hands to defend her daughter. She confronted the laws [lawlessness] of the land by showing it was imperative for Africans to defend themselves against apartheid brutality. This is exactly what she later told Siyalo after killing the white soldier:

They've destroyed us, Siyalo. They broke our marriage, they broke our life here at Sabelweni, and they've broken our children's lives and killed many. He was raping our daughter. I had to defend her. We have to defend ourselves (p.245).

This is a rallying call for African people not to assume positions of weakness but to be assertive. Clearly, Jezile has metamorphosised from a prisoner to a murderess who now justified her own actions. She had even found voice to blame Siyalo for allowing patriarchal beliefs to displace his love for Jezile as seen by his failure to seek her to find out the truth regarding Lungu: "[a]nd you never came to ask me. You didn't want to know what had happened to me... You don't know how Lungu was born; not from me, you don't" (p.244). Jezile challenges Siyalo for allowing social custom to determine his response to Lungu's birth without seeking out the truth from his wife. Their marriage had collapsed because of African patriarchy's greater concern about the illegitimacy of a child over the well-being of a woman, even when it was fairly apparent that the child could have been the product of a horrendous rape. Which compounded the trauma of the rape and impact on that crime on Jezile's life. Earlier, she had not received protection from apartheid law nor from patriarchal culture or religion, and now she felt driven to spontaneously defend her daughter in ways that lay outside the norms and dictates of the interactive systems of oppression. All of this depicts an emerging woman whose courage defied patriarchal and colonial conceptualizations of women and womanhood. This is a rallying point to other women to draw determination from these acts of courage. Jezile's acts of valour as an individual do not just have greater significance by evoking the national consciousness against racial oppression.

They also demonstrate that it is not just the nation that is fighting for liberation. Individuals are also fighting for their own independence at an individual level.

The novel ends with hope. The death of the soldier signifies hope for the end of racial oppression. At the same time, the last sentences of the novel shows the once estranged wife held in the husband's "hands tightly" and Siyalo's last words: "Jezile, life of my life" (p.245). This demonstrates the potential for women and men to overcome the multiple oppressions of patriarchal normativity that has distanced them from each other.

#### **4.1.6 African women's strategies of claiming belonging and space in apartheid South Africa**

Although apartheid continuously came up with Acts that sought to dispossess Africans of their rural land as well as banish them from urban space, there were ways African women resisted and managed to claim belonging even if their presence was unwanted. Cities and towns had been designated as the white people's "world" where African men went as migrant labourers without permanent domicile (Bernstein, 1978). African women needed to get passes (which were difficult to access) from the BAD offices to visit their husbands working in town. Thus, urban space was not only racialised but also gendered space. Left in the reserves, African women were unhappy that they were "not allowed to go" into the cities to stay with their husbands as families (p.43). This was highlighted in their "list of complaints against the government" (p.80). The women outlined that they wanted "the right to visit... [their husbands] in the cities when there is need to do so; and those of us who want to go and live with our husbands in the cities should be allowed to do so" (p.80,1). These were critical needs which apartheid had denied them.

In spite of apartheid strategies that sought to displace them, African women still contested and negotiated for space even in the cities where their presence had been made illegal by apartheid laws. For instance, Jezile had to lie straight in the face of a BAD official to get a pass into Durban. Dealing with an immoral system left her little option but to lie her way into the city. Her

strategy to temporarily claim space in the city beside her husband required that she pretended her husband had invited her to go see a doctor there.

When Jezile went to Durban, she found it teeming with women. “Wherever she walked there were women hawkers sitting behind their mounds of fruits and green vegetables” (p.27).

Women’s presence in Durban reflects African women’s victory over apartheid restrictions on their mobility. The women might not have been formally employed in the city but their fruit stalls showed their ingenuity to create economic activities for themselves. They created employment for themselves in the cities and their courage to start informal business, no matter how small, indicates remarkable bravery to survive where their self-reliance had been outlawed. On top of that, a new residential area that was not on apartheid plan had developed in Durban. Cato Manor was a residential area “that had been allowed for years to exist extra-legally” (p.34). There was no adequate accommodation for the African people who were squeezed in “little houses” where “ten, fifteen, or even eighteen people live[d] in each house” (p.27). The development of Cato Manor was, therefore, an African solution round the serious housing problem in the city. “The very existence of Cato Manor put it outside the law.... The Council had closed its eyes as Cato Manor grew over the years” (p.34). Thus, in a way, Council had accepted defeat. Therefore, the very existence of Cato Manor in the novel speaks about African people’s resistance to exclusion from the city. Cato Manor stood in defiance of oppression, and as a statement of African people’s intention to challenge racial patriarchy by creating space for themselves in their country. The materials used to build the Cato Manor shacks were “flimsy cardboard and iron walls” (p.34). While the cardboard may suggest the temporariness of their stay in Durban as envisaged by apartheid laws, the iron walls represented African people’s unbending iron will to live and remain in the cities in spite of apartheid determination.

Another way through which African women found ways to lay claim to space closed to them was reflected in how they managed to sneak into the single-sex hostels and barracks meant for the male labourers. The hostel entrance was guarded to shut out those who did not belong. Despite all that, some women still found their way in, refusing to be shut out completely. The unnamed woman and Jezile’s entry into a hostel meant “only for men, and... [was] strictly guarded” (p.23)

was a statement of their victory against prohibition. Their presence underlined women's penetration of those sites where they suffered exclusion. Njabulo Ndebele has pointed out that "even under the most oppressive of conditions, people are always trying and struggling to maintain a semblance of normal social order" (1991:52). Despite the extensive apartheid restrictions that were the product of colonial patriarchal normativity, African people were still able to navigate and negotiate their ways around the racially hostile apartheid landscape and its various prohibitions to eke out a living. All this was an attempt to improve their conditions.

Ngcobo's novel suggests hope for the future and victory in the end. As the novel draws to its climactic ending, so many challenges that had initially plagued Jezile, the protagonist, are addressed. After separating from Siyalo, she had initially lived with her mother but "began to want a small place of her own" (p.220). She was able to lay claim to a house she called her own, which enabled her to reorder her life and win her independence. Interestingly, Ngcobo demonstrates the potential for healing of relations between mothers-in-law and their daughters-in-law. Initially, the relationship between MaBiyela and Jezile was not a healthy one, particularly when Jezile was still childless. However, towards the end, the two worked towards resolving their issues.

MaBiyela learned to believe in Jezile and constantly looked for ways in which to atone for her behaviour in their earlier life together. She felt guilty about the difficult relationship that existed between the family.... She wrote to Jezile regularly about the girls' progress and their health. And when they did meet a few times at public gatherings they spent the whole time talking to each other like long-lost friends (p.236).

Though mother-in-law and daughter-in-law relations have often not been viewed positively in patriarchal regimes, Ngcobo's feminist work tackles such stereotypes through subtle suggestions of the transformation of this relationship. The power of Ngcobo's novel is evident in that it tackles oppressive relationships between women living under a range of patriarchal norms, and seeks "new possibilities of understanding" and working together between them (Ndebele,

1991:50). The novel sketches potential for triumph over a range of patriarchal restrictions and customs embedded in the African and colonial patriarchal normativities that have inhibited positive relationships between different groups of women, as well as women and men. The novel's ending addresses structural hierarchies within patriarchy and suggests the possibility of reconciliation: Jezile and Siyalo reconciled, just like Jezile and MaBiyela resolved their differences. That transformation of relations poses as a powerful way of challenging patriarchal normativity that has historically hamstrung women's rights, freedoms, empowerment, dignity, collectivity and solidarity, as well as harmonious gender relations.

#### 4.2 African women's resistance in *Nervous Conditions*

The second novel of this study, *Nervous Conditions*, is equally important as a resistance story that dares “to confront the unfrontable issues” (p.39) (of the oppressiveness of patriarchy and colonialism). Women characters such as Tambudzai, Nyasha and Lucia are portrayed questioning and challenging the marginal positions they were made to occupy in society. The patriarchal context of the novel is particularly important as it helps readers understand how patriarchal normativity has given women few opportunities and possibilities to construct meaningful lives. Regardless of that (and perhaps, because of it) many women in the novel are represented as being engaged in powerful opposition to the patriarchal realities that have made their lives unbearable. Life is experienced through extended family relations where there is a hierarchy of masculinities where some men also experience the sting of patriarchal hierarchies (Connell, 2003). Babamukuru, as the eldest brother of the Sigauke family, represents the dominant masculinities within the familial patriarchal setup. He wielded great patriarchal power, not only over his own family, but even over his young brother, Jeremiah and his family, as well as many other members around him. Evidence of Babamukuru's control and dominance are illustrated in some of his utterances: “I am the head of this family. Anyone who defies my authority is an evil thing in this house” (p.167). On another occasion he says: “We cannot have two men in this house” (p.115), clarifying how accustomed he was, through his patriarchal role, to impose his views on others as was expected of him by the patriarchal structure.

The dominance of Babamukuru affected gender relations in the family. As the dominant patriarch in the novel, Babamukuru's voice was law and even his young brother, Jeremiah, was afraid of him: “My father was much more afraid of Babamukuru's wrath, which he had experienced, than of the wrath of God, which he had not” (p.127). Therefore, Babamukuru sparked fear in both women and men alike. That Jeremiah, also lacked sufficient power and was dominated by his brother, whom he was acutely afraid of, exposes some extremes of patriarchal normativity that have allowed men to possess more power and control than others. Jeremiah feared his brother more than God, showing the extent of patriarchal domination some men suffer within patriarchy. Patriarchal ideology empowered the oldest male Babamukuru to dominate every facet of social space in the extended family. However, Dangarembga portrays some

women, such as Tambudzai, Lucia and Nyasha, demonstrating great courage to challenge Babamukuru and all men who wanted to exercise patriarchal authority.

#### **4.2.1 Exposing and confronting gendered systems of oppression through the novel form in *Nervous Conditions***

The social inequalities between African women and men and the violence of exclusion suffered by the women in various areas of life are powerfully exposed and challenged by Dangarembga right from the beginning of her narrative. There are two different categories of women: women who escaped patriarchy and those who remained entrapped. Tambudzai, the narrator, says: “my story is... about my escape and Lucia’s; about my mother’s and Maiguru’s entrapment; and about Nyasha... whose rebellion may not in the end have been successful” (p.1). Already, women are divided into two groups: those who escaped and those who remained victims.

Moyana has drawn a number of interesting questions from this introduction by highlighting an “inevitable series of questions which come to mind: from what or whom do Tambu and Lucia escape; against what or whom does Nyasha rebel and what or who traps Tambu’s mother and Maiguru” (1994: 27). Another critical question this research adds is: by what means or strategies did the women who escaped manage to do so? These are issues that the following paragraphs grapple with.

Moyana provides a possible answer to the first question by pointing out that Tambu and Lucia escaped from the oppressive system that Tambu’s brother, Nhamo, represented: “patriarchy and sexism” (1994:1). To underscore the novel’s contestation of patriarchy, it opens with a statement of Tambu’s defiance against the patriarchal system that promoted her brother’s interests and privileges over hers: “I was not sorry when my brother died” (p.1). The reader is jolted by Tambu’s intriguing refusal to mourn Nhamo, her dead brother. Tambu’s attitude towards her brother’s death leaves the reader curious to understand the reasons for this.

The novel's plot where the narrative is ushered in by a male character's funeral, in a way, gives primacy to the displacement of men from being subjects of interest in the narrative. Tambu's announced disinterest in the death of her brother underlines the extent of her suffering and her rejection of the values of the patriarchal society that promoted Nhamo's interests over hers. She shows indifference to Nhamo's death which she mentions only in passing and matter-of-factly as a non-event. This is revealed by her awareness and that she does not feel sad, and her refusal to apologise, for that would be hypocrisy in a life where her brother was very callous and took unfair advantage over her: "I was not sorry when my brother died. Nor am I apologizing for my callousness... my lack of feeling... Therefore I shall not apologise" (p.1). Tambu is very honest and not a hypocrite and her frankness and honesty evoke appreciation as qualities that are missing in patriarchal normativity as represented by Nhamo and Jeremiah whom Tambu could not trust but trusted the reader and chose to be upfront. These introductory words dismiss Nhamo's death as an unimportant occurrence in the scope of the whole narrative.

Nhamo was sacrificed right at the beginning of the novel perhaps because of what he stood for in the patriarchal structures, as revealed by his mistreatment of his sisters. Despite being young, Nhamo already epitomised patriarchal intolerance and abuse of women in his interaction with his own sisters, and his disregard for the rights and well-being of them and women in general. This view is underlined by his refusal to board buses full of women because he felt they "smelt of unhealthy reproductive odours" (p.1). Furthermore, he was the symbol of oppression of his younger sisters as he seemed to create and enjoy their misfortunes. Tambudzai says, "Nhamo was not interested in being fair... certainly not to his sisters, his younger sisters for that matter" (p.12). He found joy at taking a stick to his young sister, Netsai, at the slightest excuse. Even his treatment of his own mother when he returned from the mission school showed contempt for her. He no longer spoke to her that often and if he did, then he spoke to her in a Shona language that was ungrammatical and strangely accented. Surprisingly, the same Nhamo who laboured for linguistic proficiency when speaking to his mother, "talked most fluently with my father" (p.52). His disrespect for his mother was shocking and disgusting. This is not how a child should behave towards one's parent. The degrading treatment Mai Tambu received from Nhamo exposes the evil "operation of patriarchy that encourages" (Narismulu, 1999:71) children's lack of respect

and equal treatment of parents. This provokes condemnation because no parent deserves such treatment. Nhamo's despise for his mother was very ironical and a sign of ingratitude because it was Mai Tambu and not Jeremiah, whose efforts ensured he remained in school. It is, therefore, little wonder that Nhamo was sacrificed and 'killed' right at the beginning of the story for the patriarchal ideas and sexism that he represented which cannot continue to degrade parents. Tambudzai did not miss him nor did she care.

Drawing from the above, right from the beginning of her story, Dangarembga creatively deals with the possibilities of the overthrow of patriarchy through Nhamo's death which gave a telling blow to the patriarchal system. At a symbolic level, Nhamo's death which is given as the first statement of the novel is an argument for the potential overthrow and 'death' of the patriarchal system whose oppressive ideas Nhamo would have perpetuated even after the old generation of Babamukuru and Jeremiah had passed away. Patriarchy should not be allowed to continue but should be challenged. Though Nhamo was still a minor who was inconsequential in the scheme of patriarchal normativity, his early death suggests to the reader that the oppressive patriarchal values that he tried hard to maintain should not be allowed to cross over into the future. If patriarchal values are 'killed' early in children, then there is hope for a more equitable future that is not oppressive to the world's daughters and mothers.

As part of the larger design of her novel, the way Dangarembga ends the novel makes a huge statement about women challenging patriarchal normativity. The concluding paragraph highlights the emerging Tambudzai:

Quietly, unobtrusively and extremely fitfully, something in my mind began to assert itself, to question things and refuse to be brainwashed.... It was a long and painful process for me, that process of expansion. It was a process whose events stretched over many years and would fill another volume, but the story I have told here, is my own story, the story of four women whom I loved, and our men, this story is how it all began (p.204).

Tambudzai's words show her emerging more fully at the end as a changed woman. She was not the same eight-year old girl who had failed to understand so many things. Her refusal to submit to socially-defined expectations of subordination was now evident. She sought to "assert", "to question" and even "refused" brainwashing by oppressive systems. According to Muchemwa, "The questioning and rejection of acquiescent silence leads to a recovery of redemptive memory" (2002:8). Engaging in questioning suggests resistance to complying with patriarchal customs that have taken women for granted. Such resistance connects the novel to "African feminism [which] establishes its identity through its resistance" to all forms of inequality (Nnaemeka, 1998:6). While at the beginning it appeared her story was entirely about women who escaped and those who were trapped, the conclusion affirms Dangarembga's African feminist perspective, which seeks to include, rather than alienate, other members of society. As she concluded her narrative, Tambu now stated that her story was not just about women but the "women whom I loved, and our men" (p.204). Thus, the emerging Tambu that we see at the end encapsulates the ethos of African feminism: "African feminism is all about inclusion and not alienation" (Ifechelobi, 2014:18).

#### **4.2.2 The paradox of education as an agent of women's liberation**

Education has been viewed as a critical variable in women's fight to break free from their marginalised positions and in their attainment of independence (Uwakweh, 1998). Women can only gain liberation if they "receive modern education and participate, along with the men, in productive activity outside the home" (Bernstein, 1978:19).

Dangarembga's narrative focuses on Tambudzai, a rural African girl who seeks education as a tool of her liberation. As Pauline Uwakweh has noted, "For Tambu, Maiguru's educational achievement, lifestyle, and [relative] freedom from the drudgery of domesticity [when compared to Tambu's mother] inspired her to escape from the threat of her own mother's condition and poverty" (1998:18,19). Her disadvantaged status as a woman was pronounced by her experiences of social bias towards her education. The impact of educational inequalities have been exposed by Ngcobo (when chronicling her life experiences): "Education was a preserve" (1985:84).

However, in Dangarembga's novel, Tambu was determined to be the agent of her own liberation, by resisting acceptance of patriarchally sanctioned life roles along lines of sexual difference. She did not want to be another passive victim of patriarchy like her own mother, who is located in the repulsive and invidious position where she saw the injustice against women in her society, but did not really challenge it openly.

Tambudzai describes her own mother as "an obstacle in the path of my departure" (p.58). This was because her mother had already started her duties as a 'good' wife and mother to prepare Tambu "to learn to carry your burdens with strength" (p.16) and to "accept your lot" as a woman within patriarchy and acquiesce to a life of subordination (p.20). "She began to prepare me for disappointment long before I would have been forced to face up to it. To prepare me she began to discourage me" (p.20). However, Tambu resisted patriarchal attitudes that were bent on denying her equality with men, including access to education. It was not easy for women characters to get education given that African patriarchal attitudes frowned upon educated women as highlighted by Maiguru's experiences in her pursuit of education:

People were prejudiced against educated women. Prejudiced. That's why they said we weren't decent.... I don't know what people mean by a loose woman – sometimes she is someone who walks the streets, sometimes she is an educated woman. Sometimes she is a successful man's daughter or she is simply beautiful (p.181).

The prejudice suffered by Maiguru years back was the predicament that Tambudzai now confronted years later as her father, who did not value women's education, viewed marriage as more important than her education when he asked her:

Is that [education] anything to worry about? Ha-a-a, it's nothing.... Can you cook books and feed them to your husband? Stay at home with your mother. Learn to cook and clean. Grow vegetables (p.15).

