

**LINKING PRIVATE AND PUBLIC: Personal and Political
transition in Sindiwe Magona's
Forced to Grow.**

Logambal Moodley

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BY

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DEDICATION

For

my mother

Saras.

Her enduring love and
steadfast loyalty
have been the cornerstone
of my strength.

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DECLARATION

I, Logambal Moodley, declare that this thesis is entirely my own work. I have not submitted it in its entirety or in part to any other university except this university.

L. Moodley
2004

INTRODUCTION

Magona is a multi-talented writer. After having published To my Children's Children (1990), and prior to Forced to Grow (1992), she also published an anthology of short stories entitled Living Loving and Lying awake at Night (1991). Push Push and other stories (1996) was a selection of stories that differed from her previous writing since they were less autobiographical, and they were tales told by others. One of her most popular works is the novel Mother to Mother (1998) which 'tells the story of the mother of one of the teenagers involved in the murder of American Fulbright student, Amy Biehl in 1993, and how she shares the sorrow and anguish of Amy's mother' (Bamford 2000:7). Apart from prose, Magona has also ventured into play writing. Vukani, a drama set in post-apartheid South Africa explores rape, AIDS, responsibility, democracy and leadership.

The narrative, Forced to Grow, focuses on the story of the twenty-three year old Magona who, heavily pregnant with her third child, finds herself in dire straits after being deserted by her husband, Luthando. On experiencing abject poverty and the humiliation inflicted on her by her own people for having failed to keep her husband; by gender and racial prejudices which prevent her from continuing her job as a professional with the department of Bantu Affairs; Magona is 'forced to grow'. Whilst it is this crisis that throws her into the seemingly bottomless pit of despair, paradoxically, it is this suffering that prompts her to 'wield power over her destiny' (1992:25). Magona decides to take control of her life. During this period, however, the protagonist learns that whilst she might take charge of her private life, the public

world with its multifarious influences will intrude, incessantly, to create impediments which will add to her difficulties. This dialectical tussle between the personal and political, its tensions and apprehensions, will nonetheless contribute enormously towards shaping the protagonist into the mature, confident, well-balanced person that she becomes. Magona eventually gains profound insights of a personal and global nature.

Whilst in Magona's first autobiography, To my Children's Children, she concentrates on the need to recover a sense of family and community, and to relate to a larger, collective identity – a community of women, the sequel to this two-part autobiography Forced to Grow reveals her need to assert her individual self.

Since I am arguing that a personal and political crisis, and the conflicts therein, is motivation for the assertion of the protagonist's authority and individuality and that the decisions she makes when the political intrudes on the personal and vice versa prompts to her progress and development, my focus is directed towards the second volume of the autobiography. It is in Forced to Grow that the protagonist's transition really occurs; it is here that she is 'caught in the gap, in the chasm between the past and present, between tradition and modernity, between two opposing systems of knowledge'¹

Author Sindiwe Magona's text Forced to Grow (1992) is a prose narrative autobiography. This autobiography is spoken throughout by a single narrator (i.e. Magona), who may be defined as 'the narrative voice' or 'speaker' of the text, the

one who supplies the 'I said' tags and the descriptions. The narrator of Forced to Grow is an internal participant of the story, and a seeming reliable one since 'the rendering of the story and its commentary affords the reader the opportunity to accept it as an authoritative account of the non-fictional truth' (Rimmon-Kenan 1987:87). It must be noted that the narrator (i.e.the one who relates the story) is a mature woman who has already experienced the occurrences described in the text; the protagonist (i.e.the main character), a young woman, is facing these hardships and grows holistically as the autobiography unfolds. At the very outset of the first volume of Magona's two-part autobiography, To my Children's Children (1990), Magona addresses her great grandchildren: 'How will you know who you are if I do not or cannot tell you the story of your past?'(1990:i) and concludes Forced to Grow with: 'So, my child, that is the story of where you came from' (1992:231). This is a validation, then, that both volumes of the autobiography are dominated, chiefly, by Magona as narrator and as the protagonist.

Magona's Forced to Grow is a narrative that explores, through one woman's story, the courage and resilience of the human spirit which, when tested, can overcome all obstacles, gaining victory against adversity. In rising to the occasion, the protagonist assumes control, braving predicaments with strength of character and confidence in her self-worth. But perhaps the single most significant attribute in creating and maintaining change that would lead ultimately to positive transformation, both private and public, would be the assertion of the protagonist's individuality. Herein lies, for her, a profound contentment and pride in having taken a stand, one that is dictated by her conscience. In the second volume of the autobiography, the narrator/protagonist is

confronted by injustices that threaten her welfare in a myriad ways. Primarily, she is a black Xhosa woman living during the apartheid era. As a woman, she is already undermined and deemed inferior, but as a Xhosa woman this subordination is exacerbated by cultural ideologies that accord men mastery over all women.

Compounded by politics, the text explores how a Xhosa woman has minimal opportunity for survival as cultural norms, sex and race degrade her, entrapping her at the lowest sector of the socio-economic mobility pyramid. It takes sheer guts, a persistent mind and supreme endurance to overcome such handicaps, and these are impressive attributes with which Magona is doubtlessly endowed; hence, her overwhelming success. The protagonist is fortunate too in that she also enjoys a wonderful support system of family and friends who assist her during difficult times.

On a micro-level, Magona ensures a personal change of circumstances and thus enjoys the subsequent rewards when she takes charge of her life; on a macro-level, the African people collectively ensure an irrevocable political transformation by engaging in the boycotts to resist a sub-standard education.