Jeremiah's attempts to refuse his daughter's access to education in line with patriarchal restrictions and prejudices against women reminds the reader of the mistreatment of Aku-nna in Buchi Emecheta's *The Bride Price* (1978) where Auntie Matilda, in her sympathy with the plight that Aku-nna faced, remarked: "The pity of it all is that they will marry her off very quickly in order to get enough money to pay Nna-nndo's school fees" (p.38). This helps show the pervasiveness of ideas where the education of boys (Akunna's brother, Nna-nndo and Tambu's brother, Nhamo) has been considered a priority concern by African patriarchal normativity. Jeremiah represents this patriarchal logic that has sought to tie women to the domestic space. Even with the intervention of Mr Matimba, Tambudzai's school teacher, who fought for Tambu's educational rights and tried to convince Jeremiah to reconsider his views, Jeremiah remained the adamant voice of patriarchal reasoning as he asked: "Have you ever heard of a woman who remains in her father's house? She will meet a young man and I will have lost everything" (p.30). Jeremiah's patriarchal attitudes were designed to shatter Tambu's dream to escape from the trap of patriarchal domesticity. The fact that Mr Matimba fought from Tambu's corner is interesting as it affirms African feminist views that progressive men have a role to play in the struggle for gender justice. Dangarembga, as an African Feminist, shows that men may contribute to women's struggles for gender justice and the achievement of greater empowerment and equality for women, men, and children, through the elimination of unfair patriarchal power and injustices. However, it is Tambu's own response to her obstacles that was remarkable. She considered education a fundamental step towards her liberation given the various opportunities it would open to her:

This new me would not be enervated by smoky kitchens that left eyes smarting and chests permanently bronchitic. This new me would not be frustrated by wood fires that either flamed so furiously that the sadza burned, or so indifferently that it became mbodza. Nor would there be trips to Nyamarira... where we drew our water.... I could not pretend to be sorry to be leaving the water-drums whose weight compressed your neck into your spine, were heavy on the head even after you had grown used to them and were in need of refilling (p.59).

Tambu realised the potential of education to transform her status and position in life. Her aspirations to break free affirm Mama's view that a woman should "not relish the idea of [getting married early and] being kept at home" (2001:58). Tambu's struggle reflects one of the ideological tasks of African Feminism: to understand the patriarchal system and to fight against all forms of patriarchal exploitation and oppression (Nnaemeka, 1998).

Tambu was determined to struggle for admission and participation in the greater society. As she later shows, education presented her an "opportunity for mental and eventually, through it, material emancipation" (p.87). She was, therefore, an embodiment of the spirit of resistance in her pursuit of education. She "loved going to school and ... was good at it" and would not be stopped (p.15). After her father abused the money Babamukuru sent for school fees buying alcohol, Tambudzai defied all odds to remain in school. Her mother could only manage to send Nhamo to school from the proceeds of selling hard boiled eggs and vegetables. Yet, Tambu's spirits were not dampened by her situation. She determined to act to change her situation and was assertive in the way she went about it. Instead of pleading with her parents to allow her to continue with her education and to find fees somehow, Tambudzai actually '*announced*' to them that she would go back to school. Her two statements, "I shall go to school again" (p.16) and "I will earn the fees" (p.17) underline her agency and search for self-determination inconsistent with her age. She was only eight but her assertive voice about what she was going to do ranks amongst some of the most important sites that illustrate women's resistance to patriarchal beliefs in the whole novel. Tambu could not be silenced but is represented with voice to speak up. (In his critique of women's muted voices in Yvonne Vera's *Under the Tongue*) Kizito Muchemwa has associated women's silence in the face of exclusion and the trauma of physical and psychological violence "with absence, death, negation and repression; and [their] speech with presence, life, affirmation and freedom" (2002:9). If, as Muchemwa has suggested, speech signifies life and presence, then, women's voices become significant indicators of their agency. Thus, Tambu's possession of voice to oppose educational exclusion becomes a metaphorical allusion to her refusal of gender assumptions that sought to treat her as subordinate. Her statement: 'I shall go to school again' demonstrates her resolve to achieve this basic right. It was a statement of intent marked by a tone of confidence in her attempts to unseat her own negation.

Tambudzai's agency, boldness, mental resourcefulness and courage in overcoming the limitations poverty and patriarchy imposed on her are inspiring. She asked for a small plot to grow maize so that she could embark on market gardening to raise money to go back to school. Despite the fact that her father annoyed her "tremendously by laughing and laughing in an unpleasantly adult way" at this idea, she remained resolute that nothing was going to shake off her dream (p.17). At eight, Tambudzai was ready to be assertive and to chart her own escape route out of poverty and illiteracy by growing and selling maize from her small plot so that she could earn her own school fees. She did not want to be reliant on her father, debunking patriarchal notions that often view women as reliant on men. Her resolve was that if her father would not provide her with the school fees, then she would send herself to school. While her brother went to school, Tambudzai "worked on the homestead, in the family fields and on my own plot" (p.17). This illustrates the resilience and agency of a young girl child determined to chart her own life (instead of having it charted for her by others). Given her tender age, a reader may be dismissive of the impact her work on the plot would have in changing her situation, yet, what is remarkable is that she sought to address her situation rather than accept it. Tambudzai explains her age-defying resilience when she says:

That year I grew older, stronger and sturdier than any eight year old can usefully grow. More often than not I woke up before dawn, the first lifting of the darkness occurring while I was sweeping the yard. Before it was fully light I would be on my way to the river and then returning along the footpath through the trees and past other homesteads, where the women were just waking, my water-drum balanced on my head-pad of leaves and green twigs.... By the time the sun rose I was in my field, in the first days hoeing and clearing; then digging holes thirty inches apart, with a single swing of the hoe, as we had been taught in our garden periods at school (p.19-20).

This show of strength of character by an eight year old, to break free from a life of subjection to poverty and patriarchy, is an admirable trait that powerfully challenges patriarchal normativity and its expectations of weakness on the part of women and girls. Her resilience and courage for transformation of the status quo represents Dangarembga's vision for Tambu and all women.

It was when Tambu's green mealies were ready for sale that Tambudzai took her liberation story a notch higher by fighting her older brother, Nhamo, who had started stealing her maize. By stealing the maize, Nhamo was robbing Tambu of her journey to freedom and out of the clutches of patriarchal oppression. When she discovered that Nhamo, a representative of the patriarchal order, himself privileged to be in school, stole from her plot and gave away free maize to other children at school, Tambudzai engaged her elder brother in a fist fight because his actions were meant to defeat her pursuit of education. The raging anger that consumed Tambu and the ferocity of her fight are revealed the moment she learnt of Nhamo's misdeeds. She

took off from the pada game like a dog after a buck. I remember at one moment playing pada, the next Nhamo and I rolling about in the dirt of the football pitch... I went straight for my brother and brought him down in a single charge. The element of surprise was on my side. I sat on top of him, banged his head into the ground, screamed and spat and cursed.... I charged again, intending this time to kill (p.22-23).

According to Muchemwa, "Tambu's struggle with Nhamo was a struggle for a place in the patriarchal order" (2013:59). What can be drawn from the actions of this young girl is that women should not expect freedom to be freely offered them in a golden platter but have to fight for it because many men are not prepared to give up the privileges they have enjoyed historically (Johnson, 2014). Tambu was challenging patriarchal normativity's inequalities where her brother had entitlements including educational privilege that she could not access on account of warped socially-constructed gender assumptions. She had to fight her brother who had become synonymous with her educational restrictions and this highlights how patriarchal normativity destroys peace. There cannot be peace at the expense of women and women should continue struggling for their rights to education.

Feminist writers accord some men roles to play in women's struggles for their emancipation. In Tambu's struggle for self-determination, Mr Matimba, her teacher, provided much assistance, taking her to Umtali to sell maize. She earned ten pounds from Dorris, a white woman who simply donated the money. Her act of charity suggested the potential for solidarity between

women divided by race. The money was enough to enable her go back to school for a few years. Under the guidance of Mr Matimba, Tambudzai straight away paid her school fees at the school in advance before going back home. When Jeremiah discovered what had happened, he erupted in anger and attempted to recoup the money from the school so that he could spend it as he liked. He argued that the money was his as it had been earned by his daughter. However, the headmaster and Mr Matimba came to the defence of Tambudzai and refused to hand over the money to Jeremiah. In this way, Dangarembga presents relationships of solidarity between some African men and women, thus transcending gender binaries. This shows how African feminism contradicts ideas of “female separateness” by suggesting women and men’s need for each other to defend each other’s interests (Aina, 1998:76). Thus, as we examine Tambudzai’s resistance story, we should also appreciate the role played by some men in assisting women. This is Dangarembga’s statement that transformation of social structures requires that both men and women work together. Dangarembga’s portrayal of inter-gender solidarity in the struggle against patriarchal normativity and its abuses affirms that “time has come for women active in feminist movement to develop new strategies for including men in the struggle against sexism” (hooks, 1984:72).

The fact that Tambu was also assisted by Dorris, a white woman, makes a powerful statement on feminist sisterhood that goes beyond race. Dorris saw beyond racial difference during a colonial period when racial difference was a topical issue. She gave a huge donation towards Tambu’s education in spite of her husband and another [unnamed] white youth’s protestations that Dorris’ money was “[w]asted on a kaffir” (p.28). Dorris’ help in spite of all this reflects the potential for women to transcend the racial divide and lighten the burden for one another. Dangarembga, along with other African feminists, acknowledges that women of different racial backgrounds are critical partners given that they are part of “a global feminist movement against patriarchal oppression in all its manifestations” (Wanyeki, 2006:1). This reflects the potential for women to be united in the fight against oppression even if their lived realities may be different.

The portrayal of Tambu’s success on the educational front was quite remarkable. In spite of the challenges she confronted, Tambudzai “came first that year” and “was top of my class again the next year” (p.30). Her success at school was similar to that of her niece, Nyasha, who also “beat

the boys at maths!” (p.196). The depiction of girls excelling in school comes as a challenge to various gendered views, especially those that have been perpetrated by patriarchs such as Freud (as cited by Cixous) who misrepresented women as if they were intellectually inferior to men (Cixous, 2011). In this novel, women are not constructed as intellectually inferior to men. Rather, they possess the intellectual capacity to excel above them. Such characterization opens discourses on the various myths of patriarchy regarding femininity and womanhood. Though the road may be bumpy, women need resilience and courage to face their challenges.

Although education is depicted in the novel as a significant factor that has influenced women’s liberated identities, Dangarembga also shows there are contradictions. There is contradictory portrayal in the resistance of Maiguru who held a Master of Education degree and Lucia who was barely educated. Lucia only enrolled for her Grade One when she was pregnant, at a time when Maiguru was already a teacher. While Lucia constantly challenged men and was ready to fight for her freedom despite being ‘illiterate’, the same cannot be said about Maiguru who, despite her education, seemed content to defer and assume a subordinate role to her husband. She displayed the feminine decorum that patriarchy expects of women. During school holidays in the extended family home, “Maiguru worked harder than anybody else, because as the senior wife and owner of the best cooking facilities as well as provider of the food to cook, she was expected to oversee all the culinary operations. It was ceaseless work” (p.5). She humbly complied with the patriarchal expectations placed on her and subordinated herself to her husband: “she could not use the money she earned for her own purposes and had been prevented by marriage from doing the things she wanted to do” (p.102). Tambu felt sorry for Maiguru’s entrapment despite being educated and “thought it was a great shame that Maiguru had been deprived of the opportunity to make the most of herself” (p.102). On one occasion, when Maiguru felt that “Babamukuru’s old meal wasn’t longer fresh. She said she would eat it herself, that Babamukuru should serve himself another portion of food” (p.81). Her readiness to eat cold food while her husband ate warm food reveals how much she acted in ways that perpetuated patriarchy. It seems as if her education and ascendancy into middle class status did not grant her an escape route from the oppressiveness of patriarchal relations. This is a huge contradiction because true education should liberate (Uwakweh, 1998). The fact that Maiguru remained trapped despite being educated shows the extent of the oppressiveness of patriarchal normativity. Its repression and

intolerance meant that Maiguru would rather comply with patriarchal norms as a way of negotiating her escape from patriarchal intolerance and ruthlessness against women who raised dissenting voices.

#### **4.2.3 Girl children standing up to patriarchy**

Arguments about the power of patriarchy to socialise and encourage compliance have shown that it is effective when the child is still very young, when his or her psychology is still very malleable. According to Uwakweh, in a patriarchal society, “[s]tarting from birth, through childhood to adulthood, social expectations for the male and female child differ and grow in ever-widening circles, reaching a stage where each child inculcates the roles of their kind” (1998:9). When the children are older, breaking out of their ‘taught’ gendered roles becomes extremely difficult and fraught with psychological conflict. After years of socialisation, they may begin to take their roles and status as natural. However, Dangarembga’s portrayal of the actions and behaviour of girl children reveals their refusal of patriarchal indoctrination.

It was not just Tambu who was ready to confront the men who sought to perpetuate patriarchal oppression. Nyasha, Tambu’s cousin, also challenged and stood up to dominant systems, customs and beliefs that she felt were oppressive:

Nyasha was, persistently seeing and drawing attention to things you would rather not talk about; shredding to bits with her sharp wit the things she thought we could do without, even if everybody else thought they were important... But her mother and father were worried about her development (p.97).

Her constant questioning of matters she found oppressive led to regular confrontations with her father. She was not prevented by the aura of the patriarchal power which Babamukuru flexed in his dealing with the various men and women around him. She rebelled against Babamukuru, patriarchy’s chief spokesperson in the novel, who attempted to control every aspect of the lives of the women around him. Though men like Jeremiah and Takesure bent to Babamukuru’s word,

Nyasha exhibited great strength of voice to stand up to her father. Undeterred by her inferior patriarchal role as daughter, she often engaged her father in heated exchanges. Her dialogue of resistance shows the emerging identity of a daughter and a young woman departing from patriarchal 'docility' (a misrepresentation of women) towards a path of liberated egalitarian consciousness. Having lived with her parents in the United Kingdom while they studied, Nyasha had been exposed to new thinking and was ready to challenge the African customs which trampled on her sense of freedom. This constructs her travel outside the borders of her society as responsible in constructing a different woman who was often misunderstood by some girls of her age who had various "reasons for disapproving" her, one of which was their accusation that she wanted to appear more "superior to them because... [she did] not feel... inferior to men" (p.196). In spite of her young age, Nyasha responded to patriarchy's marginalisation of women in a very powerful way. Confiding to Tambudzai, Nyasha pointed out that even her father had "no right to treat me... as though I am water to be poured wherever he wants... really he hasn't the right" (p.119). This marks her refusal to allow socially-mediated patriarchal normativity (represented by her father) to entrap her.

Nyasha's radical opposition to Babamukuru, the epitome of patriarchal authority, disrupts and subverts the socially defined roles of daughter as her opposition to her father's patriarchal ideals saw her literally fighting him. On that occasion, Babamukuru took exception to Nyasha being the last to return home after a party though she had been with her brother, Chido, and Tambu for most of the time. Babamukuru accused Nyasha of indecency. Nyasha attempted to explain herself but was then blamed for attempting to respond to her father. "The repressed voice of women in Zimbabwean culture... continues to be seen in how] women are denied the power of agency" by expecting them to be passive recipients of men's views, actions and decisions without expecting them to speak back (Muchemwa, 2002:5). However, Nyasha protested against being silenced as she felt it imperative that she explained herself. Consequently, father and daughter engaged in "accusing each other and retaliating, condemning bitterly" (p.113). When Babamukuru demanded respect from Nyasha and hit her in the process, Nyasha's response to her father's aggression surprises me as a reader. She did not hesitate but broke her silence and, against the cultural expectations, hit him back. This is how the narrator recalls the incident:

I told you not to hit me,' said Nyasha, punching him in the eye. Babamukuru bellowed and snorted.... They went down on to the floor, Babamukuru alternately punching Nyasha's head and banging it against the floor... Nyasha, screaming and wriggling and doing what damage she could" (p.115).

The above picture of Nyasha is that of an emerging young woman rejecting to be made "a victim of her femaleness" (p.115). Though weaker than her father, still she fought back, underlining her determined stand against male violence and aggression. Shocked by his daughter's rebellion, Babamukuru threatened to kill her and then hang himself, an indication that the patriarchal structures of society struggle to come to grips with women's powerful response and search for voice and personhood, for long denied them. The psychological dilemma that engulfed Babamukuru as a result of his daughter's powerful response and the prospect of this powerful and capable man hanging himself exposes the "damage men suffer for their participation in patriarchy - damage to their emotional, spiritual, and physical wellbeing, to their relationships with children... and to their sense of themselves as people" (Johnson, 2014:71). Ratele has noted the impact of women's emergent identities to men who are still stuck in the patriarchal mode by stating:

some men, perhaps even many men, are experiencing psychological distress for no longer being in power over women's demand for choice and decision-making... we are called to work through their transition with them to work through their grief and confusion (2005).

Babamukuru's threat to hang himself reveals his resistance towards the changing gender structures. And the failure of a well educated and otherwise quite caring elder to imagine and grow into greater social equality, much less see the value of his child's desire to be more empowered. Both father and daughter suffered as a consequence: "For a week Nyasha withdrew into herself and Babamukuru withdrew out of the house. He did not even come home for meals.... How they suffered, the pair of them" (p.117,118). Clearly, patriarchy has produced suffering for all. This is why many men need to participate in the struggle for gender equality to

help them deal with their psychological distress they may feel as women resist and make claim to their justified positions in society (Ratele, 2005).

By withdrawing into herself, Nyasha was struggling to create space where she could remain free to act as she pleased. “Not only had she stopped talking to us, but she was growing vague and detaching herself from us. She was retreating into some private world that we could not reach” (p.118). Nyasha’s withdrawal into her own private world was a strategy that she adopted to survive the oppression that confronted her. Her actions reflect Kandiyoti’s argument about patriarchal bargaining and women’s strategies about maximizing their lives within oppressive structures that prohibit them to live normally (1988).

As a character, Nyasha is the least understood in the whole novel as she lived her resistance “subjectively as a personal commitment” (Abraham, 1999:8). Her whole life was resistance itself as she “thrived on inconsistencies and liked to chart them so that she could turn her attention to the next set of problems in the hope of finding fundamental solutions” (p.116). She rebelled against everything and anything that she felt undermined her freedoms and that of other people. For instance, in spite of her father’s disapproval, Nyasha dressed in mini-skirts as she felt comfortable that way. When the family arrived from England, Nyasha’s resistance to being lectured on ‘dignified’ dressing was evidenced by “the tiny little dress she wore, hardly enough of it to cover her thighs” (p.37). She knew that African customs frowned on her kind of dressing and Tambu says: “She was self-conscious though, constantly clasping her hands behind her buttocks to prevent her dress from riding up, and observing everybody through veiled vigilant eyes to see what we were thinking” (p.37). Clearly, she deliberately chose not to comply with expectations. Her desire not to change in spite of what others thought reflects the feminist argument that women do not have to dress in order to please men but themselves (Bryson, 1995). In her rebellion, she was against her father dominating every facet of her life: the way she dressed, her eating habits, the books she read, the friends she associated with and the way she talked back. Through Nyasha, Dangarembga is challenging the muting voice of patriarchy (as represented by Babamukuru) that has hindered many women in many societies from making personal choices as free individuals with rights.

While Nyasha's resistance can be justified, it is the way she carried out her resistance towards the end (and its impact on her) that shocks readers. For instance, when her father forced her to eat her food against her wishes, instead of fighting him like she used to do, Nyasha would gobble "the food down without a break" in his presence (p.189). She had grown tired of openly showing her resistance. She detested being forced to do things against her wish and her outward behaviour communicated as much because on one occasion, she simply

regarded her plate malevolently, darting anguished glances at her father, drained two glasses of water, then picked up her fork and shovelled the food into her mouth, swallowing without chewing and without pause except to sip between mouthfuls from a third glass of water (p.198).

Babamukuru thought he was finally winning against Nyasha because "[w]hen Nyasha's plate was empty they both [Babamukuru and Maiguru] relaxed and the atmosphere returned almost to normal" (p.198). Little did they realise that Nyasha had developed a different strategy of resistance and laying claim to her freedom. Soon after emptying her plate, Nyasha would rush to the bathroom and use her toothbrush to induce vomiting. In a way, the self-induced vomiting underlined her refusal to 'swallow' ideas that were simply handed over to her by dominant structures. Thus, as she vomited, the 'food', she puked out, metaphorically, the content of multi-layered systems of domination that included racism and gender that she threw out of her system so that she was not contaminated by them. Nyasha's personal commitment to vomiting out and disgorging what was forced down her is a critical site of Nyasha's personal struggle against systems of domination (Muchemwa, 2013). She did not even want to chew and digest the food but just gobbled it before quickly spewing it out again. It is apparent that "Nyasha seeks refuge in anorexia, exploring her temporary control over herself" (Uwakweh, 1998:19). Thus, she personifies women's resistance to accept compliance with what they find oppressive. However, her resistance was at a huge expense to her physical shape. In three months, "she had grown skeletal" (p.198). This exposes the horror of patriarchal oppression that damaged Nyasha physically. In the words of Tambu, "[s]he was pathetic to see, but when she hugged me hello I was surprised by the strength in her arms, so frail they looked as though they would snap if she

so much as picked up a pen” (p.198). In spite of this picture of a skeletal Nyasha, the strength in her arms was shocking. Her spirit of resistance remained vibrant, remarkably strong and unconquerable inside her despite the outward physical stature.

Because of Nyasha’s approach to resistance and having to fight different intersecting systems of oppression at once, she was fast losing grip over her life and slipping into delirium. She did not just fight against patriarchal ideals but colonialism as well. Her psychological distress with her entrapment by colonial structures that undermined African people led her into “shredding her history book between her teeth” (p.201). She was incensed that African people had been forced to study white people’s history and did not want to accept the content of colonial books anymore. In her rage, she broke “mirrors, her clay pots, anything she could lay her hands on and jabbing the fragments viciously into her flesh, stripping bedclothes, tearing her clothes from the wardrobe and trampling them underfoot” (p201). As her anger slipped into insanity, we realise the extent of the impact of numerous forms of oppression on women and people: such oppressions destroy many lives and should, therefore, be resisted.

Nyasha’s inability to cope with and to manage her resistance bothers many a reader. She was the “cornerstone” of Tambu’s development into the assertive woman she became (p.199). Unfortunately, Nyasha’s own “rebellion may not in the end have been successful” (p.1). Tambu’s assessment of Nyasha’s resistance showed that “Nyasha had no tact... [though] strong-willed” (p.116).. There are important lessons that feminists can derive from that: in the struggle against a very ruthless and violent patriarchal system, tact is imperative for resistance to bear fruit. Abraham has posed a very critical question that helps us evaluate the success of resistance innovations adopted by women where she has asked: “if resistance costs one’s life is it still worth it?” (1999:4). She has argued that survival should be the primary objective in all forms of resistance. Therefore, tact becomes a necessary tool in all resistance. In Nyasha’s case, she did the opposite as she was actually killing herself in the process. While she lived her life of resistance, her father was unaware that she was actually rebelling against his patriarchal domination as he bragged that “[s]he does eat her supper when I have time to supervise her properly” (p.199). This suggests that as long as resistance victimises oneself, then it may not

serve its purpose. Tambu was disturbed and stated: “You know how it is when something that has been a cornerstone of your security begins to crumble” (p199). Therefore, for women’s struggles against social inequalities to have the desired impact, all change and all resistance must be managed. Tact and adoption of well-calculated strategies are important if resistance to patriarchal normativity is to be successful at the end of day.

#### **4.2.4 Some perspectives on the portrayal of speech, voice, muted voices and women’s power of articulation in *Nervous Conditions***

A central concern among feminists has been the way women have been denied voice by patriarchal normativity (Muchemwa, 2002). Literature has represented women who have been silenced in many ways. Strong textual evidence from other African feminist writers shows them challenging how women have generally been denied their voices. For instance, in Vera’s *Under the Tongue*, Runyararo asks a rhetorical question about how her husband has muted her voice: “Did he not teach me silence, this husband, that a woman is not a man?” (p.31). In the same text, “Grandmother pleads to be heard. I have not spoken, she cries. I ask only for a humble silence in which I can be heard” (p.44-5). This reflects possession of voice as critical in feminism.

There are many strategies that patriarchy has historically adopted to silence women which women have to struggle against. According to Muchemwa, the “trauma of violence, physical and psychological, teaches silence” (2002:8). “Rape is... [another] violent silencing act” (Muchemwa, 2002:13). Other silencing strategies include the exposure of victims to poverty. Economic gaps make the less privileged suffer from low self-esteem. This silences them because speaking up may lead to loss of economic support. This was the strategy that Babamukuru used to silence Tambu and make her act against her conscience.

When she first arrived at the mission school, Tambu had a very high esteem of her rich uncle and said about him: “Babamukuru was God” (p.70). In Babamukuru’s home, Tambu was surrounded by so much opulence. Coming from a very poor background, the first day she arrived, Tambu

felt “slightly intimidated by the dining-room, with its large, oval table spacious enough to seat eight people taking up the centre of the room” (p.69). The economic gap between her own rural home and Babamukuru’s home was enough to mute her voice. She further states:

If I was daunted by Maiguru’s dainty porcelain cups, the living room, as I have said, would have finished me off.... The opulence of his living-room was very strong stuff, overwhelming to someone who had first crawled and then toddled and finally walked over dung floors (p.69).

Economic disparities helped form Tambu’s opinion of Babamukuru (whom she regarded as a god). At this early stage, she could not understand how Nyasha was always in a collision course with this godly man:

I had arrived in Heaven. I was in danger of becoming an angel, or at the very least a saint, and forgetting how ordinary humans existed – from minute to minute and from hand to mouth (p.70).

Tambu did not, as yet, see through Babamukuru whom she defended and justified when in reality he “was a rigid, imposing perfectionist, steely enough in character to function in the puritanical way that he expected or rather insisted, that the rest of the world should function” (p.87). Nyasha pitied Tambu and tried hard to teach her that her beloved uncle was actually oppressive. Nyasha impressed on mobility as a critical ingredient in shaping consciousness and awareness of the nuances of oppression. In one of her ‘lectures’ to Tambu, Nyasha commented about the importance of mobility: “You have to keep moving.... Getting involved in this and that, finding out one thing and another. Moving, all the time. Otherwise you get trapped” (96). As far as Nyasha was concerned, women’s mobility and inquisitiveness were sources of their liberation. Nyasha herself had gained this mobility when she had moved from Zimbabwe to England where she had stayed while her parents were studying. After this “transplantation” from Zimbabwe to England, Nyasha was never the same as she “persistently” drew “attention to things you would rather not talk about” and questioned the many social ‘truths’ that inhibited women (p.97).

Nyasha was instrumental as the stimulus of Tambu's development. Tambu admits that she was "growing in the presence of Nyasha's company" (p.116). Because Nyasha provoked critical analysis of various issues that Tambu had taken for granted, Tambu conceded: "I was having to revise my thinking" (p.116). Therefore, Nyasha was the agent of her emerging identity. Nyasha patiently worked on Tambu's consciousness so that she could view the concealed patterns of Babamukuru's oppression. Soon, Tambu learnt to see through Babamukuru's oppressive tendencies. All along, she had been "a paragon of feminine decorum, principally because I hardly ever talked unless spoken to, and then only to answer with the utmost respect whatever question had been asked" (p.155).

At first, Tambu lacked the strength of voice to oppose Babamukuru and only spoke her opposition to him privately in the crevices of her mind. For instance, when Babamukuru wanted to force Tambudzai to attend her parents' arranged wedding, she was very much opposed to the idea which she felt made her parents laughing stock of the village. She was deeply affected and "could not sleep for nights on end" (p.163). However, she failed to speak out her opinion on the matter. Muchemwa has viewed lack of voice as "a sign of want and absence" (2002:4). Denying someone the voice to articulate oneself has psychological effects on the victim who can only engage in private conversations. The gap between Tambudzai's unstated views and her response to Babamukuru is revealed when she agreed to go for the wedding when Babamukuru spoke to her, yet, inwardly, she rebelled and protested as her interior monologue shows: "Do not take me at all. I don't want to be in your stupid wedding', I wanted to shout" (p.164). Instead of voicing her actual views, Tambu "quietly and politely" responded: "[v]ery well, Babamukuru. That will make things much easier for everybody" (p.164). This illustrates Tambudzai's alienation from herself. Her alienation is captured through the metaphor of Tambudzai slipping in and out of her voice. Tambudzai privately condemned her failure to speak up and admitted that she "had not taken a stand on many issues since coming to the mission... thinking that it was because there had been no reason to, that when the time came I would be able to do it" (p.164). However, Tambu's emerging identity was revealed when, through the growing influence of Nyasha, she reclaimed her voice.

The emerging Tambudzai was very different from the one we first meet leaving her rural home for the mission school. Once Tambudzai learnt to speak after she regained her voice, she was no longer the same ‘muted’ Tambudzai. She celebrated her reclamation of her voice: “I slipped back into my body. I found I could speak again and speak I did” (p.166). The metaphor of ‘slipping back into her body’ reflects her recovery of her voice that had been suppressed by Babamukuru. She emerged from her shell and we see traces of the old resistant Tambudzai who had challenged her father and fought Nhamo back in the village. When Babamukuru “walked into the room, without knocking and looking dangerously annoyed”, Tambudzai was finally unafraid of Babamukuru’s volcanic temper and ignored his threats (p.167). Thus, instead of being an angel that unquestioningly accepted every decision imposed by Babamukuru (her god), Tambudzai became a ‘fallen angel’ who now boldly rebelled and told her uncle: “I do not want to go to the wedding” (p.167). Tambudzai had finally succeeded to battle the inner conflict (produced by patriarchal normativity) that had kept her voice in check all along. Babamukuru was shocked by the boldness of this emerging Tambudzai who had learnt to oppose his word. He threatened her with expulsion from his home and its good life:

I am telling you! If you do not go to the wedding, you are saying you no longer want to live here. I am the head of this house. Anyone who defies my authority is an evil thing in this house, bent on destroying what I have made” (p.167).

But Tambudzai was ready to lose her place and privileges in his ‘heaven’ and endure being labelled as evil. All for the sake of the freedom to act as she pleased. Soon afterwards, she began “to pack... [her] things” (p.167) in readiness to leave the opulence of his home and its “shiny surface, every soft contour and fold... comfort and ease” (p.70). She would rather go back to the dirt of her own village home, whose floors were surfaced with dung and “exuded peculiarly human smells just as the goat pen smelt goaty and the cattle kraal bovine” than lose her voice (p.70). Tambu’s recovery of the power to articulate was an act of defiance by a young girl refusing to be instructed by patriarchal normativity where women were expected to defer to men. Her possession of speech after a period marked by talking to herself signified her reclamation of the “authority to speak oneself, others and the world” that she had temporarily lost when she came to stay with Babamukuru (Muchemwa, 2002:4). This defiance underpins Tambudzai as a

young woman who has chosen self-definition as opposed to being other-defined. The power to articulate enabled her to protest, further underlining the crucial role of voice. The boldness of her actions contradict the patriarchal misrepresentation of women as weak and passive.

Tambu was later severely punished by Babamukuru for choosing a path of rebellion. She received “fifteen lashes, having turned fifteen in April” (p.169) and was asked to assume the duties of the maid for two weeks. The spirit with which she carried out this punishment reveals how much she treasured independence. Tambudzai “went about these chores... with a deep and grateful masochistic delight: to me that punishment was the price of my newly acquired identity” (p.169). Such delight confirms the joy produced by the power to control one’s life. Although this might appear as the story of a young girl rebelling against the oppressiveness of patriarchy, her actions have a global appeal as they portend women’s potential to attain freedom from oppressive structures. The punishment that Tambudzai received reveals that there is a price that many women have paid for choosing to move from their muted condition to voice. Notwithstanding this, Tambudzai showed great courage to confront anything. Towards the end of her story, she has totally changed. She now has a different view of her old hero, Babamukuru. For instance, as they travelled together, Tambudzai recounts: “We did not talk on the drive back to Umtali, Babamukuru and I, and this was as things should be.... I forced myself to sleep; there was nothing to keep me awake except thoughts of Nyasha” (p.202). Thus, Tambudzai had undergone change by the end of the story. She evolved as the narrative progressed and was no longer as naïve as she used to be. She no longer took Babamukuru for a saint nor was she awestruck by his aura as she did when she first went to live with him at the mission school. By her own admission, she had now become urbane and refined: “sophistication is acquired quickly” (p.202). She was different from the unsophisticated girl she was when she first left her poor rural home who described the “exhilarating experience” (p.58) of boarding a car for the first time and struggled to “describe the sensations that swamped me when Babamukuru started the car” (p.58). This hopeful end of the narrative is a literary device exploited by Dangarembga to express how time is an important factor in remaking women and shaping their identities.

It is clear that the agent for Tambu's metamorphosis was Nyasha, who also learnt so much from her. She helped Tambu to become the epitome of women's resistance. Tambu's movement to the mission school was critical because it enabled her to learn a great deal about challenging patriarchal normativity and protecting one's interests from Nyasha, who had a transformative effect on her. Going from her rural home to the mission school opened her up to some hidden truths and myths about patriarchal oppression that were revealed to her by Nyasha. Nhamo's death offered Tambu new found mobility, and location, which she described as "my transplantation" (p.59). Her freedom to travel out of the temporal and spatial boundaries of the poor, rural and patriarchal domestic space into which she was born, was the source of her escape. The greatest benefit from her travel and 'transplantation' was that it offered her imaginative expansion as she could now associate and learn from, Nyasha, Babamukuru's rebellious daughter. Her travel and exposure to the better resourced home and to the world greatly impacted on her development. Therefore, mobility was an important part of the process of her becoming an empowered person, confirming Nyasha's argument earlier that for women to escape entrapment, they "have to keep moving... Getting involved in this and that, finding out one thing and another. Moving, all the time" (96). Her consciousness was awakening from feeling "uncomfortable" to oppose Babamukuru whom she said "was taking on ogre-like proportions in my unconscious mind" (p.170), into a woman who could "question things and refuse to be brainwashed" (p.204). As the main character and narrator, Tambu's emerging identity makes NC a powerful novel about women challenging patriarchal normativity. The role that Nyasha played shows women as powerful agents in the construction of fellow women's emerging identities.

#### **4.2.5 Women rejecting patriarchal views about chastity and wifhood.**

Patriarchal control over women's bodies has been an area around which most women have historically faced acute oppression (Cixous, 2011). hooks has observed: "A central issue for feminist activists has been the struggle to obtain for women the right to control their bodies" (1984:52). The oppressiveness of patriarchal normativity has been shown, historically, in the "socioethical doctrine which held that women's primary virtue was chastity" (Gibson, 2006:2). This left many women open to charges and accusations of unchastity and, ultimately, facing the wrath of social censure. Patriarchal normativity's oppressive demand for chastity, perhaps

reflects men's fear that while "[t]he relationship between mother and child is incontestable... [t]he biological connection to the father [can be contested because it only] occurs through their mother" (Narismulu, 1999:72). Thus, to hijack women's productivity and incontestable rights over the child, patriarchal normativity constructed marriage and wifedom as a must for women who had to preserve themselves and remain chaste for their future husband, who, in some cases, was already married or was quite old. Women have had to endure the severity of such patriarchal notions that limited the choices open to them.

For a long time, marriage has been portrayed in literature as an area in which women have been oppressed and denied choice. As an example, Flora Nwapa's novel, *Efuru*, which has been cited as the first novel by a Nigerian woman writer (Griffiths, 2000), has portrayed an ideal woman as one who does not celebrate her own body at the expense of remaining unmarried and, if she got married, remaining childless. Nwapa's *Efuru* portrays society's impatience with a 'failed' women who, though married, were not reproductive as women's patriarchal voices assert:

[w]e are not going to eat happy marriage. Marriage must be fruitful. Of what use is it if your husband licks your body, worships you... and you are not productive?... a woman, a wife for that matter, should not look glamorous all the time, and not fulfill the important function she is made to fulfill (p. 172).

Such sentiments have captured the oppressive gendered experiences of many women in marriage which have denied them an alternative opinion on the matter.

In NC, Dangarembga shows some women's views towards ideas of chastity. Nyasha's bold refusal to bend to patriarchal normativity and its expectations of chastity from women is revealed in her assessment of women losing her virginity to a man:

[s]he said I was better off losing my virginity to a tampon, which wouldn't gloat

over its achievement, than to a man, who would add mine to his hoard of hymens:  
They [men] wear them around their waists, like scalps (p.96).

This underlines her defiance against the expectations of patriarchal normativity. To compound that, Dangarembga's depiction of Lucia refusing marriage and wifedom also presents a powerful resistance to the expectations placed on women by patriarchal custom. Thus, Dangarembga's novel suggests women revolting against what patriarchal normativity has traditionally imposed upon them. Meaningful liberation of women cannot ignore examining representations of shifts in the portrayal of women in matters related to marriage, an area of their oppression.

Arguing for women's assumption of more empowered gender roles, feminists felt that the "emerging [gender] roles for women [should] emphasise social and economic equality and choice regarding parenthood" (Andelin, 1974:73). Not long afterwards, Dangarembga enacts this refusal by women to have their bodies controlled by men through Lucia who fell pregnant out of wedlock and refused to get married as was expected by patriarchal normativity. This was a serious 'offence' in a society where marriage was treasured as already seen in Jeremiah's readiness to sacrifice his daughter's education which he dismissed as a 'waste' of resources because no daughter would remain in her father's house forever but would one day find a man to marry. It was such patriarchal customs that viewed marriage and wifedom in very high regard that were the source of Lucia's problems. Lucia was demonized for choosing to remain unmarried past her 'prime' age. As readers, we are shocked when malicious rumours began to spread about Lucia who now found herself blamed for her married sister, Mai Tambudzai's pregnancy-related complications:

[t]he rumours were vicious. One or two particularly bad people who knew a little about my mother's family predicted that my mother's younger sister, Lucia was the culprit because Lucia was passing her prime but was still unmarried and it would be useful for her to be called in to be a second child-bearer for my father (p.51).

There was no link between Lucia's remaining unmarried and her sister's pregnancy-related problems. This was just another strategy by men to control women and the accusation of witchcraft faced by Lucia was a ploy to force her into getting married against her wish. However, Lucia's response to societal expectations was quite revolutionary. Instead of getting married, Lucia openly defied patriarchal direction into the role of wife by falling pregnant out of wedlock and deliberately choosing to remain unmarried, despite both Takesure and Jeremiah being ready to take her hand in marriage. Having a baby outside wedlock ensured that the baby would belong to Lucia who could now have total rights over the child.

When the Sigauke family patriarchy met to discuss Lucia's pregnancy, Lucia was not invited for the 'hearing'. She took her rebellion a notch higher and invaded the meeting uninvited to defend herself so that she could not be spoken for by anyone. The irony was that, while Lucia was uninvited, the men who were suspected of being responsible for Lucia's pregnancy, Jeremiah and Takesure, sat in the 'courtroom' as part of the jury. The unfairness of this setup invokes so much criticism and Lucia boldly challenged the men. She demanded to speak. She is very different from the character of Grandmother (in Yvonne Vera's *Under the Tongue*) who "kneels, hands cupped, arms raised, head bowed, eyes closed, shoulders limp..." (p.44) and pleads with her husband for permission to speak. Lucia belongs to an emerging generation of women who aspire to be heard and not spoken for as she literally budged into the room where members of the Sigauke patriarchy were conferencing:

[s]he strode in there, her right eye glittering as it caught the yellow paraffin flame, glittering dangerously at Takesure, who wisely shrank back into his corner of the sofa.... In two strides she was beside him and, securing an ear between each finger and thumb, she dragged him to his feet (p.143,4).

Lucia clearly had no respect for the Sigauke patriarchal order that had failed to invite her to represent herself. Her uninvited entrance threw the 'courtroom' into confusion, affirming Kirkegaard who has argued: "if a woman is strong and capable and questioning and has an opinion, she would definitely be threatening their male ego. So they are not comfortable with women that way" (2007:116). She challenged all the men in the room, Babamukuru included,

and her actions left the tribunal unsure on how to deal with her. Patriarchy failed to tame Lucia, hence her being described as ‘vicious’ and ‘uncontrollable’ when she held Takesure by the ears. After she had made her point, Lucia left. By that time, the tribunal “wanted to talk to her. They wanted her to sit down and be calm and discuss the matter rationally, but Lucia had had enough and came back out” (p.145). This reveals the success of her resistance against patriarchal dictation. The portrayal of Lucia shows that she was quite freethinking and unhindered in the manner she talked to Babamukuru who was revered and feared by all in the story. Lucia did not bow down to him having “made up her mind that Babamukuru was irrelevant” (p.128). Nobody seemed sure who the real father for her child was and she did not tell either. She seemed to enjoy the confusion she had created as this conferred her privilege of being a mother but not somebody’s wife.

During the meeting, Lucia showed derision towards Takesure and Jeremiah, the two men at the centre of the controversy regarding responsibility for her pregnancy. She defiantly and openly challenged the two men:

    this man, this Jeremiah, yes, you Jeremiah, who married my sister, he has a roving eye and a lazy hand... he doesn’t want to work for it, isn’t it, Jeremiah?... As for Takesure, I don’t know what he thinks he can give me. Whatever he can do for me, I can do better for myself (p.145).

Her contempt for the two was underpinned by her quizzical question: “Tell me, Babamukuru, would you say this is a man?” (p.144). She has confidence in her own abilities. Her pride in her own capabilities as a single mother reconstructs singleness as something women need not be ashamed of but something to be cherished as a site of independence. Lucia is the embodiment of unmarried women’s liberation. Remaining unmarried liberated her from marital domesticity which has restricted many women’s freedoms. Lucia openly declared the advantages of her remaining unmarried when she bluntly stated to Babamukuru (after she had defended Tambu):

    Well, Babamukuru, maybe when you marry a woman, she is obliged to obey you. But some of us aren’t married, so we don’t know how to do it. That is why I have

been able to tell you frankly what is in my heart. It is better that way (p.171).

She had a strong opinion against marriage and its role in silencing women and was content with remaining unmarried as this ensured her independence and control over her own voice and body. Her view of marriage was that one should not just be tied to any man simply to satisfy societal obligations on marriage. This enabled her to be vocal as she could stand up to what she felt threatened her rights. Her feminist actions powerfully debunk patriarchal normativity's claims which have located women "as indeterminate human beings... gullible and voiceless" (Ifechelobi, 2014:20). Such views have denied women "a positive identity and fulfilment of self" (Ifechelobi, 2014:20) but Lucia was determined to create a positive self-identity and to live life for herself not on men's terms. She seemed ready to forge a life without a husband which she found liberating as opposed to being tied to an unhappy marriage and a controlling man. The fact that Lucia was not evicted from the Sigauke home as the tribunal had sought was victory for her and for feminism. Therefore, through her representation of Lucia as a character, Dangarembga challenges patriarchy and reconfigures patriarchal gender norms through her portrayal of womanhood outside the patriarchal confinement of matrimony.

An interesting way in which Lucia challenged patriarchal normativity is reflected in how her preferred identity was to be a mother but not a wife. She had nothing against being a mother but everything against becoming a wife, particularly to lazy irresponsible men such as Jeremiah who had "a lazy hand" and did not "want to work" (p.145) or Takesure who would not add value to her life: "[a]s for Takesure, I don't know what he thinks he can give me. Whatever he can do for me, I can do better for myself" (p.145). Her ability to decide for herself what was good for her, is a powerful claim that Dangarembga makes regarding women's rights. She delivers a powerful challenge to patriarchal normativity and its attempts to hijack women's productivity and force marriage on women.

Lucia's strengths may be linked to her freedom of expression. Her voice could not be restrained. For example, she never "waited for her 'superiors' to start enquiring about each other's health

before she opened her mouth” (p.131). Remaining unmarried gave her power over her voice and even over her body. Control over her body was seen in how she indulged in non-marital sex with both Takesure and Jeremiah only on her terms. For example, when Takesure who was desperate to have Lucia as his wife asked her to join him in the bedroom, she flatly rejected, choosing to sleep with the girls instead. However, weeks later, when the timing suited her, she decided for herself to move in and join Takesure, the same man whose advances she spurned and had denied paternity for her unborn child. She “had grown shrewd in her years of dealing with men” (p.126). She had learnt, over the years, how to manipulate men to her advantage and to dictate the nature and terms of the relationship with them. She had ultimate control over the duration of her relationship with both Jeremiah and Takesure. Like the other single women such as Nomawa and Gaba in ATDD, Lucia seemed to agree that men had their uses after all without necessarily controlling women in this new form of relationship. In ATDD, Nomawa says, “[a]ll I want from this man is a little fun on the side” (p.183). Like Lucia, she did not want the man to control her. These women might have needed men now and then but it was always at their own terms. Therefore, Lucia’s refusal to embrace marital domesticity makes her an embodiment of the liberation of women’s sexuality and women’s possession of control over their bodies. She was content with the independence that life outside marriage afforded her. She did not lack assertiveness or self-confidence even outside marriage, demystifying “cultural notions... [that] what it means to be feminine entail characteristics and behaviours associated with passivity, acquiescence, gentleness” (Karam and Afiumi, 2015:5). Behind Lucia’s back, Babamukuru, the man most feared by both men and women in the narrative, secretly admired her courage and guts to stand up, describing her as “like a man herself” (p.171). Lucia had decided against taking patriarchal direction into the role of wife and did not seem embarrassed by her status as a single parent as has often been the case with some women. This marks the emergence of a new identity of women who lay claim to sexual space, subjectivity and voice in an area that has been a site of women’s oppression. She broke out of narrow ideas of sexuality where women are expected to accept wifedom even if the man is a useless and irresponsible man. For most women, “reproduction and parenting are less of a choice” but not for Lucia who freed herself by challenging the traditional patriarchal model for being a woman. Her actions reflect the feminist goal that “individuals should be permitted to express their sexual proclivities and pursue their lifestyles as they desire” (Klinger, 2009:496; Shaw and Lee, 2009). Lucia can be viewed as the

social conscience of the feminist thrust in the novel. Through her representation of Lucia, Dangarembga advances a critical argument about the importance of social reforms and the creation of “a new society based on new values of mutual respect, cooperation and social responsibility” (hooks, 1984:19). Her novel draws on feminism and its promotion of the need to respect “the individual woman’s rights to freedom and self-determination” (hooks, 1984:23). Lucia wanted to celebrate her womanhood and ability to conceive and that was her right.

In a patriarchal society which claims that a child belonged to the father while women were denied rights of custody over the child, Lucia did not want to share parenthood with anyone as she desired exclusive parental rights over her child. By refusing to disclose who the father of her unborn child was, Lucia employed a well-executed strategy that allowed her to have full rights over her child. In this way, she had found a way of going round patriarchy’s laws of child custody that have deprived women rights over their children (as happened to Jezile in ATDD). However, the only challenge with the kind of freedom that Lucia exercised was that it trampled upon the rights of other women. This is evident in that Lucia bedded married men, her sister’s husband and Takesure who was also already married. Mai Tambu even pointed that to her:

[w]hen Lucia, just tell me, when, did you ever contain yourself? Do you ever know what it means, you who were in the blankets with my husband the moment you arrived? And with Takesure (p.140).

In that way, Lucia’s independence might have trampled upon the interests of fellow women. However, while Mai Tambu could question Lucia as she did above, the irony is that nobody attempted to hold the straying husbands (both Takesure and Jeremiah) to account. Failure to hold men to account is a serious issue that has not only resulted in many broken homes but increased the rates of HIV in Africa. Thus, the ‘dubious ‘privileges’ that men have within patriarchy should be challenged.

In order to survive the harshness of life as a single parent, Lucia took a bold move of seeking economic independence. Many feminist writers such as hooks (1984), Uwakweh, (1998),

Thornham (2000) and others have emphasised on the centrality of economic freedom as fundamental in promoting women's independence and struggles for equality. Bernstein underscored this decades ago when she stated: "When women become wage earners they are on the way to forcing open the doors to social, legal and political equality" (1978:36). This means that even if Lucia had won her battle against control over her body, without economic independence, she would still find herself forced to seek a man for her economic needs (Thornham, 2000). Thornham has argued that women "have to struggle for control over both production and reproduction" (2000:7). As a step towards her economic independence, Lucia secured a job as a cook at the mission school with the help of Babamukuru. Thus, something positive in Babamukuru's character was brought out as a result of Lucia's self-willed character.

The strategy that Lucia deployed in order to gain economic independence is interesting: she sought Babamukuru's help. After securing the job, Lucia "knelt in front of Babamukuru, energetically clapping her hands" (p.158). Her actions were sharply criticized by Nyasha who felt that it was wrong for a woman to 'debase' herself to get a man's help. Nyasha was disappointed by how Lucia had "been groveling ever since she arrived to get Daddy to help her out" (p.160). Nyasha's opinion was that "[t]hat sort of thing shouldn't be necessary. Really it shouldn't" (p.160). Dangarembga seems to be addressing some radical feminist views that have suggested that women do not need men. According to Lucia, seeking help from men who are able to help women to stand on their own feet even if it means belittling oneself in the process should not be frowned upon as it is a tact and strategy that women have to employ to get what they need. Lucia's response reflects Kandiyoti's argument about women bargaining within patriarchy as a strategy to maximize their survival and life options within patriarchy (1988). Lucia explained how she had bargained with Babamukuru: "Babamukuru wanted to be asked, so I asked. And now we both have what we wanted, isn't it?" (p.160). Lucia's views advocate women not to hesitate using men in order to get what they want. She 'grovelled' and submitted to Babamukuru only because that was the only way she could get his help. Babamukuru wanted respect from Lucia who wanted a job. Thus, her pretended acceptance of a subordinate status was only temporary and a tact she deployed to get what she wanted. Through Lucia, Dangarembga argues that women should negotiate within patriarchy and use diverse strategies so as to get what they want. These strategies are the coping mechanisms to survive the patriarchal

constraints (Kandiyoti, 1998). With her new found economic independence, “Lucia never went back to the homestead to live” (p159). Her employment liberated her and she was able to totally abandon Takesure and ditch him from her life. In her pursuit of greater freedom in the future, Lucia

told us that she was going to Grade One classes. She was so proud. She had not been to school before. She showed us her books, declared that she could already feel her mind beginning to think more efficiently. So Lucia stirred the great drums of sadza at the girls’ hostel and went to her Grade One classes in the evenings (p.160).

At the end of the year, Lucia “passed her Grade One so well that they were moving her into Grade Three” (p.196). The representations of the progress that Lucia made inspires so much confidence to the feminist struggle and single mothers desirous of sexual and economic liberation.

A core message that Dangarembga delivers through her portrayal of Lucia is that individual women should be prepared to stand up for their rights. It is critical to note that though solidarity among women has been defined as “a crucial technology of survival and a life jacket that shields women in the face of exacting challenges posed by patriarchy and society in general” (Muwati and Mguni, 2012:xx), women have not always stood with each other. Indeed, women’s solidarity “strengthens [their] resistance struggle” (hooks, 1984:44), yet, as Dangarembga shows in NC, many women’s struggles have been “a one-woman show” and individualistic (p.173). For instance, while Lucia was threatened by eviction from the Sigauke family homestead because she was judged to have ‘transgressed’ patriarchal expectations by falling pregnant out of wedlock, the various women around her lacked courage to stand up with her. The women made promises to fight from Lucia’s side and some “maininis threatened to become quite violent in their opposition to the system” (p.137). However, the women’s promises of solidarity were empty promises. At the end of the day, the women did not muster enough courage to act on their promises and threats. As a result, Lucia fought her battles alone. All women looked up to Maiguru for leadership because she was educated as she was a teacher who held a Master’s degree. Lucia even pleaded with her: “So what do we do, Maiguru? We are looking to you to give us a plan” (p.138). However, “Maiguru grew distant” and declared to the women: “This

matter is not my concern.... Am I of their totem? I am not. I was taken.... I shall just keep quiet and go to bed” (p.138). Clearly, in women’s struggle for independence, Dangarembga shows the possibilities of women having to engage in individual struggles. Lack of bonding amongst women and their failure to see the relatedness of their oppressive circumstances is a serious concern that Dangarembga seeks to address in this novel. In the silences and inaction of Dangarembga’s women, Lucia fought her battles against the jury all alone. The other women “*just watched her as she strode in there*” (p.143; emphasis added).

Lucia demonstrates some individual women’s abilities “to stand up in the face of it all and remain standing even if there’s no one behind” (Abraham 1999:4). The other women lacked courage to stand in Lucia’s corner but, behind her back, Tete and Maiguru applauded Lucia’s act of resistance as revealed in how they “puckered their faces up and dissolved into helpless giggles” (p.148) as they recounted Lucia’s bravery to challenge the men the previous night. Maiguru even added that the men had “asked for it. They shouldn’t meddle with women like Lucia!” (p.148). Much as they may secretly enjoy the way Lucia challenged the men, we still blame their lack of courage and inaction when she appealed for solidarity to strengthen her path of resistance. As long as women continue to lack courage to intervene in fellow women’s battles, then, their struggles will remain singular, lacking the power of numbers. Audre Lorde has made a rallying call for women not to keep silent but to speak up and join forces whenever their fellow woman is confronted with abuse and oppression:

[m]y silences had not protected me. Your silence will not protect you. But for every word spoken, for every attempt I had made to speak those truths for which I am still speaking, I had made contact with other women (1984:41).

Thus, women should participate in fellow women’s wars because all women’s struggles are connected.

What has silenced women, however, is that it is not easy to develop consciousness and courage at the same time, and particularly when needed. Maiguru might not have stood with Lucia or

even her daughter, Nyasha, in their time of need but what is gratifying to note is that towards the end of the novel, she learnt to stand up and fight oppression. In her diatribe against her oppression as a wife, Maiguru now protested against her husband:

I am tired of my house being a hotel for your [extended] family. I am tired of being a housekeeper for them. I am tired of being nothing in a home I am working myself sick to support.... I am sick of it Babawa Chido. Let me tell you, I have had enough! (p.172).

At last, Maiguru was emerging from the shadows of her husband's dominance and speaking out the frustrations she had bottled up for long. Her repetition of the statement 'I am tired' emphasises her determination to change her situation. She was tired of patriarchal normativity's notions of life for women where "everything's laid out for you.... Even the way you think" (p.173). She craved for a transformation of such social structures, and this identifies the novel with feminism and its goals (Aina, 1998; Nnaemeka, 1998; Ifechelobi, 2014). She resolved to leave her matrimonial home and her actions found approval from her own daughter. Instead of being distressed and weeping that her mother was leaving her, "Nyasha was impressed... [and actually] went to hug her mother goodbye at the door" (p173). She realised that by rebelling against her father's dominance, her mother was actually saving herself. Maiguru did not grow cold feet at the last moment as Babamukuru had hoped. She calmly

packed a suitcase, put on her travelling clothes, had her breakfast and left... there was something large and determined about Maiguru in the way that she made up her mind and, making no fuss, carried out her plan (p.173).

It is shocking to discover the determination of Maiguru, who had, till now, always obeyed patriarchal customs, toiled to show subordination to her husband and to ensure that "her Daddy-sweet would not be disappointed" (p.164). This was the same Maiguru who, previously, had not intervened but had watched quietly as her daughter was disciplined "with an hour-long sermon and fourteen lashes" by aamukuru (p.118). She had not helped Lucia as she "thought that Lucia ought to suffer the consequences of her fecund appetites" (p.138). Though her resistance against

patriarchal oppression was long in coming, what is remarkable is that she finally managed to do so. Her rebellion sent a powerful message to Babamukuru who had taken her for granted.

When Babamukuru succeeded in bringing her back after five days of her absence, his treatment of his wife was now totally different. Maiguru was also a changed person from the former 'docile' woman she was.

Maiguru had been away for only five days, but the change had done her good. She smiled more often and less mechanically, fussed over us less and was more willing or able to talk about sensible things. Although she still called Babamukuru her Daddy-sweet, most of her baby-talk had disappeared (p.175).

This reflects her changing identity. On his part, Babamukuru now invited Maiguru's opinions before making family decisions. This might look like a small achievement but this was powerful as she achieved her husband's consideration in decision-making. Maiguru's rebellion forced Babamukuru to reconsider patriarchal assumptions that made him view his wife as the other. This was no mean achievement because Babamukuru was actually giving up "a great deal of what they [men] have been taught to value" as definitions of being a man (Johnson, 2014:198). At first, he was surprised that Maiguru had different views to his but he had learnt from her rebellion not to be dictatorial. Though somewhat reluctantly, still he walked the new path he had never walked before. For instance, after Tambu had won a scholarship to go to Sacred Heart, a multi-racial secondary school, Babamukuru was firmly against Tambu taking up the offer but changed his views after Maiguru pointed out that she thought it was important for Tambu to take up the offer. Evidently, Maiguru now had voice in the family matters, a voice that had previously been muted. Maiguru's growing influence in the home was also realised in how she "flatly refused to spend another Christmas catering for a family of two dozen" (p.182). She did not go to stay in the rural areas for the Christmas holiday like had been the family custom. Her actions left her husband in the lurch because "for ten days of the Christmas season, Babamukuru drove back and forth between the homestead and the mission" (p.182). What this highlights is the power of women's resistance in achieving what one sets out to do. What makes Maiguru's story quite

interesting is that towards the end, she revealed her emerging identity as a wife who no longer allowed her husband to dominate her. She refused to go along with what she found oppressive in patriarchy and no longer ratified its subordination of women. This was a form of power that she demonstrated. Drawing from what Maiguru gained from her rebellion, it is important for women to refuse blind compliance with oppressive patriarchal customs. Women need to realise that patriarchy depends “on women to go along with male privilege, to prop up men’s egos” (Johnson, 2014:187). If they choose to challenge and not to go along, so much will change.

A clearer picture of women’s emerging identities that this thesis has been exploring is provided in the last paragraph of the novel. The concluding paragraph allows us to make a juxtaposition of the identity of Tambudzai at the beginning of the narrative and the new Tambudzai we see at the end of the story. By the end of the narrative, Tambudzai has grown up and has shed off certain behaviours that included her fear of Babamukuru and dropped her ‘feminine decorum’ because she now spoke to him with no fear. She had assumed a new identity of an assertive teenager and she now said: “something in my mind began to assert itself, to question things and refuse to be brainwashed” (p.204). For instance, when Babamukuru wanted to take her home and Tambu felt that she could not leave Nyasha in her present depressed condition, Tambu said, to herself: “I knew I could not leave. So my uncle had to be told. I had to tell him that I would not go” (p.199). When Babamukuru came back, intending to take Tambu, she asked “in a small, timid voice to be allowed to stay... for a few more days. Nobody was more surprised by my audacity than I was. Babamukuru did not answer, but I was not taken home” (p.199). She had totally changed because this was not the same old Tambudzai. She had evolved to be able see speak her mind, and see through Babamukuru’s mistreatment of the women around him.

#### **4.2.6 Conclusion**

This chapter has explored Ngcobo and Dangarembga’s representations of expanded identities of women that do not fit patriarchal normativity and its oppressive definitions and expectations of women. The selected texts both show radical shifts in how women see themselves, other women, and men. These novels challenge patriarchal depictions of women based on erroneous

assumptions and notions of women as weak. They represent the resilience and courage of African women characters who were not crushed by the toll of pain produced by unjust political and socio-economic structures they lived in, the poverty of their circumstances that made life extremely difficult for them or the roles and identities that patriarchal normativity associated with women. The portrayals of women show many women who somehow managed to assert themselves and create for themselves spaces to resist, and exercise their agency in spite of their abject situations and the physical hardships they faced. Such portrayals of women draw “attention to the larger transformative possibilities that are released when the material and signifying functions of the customary gender hierarchy are exposed” (Daymond, 2004:138).

Many women have been shown as capable agents in the construction of women’s changing identities. Owing to representations of various women characters speaking out against oppression, I conclude that there is a huge problem in the ways that women’s identities have been represented in patriarchal discourses. The overarching argument of the chapter draws from the lead of Ngcobo and Dangarembga to challenge traditional patriarchal representations of women that have often portrayed them as weak and docile. Ngcobo and Dangarembga's character representations have located women outside gendered and racial spaces, challenging and disrupting sexual taboos and other hegemonic excesses implicated in their exploitation. The predominant constructions of women in the novels selected for study not only “give more positive role models for women readers” (Pilcher and Whelehan, 2004:138), but men readers as well, if not more so. Some facets of life through which women’s identities of strength have been examined in this chapter include women’s critical roles in fighting apartheid oppression where they have been shown taking leading roles as defenders of their communities’ interests. The women might not have had guns but they devised diverse strategies to resist, and possessed an indomitable spirit that was ‘stronger than armies’ (Gibbs, 1953) Thus, the texts’ representations of women debunk patriarchy’s normative misconceptions of women.

## CHAPTER 5: Conclusion

### 5.1 Introduction

This research has examined the extent to which selected literary texts by feminist women writers from Southern Africa contest patriarchal normativity and its oppressive assumptions that harm women by denying them positive identities, agency and equality with men. The research has critiqued the underlying contradictions and conflicts between women's definitions of their own needs, interests and aspirations to live fulfilling lives and the expectations imbedded in patriarchal normativity and intersecting systems of privilege. A textual analysis of representations of African women challenging patriarchal normativity and struggling for emancipation was carried out. The impact that women's resistance and challenge against patriarchal normativity and intersecting systems of oppression have on their conditions and their relations with both men and women was then analysed.

The selected literary texts through which the objectives of the study were analysed are Laretta Ngcobo's *And They Didn't Die* (ATDD) and Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* (NC). Both narratives creatively deal with the study's central concern of repositioning women and rethinking their gender identities. These texts have been useful in highlighting African women's resistance and the impact of their changing roles in challenging patriarchal normativity. They have assisted in analysing the potential of women as agents in the construction of positive identities for women. The selected texts have also aided in reflecting on the impact of women's individual and collective strength to resist systems of abuse and exploitation that harm the quality of life. Drawing on African feminist criticism to analyse the novels enriched the study by opening up the researcher's understanding of women's concerns, feminist theoretical issues and goals. As a theory, African Feminism provided and equipped me with critical analytical tools that broadened my intellectual capacity to examine how women, particularly African women have borne the impact of different hierarchical social systems of domination that include colonialism, racism patriarchy and capitalism, among others.

## **5.2 Overarching Research Findings, Research Strengths and Research Limitations**

An important finding of the research has been the revelation of the critical role played by feminist literature in challenging oppressive beliefs, practices, stereotypes and values rooted in patriarchal normativity and related systems of privilege and domination. The novels' portrayal of women's issues has shown how the writers, as well as feminist literature, engage with critical issues of the attainment of human rights by all underprivileged people, and creatively deal with issues of advancing democracy.

Another strength is that the novels also offer important representations of women challenging patriarchal normativity. Both novels demonstrate how feminist literature questions the injustice imbedded in patriarchal normativity and other oppressive systems that intersect with it. The novels deal with the provision of environments that safeguard the dignity, respect, needs, interests and humanity of all citizens of the world. Thus, a critical finding of the study is African Feminist literature's immense contribution to flagging the potential and need for the transformation of repressive gender identities and roles.

Another significant finding of the study has been its affirmation that various systems of privilege have worked within and alongside patriarchy to undermine women's lives and livelihoods. The study confirmed arguments by African feminists that it is not only patriarchal structures, prejudices and values that have threatened and compromised the quality of lives of African women. It showed how other systems of privilege that include colonialism, capitalism and racism are forms of patriarchy because they particularly destroy the lives of the majority of African women and undermine the quality of their lives. Just like African patriarchy, colonialism, racism and capitalism have exposed African women to oppression and various forms of tyranny and abuse. The study's findings affirm Crenshaw's argument that "the experiences of women of color are frequently the product of intersecting patterns of racism and sexism", among other oppressive systems of domination and privilege (1993:1243). The study has, therefore, concluded that it is imperative that patriarchal normativity and all systems of oppression that have intersected with it to promote inequalities and marginalise women's needs

and priorities be challenged to create a more just society. Attainment of gender and social justice would ensure

equity... [and] the right of [all] women to freedom of choice and the power to control their own lives within and outside of the home; having control over their lives and their bodies is essential to ensure a sense of dignity and autonomy for women (Aina, 1998:66).

Another overarching finding of this study is that African women should be integrated into the economy as important members who cannot continue to be undermined (Razavi and Miller, 1995). African women need to play key roles that ensure family productivity and survival. The study's portrayal of African women who have visibility, agency and voice, in spite of their vulnerability, as a consequence of the oppressiveness of patriarchal normativity and other forms of tyranny, testifies how critical resilience is. The women's remarkable courage and strength to confront their challenges makes a powerful statement about endurance and resistance in life. Their powerful resilience moves them beyond patriarchal and racist stereotypical roles which trivialise women's roles in society. The powerful women characters such as Nosizwe, Nondo, Jezile, who participated in the liberation struggle, that Ngcobo in particular depicts, show that African women are not only wives and mothers. Rather, they need to be integrated into the economy to play more critical roles that would ensure greater national and regional productivity and growth. Such portrayal of the critical role of women clearly stimulates discussion on and proposes alternative views to the many erroneous gendered perspectives about women and men. Thus, the reconfiguration of women's identities underscored in the study creates new aesthetic values that defy patriarchal normativity. This creates in women readers "new ways of self-realization, new forms of knowledge" that make the world a home for everyone (Muchemwa, 2013:114). NoViolet Bulawayo has also argued for the "need of new ways of imagining our [women's] identities, new ways of seeing the world and seeing our future" (Greenman, 2014). This potential to reimagine and transform oppressive gender identities and relations is highlighted in the study.

Given that the whole world is seized with attempts to transform society so that it is not sexist or women-oppressive, it means that the ideological dissidence in feminist literature that this study shows where women subvert patriarchal normativity is important. Literature should increasingly challenge all oppressive systems as a means of remapping women's roles and place in society. The study has highlighted that women can have the courage to reject oppressive systems of their societies especially when they engage in sisterly solidarity. Rural African women's political solidarity in ATDD forced the apartheid government to reconsider its prior underestimation of women, reflecting how solidarity emboldens resistance. The sisterly solidarity between Nyasha and Tambu in NC was also an agent of change in moulding a more assertive Tambu whose worldview of the oppressiveness of patriarchy showed qualitative change and growth as a result of that sisterly relationship. Thus, women's unity and solidarity has great potential in women's struggles against patriarchal normativity.

Another significant finding of the study is that the abuse and violence against women have not been exclusively perpetuated by the actions of men. Both Ngcobo and Dangarembga represent how some actions by women have inflicted pain on fellow women. Women to women oppression has been as a result of differences in their concerns, needs and challenges based on race, class, culture, status and social position in society, religious differences and others etc. The study established how different systems of privilege seek to pit women against one another along lines of race, class and even relative gender privileges some women have access to when compared to others. Racial, gender and class attitudes have accorded women unequal statuses, power and positions implying that their opportunities and access to some privileges have differed even among them. The unequal power and opportunities conferred on different women by race, capitalist interests and the patriarchal structures are divisive. It is through the promotion of some women to relative privilege, that systems of privilege seek to divide and rule over women and make them accomplices in the oppression of others. The divisions erected by systems of domination that have sought to separate white women from African women and other races, and privileged women from those disempowered dismiss any claims of a common sisterhood (hooks, 1984). Thus, although it is true that all "women in almost every field of adult endeavour must still labor under the presumption of being inferior to men" (Johnson, 2014:22), yet, the literary texts show that even among women themselves, there are women who have been regarded as

inferior to other women and have faced more forms of oppression than others. This has been evidenced by their exclusion in economic spaces and other areas where fellow women have gained access to privilege. Thus, the study has revealed the divisiveness of systems of privilege which have pitted women against each other by according some women some modicum of privilege denied fellow women.

Another interesting finding of the study is that political solidarity created spaces for women to challenge patriarchal normativity as both men and women worked together to fight systems of oppression. The texts reveal how, in the struggle against apartheid/colonial and class oppression, African women's concerns were closely meshed and intertwined with those of African men who faced oppression within racial and class relations. This is because the oppression of African men at work places also impacted on their abilities to provide for their families. African women are, therefore, portrayed showing concern for the marginality of African men as well as being committed to the liberation of many African men and boys who suffered subordination of the racial system and were denied agency of life within socially-constructed hierarchies of masculinities. Thus, the study has established as crucial, the importance of African women and men working together against patriarchal normativity in the same way they united against colonial and racial subjugation. The strength of this study's finding about the potential for solidarity and complementarity between women and men is a powerful response to radical feminist views that have widened the gap between women and men by dismissing all men as "members of the oppressor class" who cannot be trusted (Metcalf, 1989:15). The research promotes ideas of women and men drawing closer together in complementarity, co-existing peacefully and struggling for the improvement of their conditions together (Steady, 1987). When women and men draw close together and see the humanity in each other, there is potential to create lasting peace. This affirms "[r]esearch [that] has found that when a society treats its women and girls well, it has greater stability and prosperity" (Hudson, Ballif-Spanvil, Caprioli and Emmett, 2012:12). Therefore, there is great potential for development if there is gender justice.

Another finding of the study was that drawing on African Feminism to analyse the novels has fundamental impact on understanding the concerns that African women have. As an analytical tool, African Feminism affirms and advances the rights of women. It does not just question and challenge African patriarchal structures that subjugate women but also the intersecting systems of domination such as racism, class privileges and others that have equally subjugated women. African Feminism reveals that white and African forms of patriarchy are not exclusive of each other because both ultimately leave African women as the worst affected. In this way, through African Feminism, the study found out the connectedness of different systems of privilege. The study reasserted that at all patriarchy thrives on denying women equal rights with men but these rights are not just gender based but cover other socially-constructed areas of privilege (Lorentzen, 2014).

The study located African Feminism as an important theory in analysing and questioning patriarchal normativity and its interaction with various oppressive systems that have reduced women's access to liberated existence. African Feminism has been an important tool of agency and resistance that has enabled writers to address women's concerns, challenges, needs as well as questioning patriarchal structures that marginalise women and seek to deny women their rights as citizens. In this regard, the selected texts are evident of African feminist activism as the writers draw on feminist approaches.

### **5.3 Possible solutions to some challenges confronting women discussed in the research**

The study has identified diverse challenges produced by patriarchal normativity and intersecting systems of privilege that jointly produced and shaped inequalities that make a majority of women struggle to meet most of their needs. The major challenge has centred on the state of landlessness imposed on African women. The colonial/apartheid land laws pushed Africans from their original productive land, shunted them off to crowded arid land, and this made African people's lives insecure. The land was not only small to cater for their agricultural needs but it was also very poor. African women particularly felt the impact of landlessness because the land, though poor, was never viewed as theirs as it belonged to their men who gained access to various

entitlements due to patriarchal normativity. The women could only access the land by being granted rights by men. Mai Tambu in NC had to plead with her husband, Jeremiah, to provide land for their daughter, Tambu, to work on to raise her school fees. Similarly, in ATDD, after Jezile was divorced and sent back to her parents' home, the family patriarchy had to sit down first before she could have a piece of land for her own house. She did not have her own garden plot but used her mother's garden. All this reflects how accessing land has been a serious issue for African women.

In spite of the serious challenge of the impoverishment of the land they worked on, both texts represent African women's resilience and productive roles on the family land where they continue to assume "a substantial responsibility for food production" (Razawi and Miller, 1995:4). African women characters such as Mai Tambu, Tambu's grandmother and Tambu herself (in NC), just like Jezile and many women in ATDD are depicted as hard working and not afraid to confront their challenges with strength. However, toiling on barren small pieces of land was a serious challenge that put their labour to waste and exposed their families to poverty. Food security remains a serious crisis that continues to haunt most African families and countries at large. A possible solution to landlessness would be for postcolonial governments in Africa to review the various colonial land policies that dispossessed Africans of their land. New land policies should be promulgated by African governments to reverse the colonial land imbalances. Such laws should allow African women opportunities to own productive land for agricultural use. Laws that encourage women's agricultural productivity would greatly strengthen food security as well as improve the quality of women's lives because African women are the ones engaged more in agricultural productive roles. Improved access to land by women would not only "impact positively on national development" (Razavi & Miller, 1995:5) but would also enhance the quality of life for African women and their dependents.

However, to ensure that African women do not remain vulnerable to exploitative patriarchal normativity that granted men decision-making powers and control, African governments should make legislation that allows women to own land under their own names. This suggestion stems from the realisation that women's inferior position and status in life is rooted in patriarchal

normativity that has been responsible for greatly reducing African women's chances of control over land. Thus, any land redistribution that postcolonial African governments may adopt should not ignore how patriarchal structures have also been responsible for limiting African women's access to land and other resources by granting unearned entitlements to men. Adopting measures that counter men's control and authority over land ownership would allow women greater autonomy to make own decisions as well as freedom and liberation from patriarchal normativity that has subordinated them to men. Women's land and property rights should be protected by the Constitution to avoid situations like Jezile (in ATDD) confronted when she separated from Siyalo, moved back to her parents' home and was forced to restart and reorder her life all over again. All the years and life's efforts at her husband's home were lost the moment she got divorced. Divorce meant that she could not benefit from any development she helped bring about in her husband's home all these years of her marriage. That continues to be a serious challenge faced by many women today as cases of divorce are common and on the increase. The insecurity created for women by cases of marital discord such as being divorced/ abandoned (as in the case of Jezile and Nomawa in ATDD) or widowed (as in Gaba's situation in ATDD) should be prevented by the act of the Constitution that protects women's land and household rights. Women's access to land would enable them to build homes and acquire property for themselves and their families.

The study has also dealt with the serious challenge that many African women have lacked economic autonomy that could offer them opportunity to improve the quality of their own lives and provide for their dependents. The study shows the danger of women having to depend on their husbands for survival as some men are irresponsible and may fail to provide for their families. Without regular incomes, many African women who single-handedly confronted the pressure of parenting found it extremely difficult to satisfy their survival needs without economic means. They strategized within conditions of extreme want and deprivation to secure the livelihoods of their children. Given the study's portrayal that in reality, more women than men have assumed greater responsibility to ensure the survival of families in many African homes, it means that more should be done to enhance African women's abilities to fend for their families. They should access adequate government support to help them start various economic activities.

Gaining economic independence is important as it has been observed that “the origin of women’s subordination was linked to their exclusion from the market-place” (Razavi & Miller, 1995:5). A solution would be by bringing women more fully “into the productive sphere” so that they too can “make a positive contribution to development” (Razavi & Miller, 1995:5). The impact of embracing women in the market place would greatly improve the women’s economic status which would render them independent. There is, therefore, need to educate women to help them gain access to critical economic space. That will enable them to take central roles in providing or fending for the family. Universities and colleges can be encouraged to run short courses to educate women and empower them on how to increase and empower their economic participation. Women’s access to land discussed in the paragraph above would then come handy because land is critical for women to set up their own economic income-generating projects. Therefore, as a solution, the economy in all countries should be opened up to provide women economic opportunities to participate and fend for their families. African governments should adopt or continue to implement affirmative action in various areas of the economy, including in education and employment opportunities as a means of empowering women and redressing past inequalities. Because patriarchal normativity has widened gaps between women and men in virtually all areas of life, deliberate steps must be taken to bridge this historic imbalance. Empowering women is crucial to ensure families do not starve because survival of children continues to be largely dependent on women’s efforts. Therefore, women should be empowered more.

One of the most worrying situations raised by Ngcobo is the representation of women’s insecurity from the threat of sexual exploitation. The African women in Sigageni are constantly threatened by rape by soldiers, especially in the absences of their men. They are raped at the work place (as is the case with Jezile), sexually abused in jails and this is compounded by their general lack of control over the number over children they want to have. Governments across the world should partner Non Governmental Organisations, agencies and others in increasing awareness of women’s sexual and other rights. Deliberate efforts in schools to promote women’s rights may lead to attitude changes among men and boys. Women should also be empowered

regarding their rights and privileges as a way of reversing assumptions produced by years of patriarchal socialisation.

#### **5.4 Significant contributions of the research to scholarship**

One important contribution of this study to scholarship is its demonstration that literature can be used to challenge systems that are oppressive to women. The study has made a careful selection of literary texts which help portray women's remarkable strength and great capacity to confront many challenges where patriarchal normativity has historically underestimated them. The study has shown the resilience and transformative power of women, whether as individuals or as a collective, to engage oppressive systems and negotiate women's position and status in life. It is not secondary characters that carry the feminist vision of engaging with the search to transform oppressive relations but women protagonists. That is critical.

The study also makes a substantial claim about the remarkable power of women's collective strength against systems of oppression. The significance of women's solidarity in strengthening their resistance against men's exploitation should be affirmed. There is power in numbers which cannot be attained if one works as an individual.

In a focus on patriarchal normativity, the study has also found ways to look at how many African men have faced oppression. The creative writers selected for study and feminists have shown concerns with the position of the disempowered men. The study has shown that though not oppressed to the same degree as most women, African men within colonial, racial and capitalist discourses have never been treated as equal to their white counterparts and have often suffered racial repression alongside their women. The gendered reality of men within patriarchy implies that gender is not just about women but women and men (Kimmel, 2005; Lorentzen, 2014). Unfortunately, "most men do not know that they are gendered beings" and fail to realise that they too benefit from feminist struggle for the transformation of oppressive systems (Kimmel, 2005:106). The creative writers selected for study and feminists' concern and attention to the

plight of men offers adequate justification why men should support feminist struggles against patriarchal normativity and intersecting systems of oppression. Thus, this study's fundamental contribution to gender analysis is that men's experiences of oppression should not be overlooked or trivialised by women or men. It also found that although African feminists like Tsitsi Dangarembga and Laretta Ngcobo pay close attention to the serious oppression of women and that of some men, it is not only women who should be concerned by gender oppression but men too. The gender oppression suffered by men (and women) should be men's concerns too because they too face the subordination of the dominant men, mostly dominant white men.

The inclusive approach to the study of gender helps show how much men need to join hands with feminist women in the struggle against systems of privilege rather than denounce feminists and give them all sorts of negative labels. African feminists have criticised how, amongst some African men, "the mere mention of feminism or Women's Liberation... [has often drawn] anger and rejection from a majority of the menfolk" (Chukukere, 1998:134). However, this study's significant input is that African men's realisation of their own gendered realities should make them understand that gender transformation benefits both women and men. Deriving from that, it is indeed a critical contribution that all feminist discussions of gender inequalities should include the precarious position of some men who also feel victimised and threatened by oppressive gender relations and expectations. This will have a great impact in making visible to men why they need to participate alongside feminist women who, for long, have been championing against oppressive systems and for social transformation to make the world more equal. The power of numbers will make us challenge oppressive systems in a more serious way. However, it is not just about men speaking against oppression but also acting in ways that resonate with the same ideology.

Another significant contribution made by this study which draws from the above argument is its exposure of the injustice of many African men, who sought women's support against colonialism, racism and other systems of privilege that oppress both men and women. And women did play active roles in ensuring family survival and the liberation struggle. Yet, the same men seem to learn little about women's critical position and roles in the advancement of

society's interests, in men and children's lives at family level, in the fight against various crises and continue to oppress women in their own relations with them. The study has exposed the duplicity of African men who were happy to fight against colonialism alongside women activists and spoke up against the oppressiveness of colonialism, capitalism and racism. Yet, they have remained oblivious to the reality that colonialism, racism and other oppressions are extensions of patriarchy. The study finds very significant Aina's claims about the illogicality of African men who may see the oppressiveness of various systems of privilege that marginalize them and their women, yet when they

look at what they gain from the existing patriarchal relations, it is very likely that they will fight tooth and nail against all that feminism stands for.... This is to say that... the task of feminism in Africa might demand even more ingenuity to make a breakthrough (Aina, 1998:77).

From the primary texts, the research finds that African men have not fought alongside women to secure their freedom from the oppressive expectations of patriarchal normativity. They need to start working towards creating a safe environment that does not confirm to the oppressive patriarchal status quo. Men should play a role in promoting women's dignity, respect and rights as full human beings because, as the primary texts have suggested, men benefit from the emancipation of women from oppressive and exploitative systems. African men should, therefore, start recognising that the transformation of oppressive racial and capitalist relations can never be enough without securing liberation for the many women who continue to suffer from our sexist attitudes. Thus, the study contributes to scholarship through its affirmation of critical analyses that illustrate to men that they cannot be allowed to be selfish by seeking their own liberation but in turn fail to liberate those they oppress.

Another critical contribution of the study is its argument that (un)wittingly, many women may have been facilitating and perpetuating the oppression of fellow women. The study argues that women should not always look at themselves as victims but also need to take stock of ways through which they may be perpetuating systems of oppression. Maintaining oppressive relationships with fellow women is what the women should guard against as they seek to achieve solidarity. In this way, the study's critical contribution is its potential to provoke women readers

to take self-introspection and seek to find ways through which they may, in their relationships with fellow women, paradoxically, continue oppressive tendencies that many men have perpetrated against women.

### **5.5 Implications of the study**

There are many important lessons in the fight against oppressive systems that can be drawn, by women and men in real life, from Ngcobo and Dangarembga's portrayals of African women in the texts studied. It is important to realise that the challenges that confront women in the selected texts "cannot be neatly divorced from other related issues which plague society at large, because the liberation of women is the index of a liberated society" (Chukukere, 1998:137). This means that the various ways through which women are represented as oppressed reflect the oppression of women in real life. As long as women are oppressed in society, then that society will continue to lag in development. Therefore, more should be done to fight systems that oppress women.

The study has shown the capacity that women have to fight for the improvement of living conditions for everyone: women, men and children. In the study, women's struggles have been highlighted to be family-focused and not bent on improving individual women's own personal conditions. The implication is that men need to play critical roles in the struggle for the empowerment of women as they too benefit from it. Men need to realise that maintaining oppressive gender relations does not serve their interests at all. Therefore, as men, we should be prepared to lose the unfair privileges that many of us continue to insist on in our relations with the women around us which have been the basis for so much abuse they have experienced, denying them full participation which could have enhanced the quality of life for everyone.

The study's examination of the potential for women and men to work together against systems of privilege such as colonialism/apartheid implies that some radical feminists who have often portrayed men as the enemy should rethink their views. According to hooks, such

feminist rhetoric identifying men as the enemy has had few positive

implications. Had feminist activists called attention to the relationship between ruling class men and the vast majority of men, who are socialized to perpetuate and maintain sexism and sexist oppression even as they reap no life-affirming benefits, these men might have been motivated to examine the impact of sexism in their lives (1984:75).

There is need to treat men as critical members in the fight against patriarchal normativity so that they do not feel discriminated against. This view affirms Moilola's argument that "[b]asically, if not moulded in such a way that it will respond to a range of societal issues by means of a collectivist and an all-inclusive approach, feminism will assume a posture that is as discriminatory and undermining as patriarchy" (2014:8). Thus, using the African feminist perspective to examine the selected literary texts, it is clear that African feminists' examination of gender issues does not promote gender antagonisms but shows the potential of men and women working together for the common good of all humanity. Moilola has argued that the 21<sup>st</sup> century feminist should be "prepared not only to advocate for the empowerment of women, but to assume the responsibility of educating the patriarch [men] about the value of co-existence" (2014:8). In line with these views, the literary texts show how a complex bonding has existed between African women and men in their fight against apartheid oppression. The women and the men's interests were, in this way, interlocked. Such evidence of the existence of special bonding between African women and men provokes readers to question assumptions that have been advanced by some Western feminist views that have often posited men as the enemy. Yet Ngcobo, Dangarembga and other feminists have a more nuanced view: "No man is the enemy, unless he declares war on women. Women know men as their fathers, brothers, children, lovers and husbands and friends" (Narismulu, 1999:72). The findings of this study confirm this view. This is a different view from some earlier Western feminist views that women need to have more distance from men, and who sought to advance women from the oppressiveness of men by recognising how patriarchy had positioned them in binary relations that were difficult to challenge. It suggests the need for women and men to work together towards seeking redress to social inequalities that confront them. Such a stance powerfully challenges patriarchal normativity. Thus, an implication drawn from this study affirms that African women are not

interested in gaining power for themselves but desire social transformation that benefits everyone: women, men and children.

A related implication drawn from the foregoing view is that men and women should make a contribution to finding a way out of oppressive systems together. Men should be part of the solution and not just part of the problem (Johnson, 2014). If more and more men join the struggle against oppressive systems and are made to realise the connection between these systems of oppression and patriarchy, then, there are possibilities for attitude change in the men. As Johnson has contended, the oppressiveness of patriarchal normativity or any other form of tyranny, cannot “stand the strain of many people [women and men] coming together to do something about it, beginning with the simplest act of speaking its name out loud where others can hear” (Johnson, 2014:245). Our contribution as men can involve roles where we awaken fellow men’s consciousness regarding gender issues, helping each other recognise our own responsibility in the transformation of attitudes and practices imbedded in patriarchal normativity that have undermined women for long.

There are important messages that can be derived from Ngcobo’s representations of powerful women identities who are depicted fighting and being imprisoned for their anti-apartheid activism. The critical role of women in Africa’s liberation struggle that Ngcobo represents as analysed in Chapter 3 underlines African feminists’ exposure of how “[m]odern African states were built on the backs of African Feminists who fought alongside men for the liberation of the continent” (Wanyeki, 2017:4). Women played a critical role in the liberation struggle as also confirmed by Aidoo:

Today we know that the story of South Africa’s fight against the institutionalized horrors of conquest would be different if women had not been prepared to get actively involved. And they paid the price. They were killed, maimed, incarcerated, and exiled (1998:41).

Owing to the important role played by African women in the ‘birth’ of the new African states, the implication drawn is that it can only be a height of African men’s injustice if the same African women become disadvantaged in the new African states. It is, therefore, critical to “craft new identities for African women, as full citizens, free from patriarchal oppression, with rights of access, ownership and control over resources” and their own bodies (Wanyeki, 2017:4). Continued oppression of women in most postcolonial Africa is clearly unjustified and the struggle against it should be intensified.

### **5.6 Conceptual/Methodological Limitations of Study**

The study has some methodological limitations that need to be acknowledged. The first relates to its recognition that it is only an in-depth study into a tiny aspect that relates to the otherwise very broad issues of the oppression of women and the search for equality, democracy and basic human rights. Although it has made some important findings that can help advance issues of democracy and the rights of women, it still makes the important admission that it remains limited and cannot claim to be exhaustive of challenging issues of patriarchal normativity.

The selection of the literary texts was meant to provide a regional context of Southern Africa as the focus of the study where Southern African women writers would mediate the experiences of African women. The texts selected provided a wide and very comprehensive representation of the study’s central concerns and objectives but, perhaps, the selection of texts could have been increased to cover other Southern African countries such as Mozambique, Botswana, Namibia and any other country in Southern Africa. This is an admission of the methodological limitations of this study where the number of the texts could have been increased. The researcher attempted to go round this shortcoming by making cross reference to other literary texts that were not part of the primary texts whenever that was possible.

Apart from that, the time period that the literary texts selected represent is generally confined to the colonial period. My post writing reflection shows that, perhaps, my selection of literary texts could have covered a text or two that portray(s) African women’s postcolonial experiences. That

could have allowed for comparison of women's realities between the different times: colonial and postcolonial periods. Texts outside Southern Africa could also have been included to broaden the study by examining representations from various countries on the continent.

The adequacy of the study's approach of focusing only on literary texts by black African women is, probably, another limitation. Perhaps, some literary texts by both African men and white women writers from Southern Africa could also have been purposively selected and studied to make the study more representative and comparative. This comes against the view offered by Ifechelobi: "African feminism is all about inclusion and not alienation" (2014:18). Her view suggests that there would be adequate rationale to include the contradictory perspectives of other writers from Southern Africa without only focusing on black Southern African writers. That approach could have enriched the study by providing a platform for a comparative study. However, identifying texts by African men and white women that adequately represent African women with the same remarkable courage (as those selected) to confront patriarchal normativity and oppressive intersecting systems of privilege such as racism and capitalism proved to be very difficult.

### **5.7 Some recommendations arising from the study**

A recommendation that derives from this study is that, to advance transformation, research where patriarchal structures are analysed and challenged should consider challenging all systems of privilege that intersect with patriarchy to oppress women. The systems of privilege cannot be examined in isolation when examining African women's experiences of oppression. Therefore, future studies should consider adopting an intersectional approach to examining the oppression of women (and men). Texts from Southern Africa other than Zimbabwe and South Africa can also be looked at to understand what is happening in other parts of the region.

Related to the above, it is also recommended that future researches should focus on other regions in Africa i.e North, East and Western Africa to evaluate how women all over Africa have challenged patriarchal normativity. This is important so as to appreciate how other writers in

Africa construct women's concerns, needs and challenges. Genres like drama and poetry may also be examined to see how patriarchal normativity is challenged through other literary forms as well.

Other possibilities for further research lie in the area of women's inter-racial solidarity that was not addressed in this study. The researcher recommends future researches that aim at portraying the possibilities of women's solidarity that cuts across race and regions. Instead of focusing on African women in isolation, future research may broaden focus and scope for analysing women's collective responses to systems of oppression by examining literary representations of their resistance that is not restricted to a particular race. The strength of such an approach is its potential for building alliances across race and other differences amongst women.

Given the study's focus on African women's colonial experiences, the study also recommends that researchers examine representations of women's postcolonial experiences. This would reveal in what forms the oppression of women now plays out. This particular research focused on literary portrayal of women. Recommendations can be made for field research so as to find out how findings from literary representations compare with those from fieldwork. More future research can also be more current by examining more contemporary exploitative and oppressive realities confronted by women, particularly in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic where cases of violation against women have been on the increase. All these areas offer possibilities for future research.

Owing to the potential of feminist literature to challenge repressive systems in powerful ways, it must be recommended that a reading culture of critical feminist literature be promoted at various levels of our education system: primary school, high school and the tertiary level. In schools, colleges and universities, literature that addresses various social, economic and political inequalities should be recommended. Teachers and lecturers should select, for their learners, literary texts that challenge patriarchal normativity and intersecting systems of oppression in very powerful ways. Women writers, despite race, creed or colour, are, in turn, recommended to

creatively construct women characters who have very positive identities to address the various intersecting discriminations that the most oppressed women have faced. As Juliet Mitchell has highlighted,

[L]iterary forms arise as one of the ways in which changing subjects create themselves as subjects within a new social context. The novel is the prime example of the way women start to create themselves as social subjects ... create themselves as a category: women (2011: 407).

However, this mammoth task cannot be accomplished by women writers alone. Men writing fiction are also recommended to do the same. All works of literary art should assert the fundamental significance of representing women and men cooperating with one another in the fight against various challenges that assail society. No gender or sex should be maligned as if it is not critical. This would be a powerful response to African feminists' call for co-operation between women and men: "Genuine co-operation and dialogue between women and men will transform women's problems into society's problems - which requires the entire society's involvement in the quest for solutions" (Chukukere, 1998:145). Thus, the study recommends everyone to assume responsibility for redressing social injustice: parents, teachers, preachers, employers, government and everyone else.

Lastly, it is recommended that governments the world over, schools, the work place, church and all areas of life take deliberate efforts towards addressing continued victimisation of women. The insights gained from this study should help governments engage in intentional and strategic interventions to improve women's status in society. Governments should be able to put in place laws and legislation that address various forms of social inequalities.

## REFERENCES

### Primary texts

Dangarenbga, Tsitsi. 1988. Harare: Zimbabwe Publishing House.

Ngcobo, Laurretta. 1999. *And They Didn't Die*. New York: The Feminist Press.

### Secondary texts

Abraham, K. N. 1999. Resistance Innovations in African Feminist Discourses: African women negotiating cultures of resistance. Patricia McFadden (ed.) *Reflections on Gender Issues in Africa*. Harare: SAPES: 1-18.

Abrahamyan, Milena, Mammadova, Pervana and Tskhvariashvili, Sophio. 2019. Women Challenging Gender Norms and Patriarchal Values in Peace Building and Conflict transformation across the South Caucasus. *Journal of Conflict Transformation*. 1-29.

Achebe, Chinua. 1974. The Novelist as Teacher. *Morning Yet on Creation Day*, London: Heinemann Educational Books. 42-45.

Archer, Margaret. 2000. *Being Human*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Adeleye-Fayemi, Bisi. 1992. *West Africa* (3-9 February, 1992).

Adhikari, Mohamed. 2013. From narratives of miscegenation to post-modernist re-imagining: towards a historiography of colored identity in South Africa. M. Adhikari (ed.) *Burdened by race: Coloured identities in southern Africa* Cape Town, UCT Press: 1-22.

African Feminist Forum. 2006. Charter of Feminist Principles for African Feminists. Accra.

Aidoo, Ama A. 1998. The African Woman Today. O, Nnaemeka (ed.) *Sisterhood, Feminisms and Power: From Africa to the Diaspora*. Trenton NJ: Africa World Press. 39-50.

Aina, Olabisi. 1998. African Women at the Grassroots. O, Nnaemeka (ed.) *Sisterhood, Feminisms and Power: From Africa to the Diaspora*. Trenton NJ: Africa World Press. 65-88.

Alabi, Adetayo. 1998. Gender Issues in Zaynab Alkali's Novels. E.D Jones and A.M. Jones (eds.) *Childhood in African Literature*, Oxford: James Currey. 22-28.

Alimam, Rawan. 2010. The Feminist Thought in Virginia Woolf's *A Room of one's Own* and *Three Guineas*. A published MA Thesis, Middle East University. 1-91.

Amaka, Orakwue. 2018. What is African Feminism?' *Urban Woman Magazine*, Retrieved 21 March 2018.

Amanor-Wilks, D.E. 2009. Land, Labour and Gendered Livelihoods in a "Peasant" and a "Settler" Economy. *Feminist Africa*. 12: 31-50.

Andelin, H. 1974. *Fascinating Womanhood*. New York: Bantam Books.

Banana, C. S. 1989. *Turmoil and Tenacity. Zimbabwe 1890-1990*. Harare: College Press.

Barkawi, Tarak. 2016. Decolonizing war. *European journal of intersectional Security*: 199-214.

Bayu, Eyayu, Kasseye. 2019. A comparative analysis on the perspectives of African Feminism Vs Western Feminism: philosophical debate with their criticism and its implication for women's rights in Ethiopia context. *International Journal of Sociology and Anthropology*. 11(4): 54-58  
Bedford Books.

Bell-Scott, Patricia. 1994. *Life Notes: Personal writings by contemporary Black Women*. New York: W.W. Norton and Company.

Berlina, Alexandra. 2016. *Victor Shklovsky: A reader*. New York: Bloomsbury Publishing.

Bernstein, H. 1978. *For their triumphs and for their fears: women in apartheid South Africa*. *International Defence and Aid Fund*.

Bhasin, Kamla and Khan, Nighat S. 1986. *Some Questions about Feminism and its Relevance in South Asia*. New Delhi: Kali for women Press.

Black, Allide. 1999. Where Do Human Rights Begin? Remarks at the United Nations, March 27, 1958. A, Black (ed.) *Courage in a Dangerous World: The Political Writings of Eleanor Roosevelt*, New York: Columbia University Press.

Boehmer, Elleka. 1991. Stories of Women and Mothers: Gender and Nationalism in the Early Fiction of Flora Nwapa. Nasta, Susheila (ed.) *Motherlands: Black Women's Writing from Africa, the Caribbean and South Asia*. London: The Women's Pres. 3-23.

- Bolt, Maxim and Rajak, Dinah. 2016. Introduction: Labour, insecurity and Violence in South Africa. *Journal of Southern African Studies*. 42(5): 797-813.
- Bostow, Raquelle, K. 2016. Dangerous and Endangered: Female Bodies in Contemporary French Studies (PhD Study).
- Boswell, Barbara and Collins-Buthelezi, Victoria J. 2017. And She Didn't Die: Celebrating Lauretta Ngcobo's Life and Literary Legacy (1931-2015). *Scrutiny2: Issues in English Studies in Southern Africa*. 22(1): 1-5.
- Bradford, Helen. 1996. Women, Gender and Colonialism: Rethinking the history of the British Cape Colony and its frontier zones. *Journal of African History*. 37: 351-370.
- Brittan, A. and Maynard, M. 1984. *Sexism, Racism and Oppression*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Brooke, Beloso. 2013. Love in the Time of Capitalism: A Marxist Feminist Reading of Modern Times. Mary K. Leigh and Kevin K. Durand (eds.) *Marxism and the Movies: Critical Essays on class struggle in the cinema*. McFarland Publishers.
- Broughton, Treva. 1988. *Southern African Review of Books*. [Review of Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*.]
- Bryson, V. 1995. *Feminist Debates: Issues of Theory and Political Practice*. New York: Macmillan.
- Buchi, Emecheta. 1978. *The Bride Price*. Glasgow: Fontana.
- Bunch, Charlotte. 1993. Prospects for Global Feminism. A.M. Jaggar and P.S. Rothenberg (eds.) *Feminist Frameworks*, New York: McGraw-Hill: 249-252.
- Bunch, C. 2012. How Women's Rights Became Recognized as Human Rights. M, Worden (ed.) *The Unfinished Revolution: Voices from the Global Fight for Women's Rights*. Bristol, The Policy Press: 29-39.
- Bunjun, Benita. 2010. Feminist Organizations and Intersectionality: Contesting Hegemonic Feminism. *Atlantis: Critical Studies in Gender, Culture and Social Justice*. 34(2).
- Burck, Charlotte and Speed, Bebe. 1995. *Gender, Power and Relationships*. London: Routledge.
- Cabral, Amilcar. 1977. The role of culture in the liberation struggle. *Latin American Research Unit Studies*. 1(3): 205-213.

- Carastathis, Anna. 2014. The Concept of Intersectionality in Feminist Theory. *Philosophy Compass* 9 (5): 304-314.
- Cawthorne, Maya. 1999. The Third Chimurenga. P, McFadden (ed.) *Reflections on Gender Issues in Africa*, Harare: SAPES. 55-83.
- Chaplin, Tara M. 2015. Gender and Emotion Expression: a Developmental Contextual Perspective. *Emotion Review: Journal of the International Society for Research on Emotion*. 7(1): 14-21.
- Charter of Feminist Principles For African Feminists. Accra.
- Charters, Ann. 1995. *The Story and its writer: An introduction to short fiction*. Boston:
- Chikafa-Chipiro, Rosemary. 2020. Tsitsi Dangarembga and writing about pain and loss in Zimbabwe. *The Conversation*. 445-447. Available: <http://theconversation.com/tsitsi-dangarembga-and-writing-about-pain-and-loss-in-zimbabwe-144313>
- Chikonzo, Kelvin and Chifamba, Portia. 2018. Pole Dancing and Agency, from Victims to Victors: The Case of Bervely Sibanda and the Sexy Angels. B, Chinouriri, U, Kufakurinani and M, Nyakudya (eds.) *Victors, Victims and Villains: Women and Musical Arts in Zimbabwe- Past and Present*. Harare: UZ Publications. 118-130.
- Chireshe, E. 2018. Depiction and Representation of Images of Women in Selected Songs by Paul Matavire. B, Chinouriri, U, Kufakurinani and M, Nyakudya (eds.) *Victors, Victims and Villains: Women and Musical Arts in Zimbabwe- Past and Present*. Harare: UZ Publications. 44-60.
- Chireshe, E. and Chireshe, R. 2010. Lobola. The perceptions of great Zimbabwe University Students. *Journal of Pan African Studies*. 3(9):211-221.
- Christiansen, Lene, B. 2005 Yvonne Vera: Rewriting discourses of history and identity in Zimbabwe. Robert Muponde and Ranka Primorac (eds.) *Versions of Zimbabwe: new approaches to literature and culture*, Harare, Weaver Press: 203-215.
- Christiansen, Lene, B. 2007. Mai Mujuru: Father of the Nation?' Kizito.Z, Muchemwa and Robert Muponde (eds) *Manning the Nation: Father figures in Zimbabwean Literature and*

- Chukukere, Glo. 1998. An Appraisal of Feminism in the Socio-political Development of Nigeria. O, Nnaemeka (ed.) *Sisterhood, Feminisms and Power: From Africa to the Diaspora*. Trenton NJ: Africa World Press. 133-148.
- Chukukere, Glo. 1998. An Appraisal of Feminism in the Socio-political Development of Nigeria. O, Nnaemeka (ed.) *Sisterhood, Feminisms and Power: From Africa to the Diaspora*. Trenton NJ: Africa World Press. 133-148.
- Cixous, H. 2011. Sorties. D, Lodge and N, Wood (eds) *Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader*. New Delhi: Dorling Kindersley: 281-288.
- Collins, Patricia, H. 2009. Toward a New Vision: Race, Class, and Gender as Categories of Analysis and Connection. S, Shaw and J, Lee (eds.) *Women's Voices, Feminist*
- Coltri, Marzia. 2017. Women and the NRMS: Location and Identity. Tollefsen, I.B. and Giudice, C. (eds.) *Female Leaders in New Religious Movements*, Palgrave, MacMillan. 11-28.
- Connell, R.W. 2003. *The Role of Men and Boys in Achieving Gender Equality*. United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW) in collaboration with International Labour Organisation (ILO), Joint United Nations Programmes on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Brasilia, Brazil, 21 to 24 October 2003.
- Connell, R.W. 2005. Change among the Gatekeepers: men, Masculinities, and Gender Equality in the Global Arena. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*. 30(3): 1801-1825.
- Connell, R. W. 2009. Masculinities and Globalization. S, Shaw and J, Lee (eds.) *Women's Voices, Feminist Visions: Classic and Contemporary Readings*. New York: Mc-Graw Hill. 162-169.
- Constitution of Zimbabwe Amendment (No. 20) Act 2013*
- Cooper, Elizabeth. 2010. Inheritance and the Intergenerational Transmission of Poverty in Sub-Saharan Africa: Policy Considerations. *Chronic Poverty Research Centre*. 1-34.
- Crenshaw, Kimberle. 1993. Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of colour. *Stanford Law Review*. 43:1241, July 1993.
- Crompton, Rosemary. 1989. Class theory and gender. *The British Journal of Sociology*. 40(4). New York: University of Massachusetts.

- Crowley, Ethel. 1994. Out of the Shadows: Women, Resistance and Politics in South America. *Feminist Review*. 48: 1-13.
- Cudd, Ann. 2005. How to Explain Oppression: Criteria of adequacy for normative explanatory theories. *Philosophy of the Social Sciences*. 35 (1): 20-49.
- Dangarembga, T. 1988. *Nervous Conditions*. Harare: Zimbabwe Publishing House.
- Dascal, M. 2007. *Colonizing and decolonizing the mind*. Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University.
- Davies, Carol-Boyce. 1986. *Ngambika: Studies of women in African literature*. Asmara: Africa World Press.
- Daymond, Margaret, J. 1992. Some Thoughts on South Africa: Interview with Laretta Ngcobo. *Current Writing*. 4: 85-97.
- Daymond, Margaret. 1998. Afterword to *And They Didn't Die* by Laretta Ngcobo. 247-273.
- Daymond, Margaret. 2004. To Write Beyond the 'Fact': Fictional revisions of Southern African Women in History by Yvonne Vera & Laretta Ngcobo. Emenyonu, Ernest N. (ed.) *African Literature Today*. 24: 138-155.
- de Beauvoir, Simone (1963) *The Second Sex*. London: David Campbell.
- Desmond, Cosmas. 1971. *The Discarded People*. London: Penguin.
- Diamond, Arlyn and Edwards, Lee, R. 1988. *The Authority of Experiences: Essays in Feminist Criticism*. New York: University of Massachusetts.
- Dickens, Charles. 1985. *Dombey and Son*. London: Macmillan.
- Dickson, M. & Louis, N. 2018. Discrimination and Oppression of Women: A Social Work Exploration in Zimbabwe. *Sociology and Criminology-Open Access*. 6(2):1-5.
- Edholm, Felicity. 1992. Beyond the mirror: women's self portraits. F, Bonner, L, Goodman, R., Allen, L, Janes and C. King (eds.) *Imagining Women: Cultural representations and Gender*. Cambridge: Open University Press: 154-172.
- Ehrlich, Carol. 1981. The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism. L, Sargent (ed.) *Women and Revolution*. Boston: South End Press. 109-133.

Eisler, R.M. et.al 2000. Masculine Gender Role Stress and Intimate Abuse: Effects of Gender Relevance of Conflict Situations on Men's Attributions and Effective Response. *Psychology of Men and Masculinity*, 1: 30-36.

Emecheta, Buchi. 1988. *The Joys of Motherhood*. London: Heinemann.

Eric, Allina. 2015. Transforming 'beasts into men': colonialism, forced labour and racism in Africa. Available: <https://www.opendemocracy.net>

Fanon, Frantz. 1963. *The Wretched of the Earth*. New York: Penguin.

feminism-combating-colonial-rhetoric-in-feminist-theory/

*Feminist Theory*. <http://beingfeministblog.wordpress.com/2013/08/26/postcolonial->

Financial Gazette. 2020. Tsitsi Dangarembga: Life in an ever narrowing Zimbabwe. November 19 2020.

Fisher, J.A. 2013. Postcolonial Feminism: Combating Colonial Rhetoric. Fouque, Antoinette.

1980. Warnings. E, Marks and I, Courtwron (eds.) *New French Feminisms*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press. 117-118.

Freedman, Estelle, B. 2003. *No turning back: The history of feminism and the future of women*. New York: Ballantine Books.

Freedman, Estelle, B. 2009. The Global Stage and the Politics of Location. S, Shaw and J,

Freeman, Linda. 1973. Review of *The Discarded People* by Cosmas Desmond. *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, Taylor & Francis. 7 (2): 343-346.

French, Marilyn. 1985. *Beyond Power: On Men, Women, and Morals*. New York: Summit Books.

*Gender Issues in Africa*. Harare: SAPES. 1-18.

Genette, Gerard. 1988. Structure and functions of the title in literature. *Critical Inquiry*. 14 (4), Chicago press. 692—719.

Gibbs, Peter. 1953. *Stronger than Armies*. New York: Central News Agency.

Gibson, Joan. 2006. The Logic of Chastity: Women, Sex, and the History of Philosophy in the Early Modern Period. *Hypatia*. 21(4): 1-19.

Gilfillan, Lynda. 1992. Black Women Poets in Exile: The Weapon of Words. *Tulsa Studies in Women's Literature*. 11(1): 79-93.

- Goredema, Ruvimbo 2010. African feminism: the African woman's struggle for identity. *Semantic Scholar*33-41.
- Govinden, Devarakshanam Betty. 1998. 'While she watered the morning glories': Evaluating the literary achievement of Gcina Mhlophe. E.D. Jones and A. M. Jones (eds.) *Childhood in African Literature*. Asmara: Africa World Press.
- Gray, John. 1992. *Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus*. New York: Harper-Collins.
- Greenman, Ben. 2014. *Eat, Drink and Be Literary: dinner and a Reading at BAMCAFE*  
internetlink: <https://m.soundcloud.com>nationalbook>.
- Griffin, Emory. 2009. *A first look at communication theory*. Boston: McGraw-Hill.
- Griffiths, Gareth. 2000. *African Literatures in English: East and West*. London: Longman.
- Hancock, Ane-Marie. 2011. *Solidarity Politics for Millennial: A guide to Ending the Oppression Olympics*. New york: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Harding, Sandra. 1991. *Whose Science? Whose Knowledge? Thinking from Women's Lives*. New York: Cornell University Press.
- Harlow, Barbara. 1987. *Resistance Literature*. New York: Methuen.
- Hasel, Michael, G. 2020. The Bible- the Authoritative Source of Our Theology. C, Goldstein (ed.) *How to Interpret Scripture*, Silver Spring. 27-33.
- Hepple, Alex. 1971. *South Africa: WORKERS UNDER APARTHEID*. London: Christian Action Publications.
- Hill-Collins, Patricia. 2009. Toward a new vision: Race, Class and Gender as Categories of Analysis and Connection. S, Shaw and J, Lee (eds.) *Women's Voices, Feminist Visions: Classic and Contemporary Readings*. New York: Mc-Graw Hill: 76-84.
- hooks, bell. 1984. *Feminist Theory from margin to center*. Boston: South End Press.
- hooks, b. 1998. Black women shaping feminist theory. Emmanuel, C. Eze (ed.) *African Philosophy: Anthology*. Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers.
- hooks, b. 2009. Feminist Politics where we stand. S, Shaw and J, Lee (eds.) *Women's Voices, Feminist Visions: Classic and Contemporary Readings*. New York: Mc-Graw Hill. 40-42.

- Horrell, Muriel. 1978. *Laws Affecting Race Relations in South Africa* Johannesburg:South African Institute of Race Relations.
- Hortense, J. Spillers. 1990. The Permanent Obliquity of an in(pha)libly Straight: In the Time of our Fathers. C, Wall (ed.) *Changing our own Words: Essays on Criticism, Theory and Writing by Black Women*. London: Routledge.
- Hudson, Valerie M., Ballif-Spanvil, Bonie, Caprioli, Mary and Emmett, Chad F. 2012. *Sex and World Peace*. New York: Columbia University.
- Ifechelobi, J.N. 2014. Feminism: Silence and Voicelessness as Tools of Patriarchy in Chimamanda Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*. *African research Review* 8(4): 17-27.
- Illunga, B. 1984. *Paths of liberation: A Third World spirituality*. New York: Orbis.
- Jell-Bahlsen, Sabine. 1998. Female Power: Water Priestesses of the Oru-Igbo. O, Nnaemeka (ed.) *Sisterhood, Feminisms and Power: From Africa to the Diaspora*. Trenton NJ: Africa World Press. 101-131.
- Johnson, Allan. 2014. *The Gender Knot: Unravelling our Patriarchal Legacy*. New York: Temple University.
- Jones, S. 2000. *Feminist Theory and Christian Theology: Cartographies of Grace*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.
- Kaarsholm, Preben. (2005. Coming to terms with violence: literature and the development of a public sphere in Zimbabwe. R, Muponde and R, Primorac (eds.) *Versions of Zimbabwe: New Approaches to Literature and Culture*. Harare: Weaver Press. 3-23.
- Kabeer, Naila. 1992. Tripple roles, Gender Roles, social Relations: The Political Sub-text of Gender training. *Discussion Paper No. 313*. Brighton: Institute of Development Studies.
- Kadhim, Rawaa J. 2018. Negative treatment of women in selected short stories by Katherine Mansfield and Ernest Hemingway. *African Educational Research Journal*. 6(4): 228-235.
- Kandiyoti, D. 1988. Bargaining with Patriarchy. *Gender and Society (Special Issue to Honour Jessie Bernard)*. 2(3): 274-290.

- Karam, Charlotte, M. and Afioumi, Fida. 2015. Gender, Governance, and Patriarchy: Married Women's Perceptions of their (Un)Employment Legitimacy. *Academy of Management Annual Meeting Proceedings. (1): 17310-17310.*
- Katrak, Ketu H. 2006. Decolonizing Culture: Toward a Theory for Postcolonial Women's Texts. Ashcroft, B., Griffiths, G. and Tiffin, H. (eds.) *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader*. London: Routledge. 239-241.
- Kaur, Abnash. 1994. White Prosperity with Cheap Black Labour. *World Affairs: The Journal of International Issues*. 3(2): 43-50.
- Kendie, Daniel. 2006. How useful is Gramsci's theory of hegemony and domination to the Study of African states?' *African Social Sciences Review*. 3(3/5): 88—107.
- Kgatla, Selaelo T. 2018. The decolonisation of the mind: Black consciousness community projects by the Limpopo council of churches. *Missionalia* 46(1):146-162.
- Kimmel, Michael S. 2005. Why men should support gender equity S, Freedberg, E, Haghigat and B, Ngo-Ngijol-Banoum (eds.) *Women's Studies Review, special Edition: the Role of women in world peace and the Role of men and Boys in Gender equity*. Women's studies program, Lehman College, New York.: 102-114.
- Kimmel, Michael S. 2008. *The Gendered Society, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Kirkegaard, Anne, M. 2007. It couldn't be anything innocent: Negotiating gender in patriarchal-racial spaces. K.Z, Muchemwa and R, Muponde (eds) *Manning the Nation: Father Figures in Zimbabwean Literature and Society*. Harare: Weaver Press. 115-126.
- Klinger, K. 2009. Prostitution, Humanism and a woman's choice. S, Shaw and J, Lee (eds.) *Women's Voices, Feminist Visions: Classic and Contemporary Readings*. New York: McGraw-Hill: 493-497.
- Kolawole, Mary Modupe. 2002. Transcending incongruities: rethinking feminisms and the dynamics of identity in Africa. *Agenda*. 54:92-98.
- Kolawole, Mary Modupe. 2011. 'Transcending incongruities: rethinking feminism and the dynamics of identity in Africa. *Agenda*. 54: 92- 98.

- Kruger, Loren. 2017. Review: The Soweto Uprisings Forty Years On: Usable Pasts and Uncertain Futures. *Research in African Literatures*. 48(4): 250-255.
- Lee, Catherine. 2017. Women's agency, activism and organisation. 831-834, internet link: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09612025.2017.1346880>
- Lerner, Gerder. 1986. *The Creation of Patriarchy*. London: Routledge.
- List of Laws on Land Dispossession and Segregation. *South African History Online: towards a people's history*. 2016. Available: [sahistory.org.za](http://sahistory.org.za)
- Locket, Cecily. 1988. The Black Woman in South African English Literature. *Journal of Literary Studies*, TLW, 4. 1-35.
- Lodge, Tom. 1983. *Black politics in South Africa since 1945*. New York: Longman.
- Lorde, Audre. 1984. *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches*. New York: Crossing Press.
- Lorde, Audre. 1984. The Transformation of Silence into Language and Action. *Zami, Sister Outsider, Undersong*. New York: Quality. 40-44
- Lorentzen, J. 2011. Masculinities, power and Change. *Norma: Nordic Journal for Masculinity Studies*. 6 (2): 110-123.
- Lorentzen, J. 2014. Men, Masculinities, and Changing Power: A Discussion on Engaging Men in Gender Equality From Beijing 1995 to 2015. *UNFPA*. 1-13.
- Ludvig, Alice. 2016. Differences Between Women? Intersecting Voices in a Female Narrative. *European Journal of Women's Studies*. 13(3): 245-158.
- Mama, Amina. 2001. Talking about feminism in Africa. *Agenda, African feminisms* 1(50):58-63. Available: <http://www.world.org/programs/regions/africa/amina> mama.htm
- Mama, A. 2012. The Challenges of Feminism: Gender, Ethics and Responsible Academic Freedom in African Universities. *Council for the Development of Social Science research in Africa*. 1-24.
- Mama, A. 2014. Feminists We Love: Professor Amina. Available: [africanstudies.org](http://africanstudies.org).
- Mann, M. 1986. A Crisis in Stratification Theory. R, Crompton and M, Mannmann (eds). *Gender and Stratification*. Cambridge: Polity.

- Maseno, Loreen and Kilonzo, Susan M. 2015. Engendering development: Demystifying patriarchy and its effects on women in rural Kenya. *International Journal of Sociology and Anthropology*. 3(2): 45-55.
- Masola, Athambile and Xaba Makhosazana. 2017. What is a place?: Exploring place and Displacement in Laretta Ngcobo's Novel *Cross of Gold*. *Scrutiny2: Issues in English Studies in Southern Africa*. 2(1):52-63.
- Maunganidze, Farai. 2020. Dealing with gender-related challenges: A perspective of Zimbabwean women in the practice of law. *Cogent Business & Management*. 7(1): 1-19.
- Mayer, T. 2000. *Gender Ironies of Nationalism: Sexing the Nation*. London: Routledge.
- Mazorodze, Isheunesu, V. 1989. *Silent journey from the east*. Harare: ZPH.
- Mbilinyi, Marjorie. 1992. *Gender in southern Africa: conceptual and theoretical issues*. Harare: SAPES Books.
- Mbuende, Elizabeth. 1990. The Namibian Woman's Plight. *SAPEM*, August 1990. 19-21.
- McCall, Leslie. 2005. The Complexity of Intersectionality. *Signs* 30(3): 1771-1800.
- McClintock, A. 1995. *Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Context*. New York: Routledge.
- McFadden, Patricia. 1990. The condition of Women in Southern Africa: Challenges for the 1990s. *SAPEM*, August 1990. 3-9.
- McGinn, Kathleen L and Oh, Eunsil. 2017. Gender, social class, and women's employment. *Current Opinion in Psychology*. 84-88.
- Mekgwe, Pinkie. 2008. Theorizing African Feminism(s). The 'Colonial' Question. *Quest: An African Journal of Philosophy*. 11-22.
- Metcalf, Rosamund. 1989. The liberation of female consciousness in African literature.
- Emmanuel, Ngara and Andrew, Morrison (eds.) *Literature, Language and the Nation*. Harare: ATOLL.
- Mguni, Zifikile, Furusa, Munashe and Magosvongwe, Ruby. 2006. *African womanhood in Zimbabwean literature: new critical perspectives on women's literature in African languages*. Harare: College Press.

- Mhako-Mutonhodza, Doricah. 2018. Victimhood and 'Politics of Space': Representations of Women in Zimbabwean Protest Theatre. B, Chinouriri, U, Kufakurinani and M, Nyakudya (eds.) *Victors, Victims and Villains: Women and Musical Arts in Zimbabwe- Past and Present*. Harare: UZ Publications. 166-179.
- Mitchell, Juliet. 2011. Femininity, narrative and psychoanalysis. David, Lodge and Nigel, Wood (eds) *Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader*. New Delhi: Dorling Kindersley. 406-410.
- Mohanty Chandra. 2003. *Feminism Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Moi, Toril. 1986. Feminist literary criticism. Ann, Jefferson and David Robey Eds. *Modern Literary Theory: A Comparative Introduction*. New Jersey: Barnes and Noble Books.
- Moilola, Karabo. 2014. What is the role of feminists in 21<sup>st</sup> Century?' *Dailynews*. 8. col.
- Moraga, Cherrie and Anzaldua, Gloria. 1981. *This Bridge called my back: Writings by Radical women of color*. New York: Kitchen Table.
- Molteno, Frank. 1979. The Uprising of 16<sup>th</sup> June: A review of the literature on events in South Africa 1976. *Social Dynamics*. 5(1): 54-89.
- Moraga, C. 1979. La Guera. S, Shaw and J, Lee (eds.) *Women's Voices, Feminist Visions: Classic and Contemporary Readings*. New York: McGraw-Hill. 204-208.
- Moser, Caroline O.N. 1993. *Gender Planning and Development: theory, Practice and Training*. London: Routledge.
- Mowbary, Carol T., Oyserman, Daphna, Lutz, Catherine and Purnell, Rogear. 1997. Women: The Ignored Majority. *Psychology Faculty Publications*. Paper 18. 171-194.
- Moyana, Rosemary. 1994. Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*: An Attempt in the Feminist Tradition. *Zambezia*. XXI (1): 23-42.
- Muchemwa, Kizito Z. 2002. Language, voice and presence in *Under the tongue* and *Without a name*. Muponde, R. and M, Maodzwa-Taruvinga (eds.) *Sign and Taboo: Perspectives on the Poetic fiction of Vera*. James Currey, Oxford: 3-14.
- Muchemwa, Kizito Z. and Muponde, Robert. 2007. *Manning the Nation: Father Figures in Zimbabwean Literature and Society*. Harare: Weaver Press.

- Muchemwa, K.Z. 2013. *Imagining the City in Zimbabwean Literature 1949 to 2009*. PhD. Stellenbosch University. Available: <http://scholar.sun.ac.za>
- Mugenda, M.Olive and Mugenda, G. Abel. 2003. *Research Methods: Quantitative & Qualitative Approaches*. Nairobi: ACTS Press.
- Mutume, Gumisai. 2005. African women battle for equality. *Africa Renewal*
- Muwati, Itai and Mguni, Zifikile. 2012. Introduction. I, Muwati, Z, Mguni, T, Gwekwerere and R, Magosvongwe (eds.) *Rediscovering African Womanhood in the Search for Sustainable Renaissance*, College Press, Harare. xvi-xxiv.
- Naidu, Maheshvari. 2013. Revisiting Female Power and the Notion of African Feminism: 147-163. Available: <https://www.researchgate.net> [Accessed 15 November 2018].
- Namulondo, Sarah. 2010. *Imagined Realities, Defying Subjects: Voice, Sexuality and Subversion in African Women's Writing*. Scholar Commons.
- Nandy, Ashis. 1983. *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of Self under Colonialism*. New Dehli: Oxford University Press.
- Napikoski, L. 2019. 'What is sexism? Defining a key feminist term. Available: <https://www.thoughtco.com>
- Narismulu, Priya. 1999. Unlearning privilege: challenging constructions of gender and AIDS in class. *Agenda*, 15(41): 71-78.
- Narismulu, P. 2012. For my Torturer: an African woman's transformative art of truth, justice and peace-making during colonialism' in *Journal of International women's Studies*. 13(4): 67-81.
- Ndebele, Njabulo. 1991. *Rediscovery of the Ordinary*. Johannesburg: COSAW (Congress of South African Writers).
- Ngcobo, L. 1985. My Life and Writing. *Kunapipi*. 7(2/3):83-86.
- Ngcobo, Laretta. 1999. *And They Didn't Die*. New York: The Feminist Press.
- Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1986) *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African literature*. Nairobi: Heinemann.
- Nienaber, Catharine. 2018. Evolving Oppression: How Societies Keep Women Down. *Classic Journal*.

- Nnaemeka, Obioma. 1997. *The Politics of (M)Othering: Womanhood, Identity and Resistance in African Literature*. New York: Routledge.
- Nnaemeka, Obioma. 1998. (ed) Introduction: Reading the Rainbow. *Sisterhood, Feminism and Power: From Africa to the Diaspora*. Trenton NJ: Africa World Press: 1-35.
- Nwapa, Flora. 1998. Women and Creative Writing in Africa. Nnaemeka, Obioma (ed.) *Sisterhood, Feminism and Power: From Africa to the Diaspora*. Trenton NJ: Africa World Press: 89-99.
- Nyanhongo, Mazviita M. 2011. Gender Oppression and Possibilities of Empowerment: Images of Women in African Literature with specific Reference to Mariama ba's *So Long A Letter*, Buchi Emecheta's *The Joys of Motherhood* and Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*. MA. University of Fort Hare: 1-177.
- O'Brien, Colleen. 1994. The Search for Mother Africa: Poetry revises Women's Struggle for Freedom. *African Studies Review*. 37 (2): 147-155.
- O'Connell, H. 1994. *Women and the Family*. London: Zed Books.
- O'Malley, Pdraig. 1999. The racial workplace- The O'Malley Archives. Available: <http://omalley.nelsonmandela.org>
- Obbo, Christine. 1986. *African Women: Their struggle for economic independence*. London: Zed Press.
- Offen, Karen. 2018. Defining Feminism: A Comparative Historical Approach. *Chicago Journals*. 1-41.
- Ogundipe-Leslie, M. 1994. *Re-Creating Ourselves: African Women and Critical Transformations*. Trenton, J: Africa World Press.
- Ogundipe-Leslie, M. 2002. Desiree Lewis talks to Molaria Ogundipe-Leslie, Leading Feminist Theorist, Poet, Literary Critic, Educator and Activist, About the Interface of Politics, Culture and Education. *Feminist Africa* 1. Available: [http://www.agi.ac.za/sites/default/files/imagedstool/images/429/feminist\\_africa\\_journals/archive/01/fa\\_1\\_conversation\\_2.pdf](http://www.agi.ac.za/sites/default/files/imagedstool/images/429/feminist_africa_journals/archive/01/fa_1_conversation_2.pdf).
- Okia, Opolot. 2012. Forced Labor and Colonial Development in Africa. *Communal Labour in Colonial Kenya*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. 9-22.

- Okolie, Maxwell. 1998. *Childhood in African Literature*. E.D. Jones and M, Jones (eds.) *Childhood in African Literature*. Oxford: James Currey.
- Okonjo, Kamene. 1976. The Dual-Sex Political System in Operation: Igbo Women in Community Politics in Midwestern Nigeria. Hafkin, Nancy J. & Bay, Edna G. (eds.) *Women in Africa*. Stanford: Stanford University Press. 45-58.
- Ostergaard, L. 1994. *Gender and Development*. London: Routledge.
- Oyekan, Oluwseyi Adeolu. 2014. African Feminism: Some Critical Considerations. *African Feminism*. 15:.1-10.
- Oyewumi, Oyeronke. 2003. (ed.) *African Women and Feminism: Reflecting on the Politics of Sisterhood*. Asmara: Africa World Press.
- Oyewumi, Oyeronke. 2013. *The Invention of Women: Making an African sense of Western gender discourses*. London: University of Minnesota.
- Parpart, J.L. 2007. Masculinities, race and violence in the making of Zimbabwe. Kizito, Z. Muchemwa and Robert Muponde (eds.) *Manning the nation: Father figures in Zimbabwean literature and society*. Harare: Weaver press. 102-114.
- Pilcher, Jane and Whelehan, Imelda. 2004. *Fifty Key Concepts in Gender Studies*. London: SAGE Publications.
- Pillay, A. 2006. Women's Activism and Transformation: Arising from the Cusp. *Feminist Africa*. 14. 63-69.
- Primorac, Ranka. 2003. Iron Butterflies: notes on Yvonne Vera's Butterfly Burning. R, Muponde and M, Maodzwa-Taruvinga (eds) *Sign and Taboo*, Oxford: James Currey. 101-113.
- Purvis, June. 2018. A Glass Half Full? Women's History in the UK'. *Women's History Review*. 27(1): EN51.
- Puttick, Elizabeth. 1997. *Women in New Religions: in search of community, sexuality and spiritual power*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.
- Quanta, C. 1987. *Women in Southern Africa*. Braamfontein: Skotaville.
- Ratele, Kopano. 2005. Men left behind by an evolving culture. [newafricanmen.wordpress.com](http://newafricanmen.wordpress.com)
- Ratele, Kopano. 2015. The singularity of the post-apartheid black condition. *Psychology in Society*. 49. 46-61.

- Ratele, Kopano. 2015. Working through resistance in engaging boys and men towards gender equality and progressive masculinities. *Culture, Health and Sexuality*. 17(52): 144- 158.
- Rawat, Preeti S. 2014. Patriarchal Beliefs, Women's Empowerment, and General Well-being. *Vikalpa*. 39(2), April-June 2014: 43-55.
- Razavi, Shahrashroub and Miller, Carol. 1995. From WID to GAD: Conceptual shifts in the women and development discourse. *UNRISD*. Occasional Paper (1). Geneva.
- Report of the First African Feminist Forum: Beginnings (2006).
- Ridley, Diana. 2015. *The Literature Review*. London: Sage.
- Robbe, Ksenia. 2015. *Conversations of motherhood: South African women's writing across traditions*. Pietermaritzburg: UKZN Press.
- Ronquist, Olof W. 2015. The Changing Nature of Female Portrayal: An Analysis of Gender Roles in Fairy Tales. Karlstads University. 1-18.
- Rosenthal, Carolyn J. and Marshall, Victor W. 1986. The Head of the Family: Social Meaning and Structural Variability. *The Canadian Journal of Sociology*. 11 (2): 183-198.
- Russell, Kathryn. 2007. Feminist Dialectics and Marxist Theory. *Radical Philosophy Review* 10(1): 33-54.
- Said, E. 1994. *Culture and Imperialism*. London: Vintage Books.
- Sandoval, Chela. 2003. US Third-World Feminism: The Theory and Method of Oppositional Consciousness in the Postmodern World. R, Lewis and S, Mills, (eds.) *Feminist Postcolonial Theory: A Reader*, New York: Routledge. 75-99.
- Schweickart, Patrocínio P. 2011. Reading Ourselves: toward a Feminist Theory of Reading. D, Lodge and N, Wood (eds) *Modern Criticism and Theory: A Reader*. New Delhi: Dorling Kindersley. 442-465.
- Sertima, Ivan. 1984. *Black Women in Antiquity*. New Brunswick: Transaction Books.
- Shava, V. Z. 2012. *Maibuye Dilemmas of Agrarian Reforms in Independent Zimbabwe and South Africa*. Gweru: Mambo Press.

Shaw, Susan and Lee, Janet. 2009. Systems of privilege and inequality in women's lives. *Women's Voices, Feminist Visions: Classic and Contemporary Readings*. New York: Mc-Graw Hill. 47- 53.

Sibanda, M. J. 1989. Early Foundations of African Nationalism. C.S. Banana (ed.) *Turmoil and Tenacity. Zimbabwe 1890-1990*. Harare: College Press. 25-49.

Simmonds, F.N. 1992. She's Gotta Have it: The representation of Black Female Sexuality on Film. F, Bonner, L, Goodman, R, Allen, L, Janes and C, King (eds.) *Imagining Women: Cultural representations and Gender*. Cambridge: Open University Press. 210-220.

Sisulu, Lindiwe. 2018. Lies on land reform process a disservice to South Africa. *The Herald Insight: A2, Columns, 1 & 2*.

Sofola, Zulu. 1998. Feminism and African Womanhood. O, Nnaemeka (ed.) *Sisterhood, Feminisms and Power: From Africa to the Diaspora*. Trenton NJ: Africa World Press. 51-64.

Sougou, N.M., Bassoum, O., Faye, A. & Leye, M.M.M. 2020. Women's autonomy in health decision-making and its effect on access to family planning services in Senegal in 2017: a propensity score analysis. *BMC Public Health*. 1-9.. Available: <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12889-020-09003-x>

South African History Online. 2011. *Apartheid Legislation 1850s- 1970s*. Available: <http://www.sahistory.org.za>

Steady, Filomina C. 1987. African Feminism: A Worldwide Perspective. R, Lerborg-Penn, S, Harvey and A,B. Rushing (eds.) *Women in Africa and the African Diaspora*, Washington, D.C., Howard University Press. 3-24.

Steady, Filomina. 2005. An Investigative Framework for Gender research in Africa in the new Millenium. O, Oyewumi (ed.) *African Gender Studies: A Reader*, Hampshire, Palgrave Macmillan. 313-331.

Strong, Bryan and de Vault, Christine. 1989. *The Marriage and Family Experience*. New York: West Publishing Company.

Strong, Bryan and de Vault, Christine. 1989. *The Marriage and Family Experience*. New York: West Publishing Company.

Sultana, Abeda. 2011. Patriarchy and Women's Subordination: A Theoretical Analysis. *The Arts Faculty Journal, July 2010- June 2011*: 1-18.

Tamale, Sylvia. 2004. Gender Trauma in Africa: Enhancing Women's Links to Resources. *Journal of African Law*. 48: 50-51.

Tamale, S. 2011. Gendered Sexualities, power and legal mechanisms in Africa. Interrogating the link: experiences from the lecture room. Tsanga, A.S. and Stewart, J. E. (eds) *Women and Law: Innovative Approaches to Teaching, Research and Analysis*. Weaver Press, Harare. 306- 315.

Teckie, Flora. Gender equality: A requirement of peace and prosperity. *The Sunday Mail*, 2 September 2018.. S10.

Ternate, Alexia. 2016. Nervous Conditions by Tsistsi Dangarembga- review. *The Guardian*. Monday 28 March 2016.

The UNESCO Advocacy Brief. 2004. Bangkok.

Thornham, Sue. 2000. *Feminist Theory and Cultural Studies: Stories of unsettled relations*. London: Arnold.

Tsikata, D. 2009. Gender, Land and Labour Relations and the Livelihoods in Sub-Saharan Africa in the Era of Economic Liberalisation: Towards A Research Agenda. *Feminist Africa*. Issue 12: 11-30.

Tollefsen, I. Bardsen and Giudice, Christian. 2017. Introduction: Female leaders in New Religious Movements Bardsen IngaTollefsen and Giudice Christian (eds.) *New Religious Movements*. Palgrave: Macmillan. 1-9.

Tong, Rosemarie. 2014. *Feminist Thought: A More Comprehensive Introduction*. Philadelphia: Westview Press.

United Nations Human Rights Report. 2015. *Land and Human Rights: Annotated Compilation of Case Law* 1-93. Available: OHCHR land and Human Rights ohchr.org

*United Nations Population Fund: State of World Population Report*. April 2021.

- Uwakweh, Pauline, A. 1995. Debunking patriarchy: The liberation quality of voicing in Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*. *Research in African Literature*. 26(1): 75-84.
- Uwakweh, Pauline. 1998. Carving a niche: visions of Gendered Childhood in Buchi Emecheta's *The Bride Price* and Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*. Jones, E. D. and Jones, M. (eds.) *Childhood in African Literature*. James Currey, Oxford.
- Vance, Laura, L. 2017. God's Messenger: Ellen G. White. Tollefsen, I.B. and Giudice, C. (eds.) *Female Leaders in New Religious Movements*, Palgrave, MacMillan. 29-38.
- Vanderstoep, Scott, W. and Johnston, Deirdre, D. 2009. *Research Methods for Everyday Life: Blending Qualitative & Quantitative Approaches*. San Francisco: John Wiley & Sons.
- Vera, Y. 1996. *Under the Tongue*. Harare: Baobab Books.
- Vera, Yvonne. 1998. *Butterfly Burning*. Harare: Baobab Books.
- Vivan, Itala. and Hunter, Eva. 1993. Lauretta Ngcobo, Interviewed by Itala Vivan and Eva Hunter. *Between the Lines II*. E, Hunter and Craig Mackenzie (eds.). 97-116. Grahamstown: National Literary Museum.
- Voice Literary Supplement: *And They Didn't Die*. 1999. Review. United States.
- Vosloo, Christo. 2020. Extreme apartheid: the South African system of migrant labour and its hostels. *SciELO*. Available: <http://dx.doi.org/10.17159/2617-3255/2020/n34a1>
- Walby, S. 1990. *Theorising Patriarchy*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Walker, Cheryl. 1991. *Women and Resistance in South Africa*. Cape Town: David Phillip.
- Walker, Rebecca. 2004. We are using this power to resist. S, Shaw and J, Lee (eds.) *Women's Voices, Feminist Visions: Classic and Contemporary Readings*. New York: Mc-Graw Hill.
- Wanyeki, Muthoni L. 2017. The African Feminist Forum: Beginnings. *Isis International*.
- Weedon, Chris. 2002. Key Issues in Postcolonial Feminism: A Western Perspective, Gender Forum. 1
- Wilson-Tagoe, Nana. 2003. History, gender and the problem of representation in the novels of Yvonne Vera. Muponde, R. and M.M. Taruvinga (eds.) *Sign and Taboo*. 155-178.
- Wolpe, Harold. 1972. Capitalism and cheap labour-power in South Africa: from segregation to apartheid. *Economy and Society*. 1(4): 425-456.
- Wood, Julia T. 1997. *Communication Theories and Action*. California: Wadsworth Belmont.

Worden, Minky. 2012. Revolutions and Rights. M, Worden (ed.) *The Unfinished Revolution: Voices from the Global Fight for Women's Rights*. Bristol, The Policy Press. 1-13.

Worsford, B. 1995. In Conversation with Laretta Ngcobo. *BELLS: Barcelona English Language and Literature Studies*. 6: 183-192.

Yiu, Sarah K. 2008. Solidarity and Women's Resistance in Laretta Ngcobo's *And They Didn't Die*. *Social and Political Movements*.

Yngstrom, I. 2002. Women, Wives and Land Rights in Africa: Situating Gender Beyond the Household in the Debate over Land Policy and Challenging Tenure Systems. *Oxford development Studies*. 30(1): 21-40.

Zenenga, Praise. 2007. Boys: Performing Womanhood. K.Z, Muchemwa and R, Muponde (eds) *Manning the Nation: Father Figures in Zimbabwean Literature and Society*. Harare: Weaver Press. 127-141.

Ziwira, Elliot. 2019. 'Mungoshi: Remembering the master of metaphor' in *The Herald*, Monday 4 March 2019, p.10, col. 2,3.