In selecting the autobiographical medium to convey her message, the writer deviates from the estranged third-person narrator common to much fictional narrative. Sindiwe Magona writes her story and in doing so assumes control over what she says and how she says it. Implicit in both her message and personal style, Magona is highlighting the importance of the individual's need to assert authority to change conditions that can be stifling or confining, and showing that even in the most contemptible of circumstances such a stance can be threatening to the opposition. Often, it is this

intimidation that forces the opponent or oppressor to submit to the demands of the oppressed.

In fact, feminist writers often employ the autobiographical mode. As agents of change they frequently express their discontent regarding issues that require redress. It is frequently and effectively via autobiography, then, that women have conscientised the masses universally about women's welfare - women's relegation to servility by patriarchal structures, gender disparities, men's condonation of female subordination in an array of sectors, women's commitment towards changing the status quo, and so forth. The Feminist Movement has contributed enormously towards the transition of women both personally and publicly, as women, via this platform; feminists have voiced their disapproval of various biases and have sought to attain selfhood, free from the taint of inferiority.

Whilst black women writers have supported some concerns of feminist writers, they have also challenged eurocentric feminist writers on their roles in the oppression of black women. Black female writers, such as Bessie Head, Miriam Tlali and Laurretta Ngcobo amongst others, have written extensively on the impact of apartheid on black families and subsequently on black women. In light of the white female employer (i.e. the madam) and the black female employee (i.e. the maid) scenario, Magona, unlike many other black feminists who have been subtle or have avoided this issue, has challenged the compliant and condescending attitudes of white women who have displayed little compassion, some even exacerbating the unbearable lives of black

women already subjected to the miseries of apartheid. This is one of the reasons why black female writers have supported the ideology behind 'Womanism', a concept that deviates from traditional feminism and embraces factors which consider the peculiarities that pertain to the position of black women.

Judith Lutge Coullie explains that:

for apartheid to work "non-europeans" had to be dehumanised, their history excised. Much life writing thus sought to contest apartheid's obsession with group identity and the concomitant erasure of individuals. Life writing, in reflecting democratisation, contradicted the basic principles of apartheid. The Afrikaner Nationalist government's policy of apartheid enshrined racist separation in increasingly draconian laws. For this reason black feminist writers were on the increase and life writing became a weapon to be used in the struggle against all forms of oppression (2001:42).

Whilst apartheid, then, was a separation of the races and consequently a denigration of the African people, autobiography served to heal apartheid's attempt to fracture and dislocate black people. Lindsay Aegerter explains that in Magona's autobiography, her aim seems to be the: 'retention and revision of African traditions; she participates in an expressive culture that must be continued even as she critiques aspects of that culture that, under apartheid's divisive policies, are demeaning to women' (2000:69). The intention of autobiography is to focus on the individual, the subject of the story, the one who lives the life as opposed to the faceless, nameless members of an oppressed racial group, thus supporting Coullie's point that autobiography 'reflects democratisation'.

The research undertaken in this thesis explores a feminist approach to the narrator/

protagonist's personal and political transition in Forced to Grow. Chapter One examines the life of Magona, the writer, and links various influences in her life to the topic of this thesis: Linking Private and Public: Personal and Political transition in Sindiwe Magona's Forced to Grow. Chapter Two focuses on autobiography, the medium employed by Magona to relate her story as this genre allows the writer to confront issues that affect her both privately and publicly. Chapter Three explores feminist theory, in particular socialist feminist theory, the ideals of which the implied author supports, to some extent, in the text. It also looks at Womanism, an approach to which Magona is more inclined because it considers political and other issues relevant to black people in general. Chapter Four confines itself to a critical analysis of the narrator/protagonist's private and public life as portrayed in the narrative in respect of her personal and political transition. In chapter Five, I draw some conclusions about how Magona links the private and the public, why these connections need to be drawn and what are the results of these links.

CHAPTER TWO

AUTOBIOGRAPHY

In Greek, *autos* signifies ‘self’, *bios* ‘life’, and *graphe* ‘writing’. Taken together, in this order, the words denote ‘self life writing’ which together give a succinct definition of ‘autobiography’. In autobiography, the life narrator confronts his or her life via the self that is experienced by him or her, the self felt from the inside that the writer can never get ‘outside of’. The ‘inside’, or personally experienced self, has a history. While it may not be equable to an objective ‘history of the times’, it is a history of observation, not a history observed by others. Therefore, while autobiographical narratives may contain ‘facts’, they are not only factual history about a particular time, person or event. Instead, they also offer subjective ‘truth’ rather than ‘fact’ (Smith & Watson 2001:1-5). In the second volume of Magona’s autobiography, however, a great deal of factual information is presented. For instance, readers learn much about the ways in which apartheid was implemented:

Sex across the colour line was forbidden. True. But friendship wasn’t. Restaurants were closed to Africans and most coloured people. They were ‘whites only’. So were most cinemas. All the better beaches too. Trains, buses and taxis were segregated also. (1992:125)

Whilst the narrative structure consists of a storyline that focuses on Magona’s experiences and will therefore conform to her slant (keeping in mind various influences such as her feelings, attitudes, beliefs and so forth) this subjectivity is set against a political background that can be verified and therefore accepted as factual. Factual history and subjective history therefore merge to produce powerful discourse.

In autobiography, questions such as the notion of authorship and the author's investment in his or her personal life story are important. Magona informs Stephan Meyer in his interview with her: 'I always wanted to write, but I didn't know how to type, I didn't have a typewriter. The first book was handwritten to the end, and then I typed' (1998:79). It is clear that when she first started writing, Magona was ignorant of what it meant to be an author. In addition, she had little knowledge of the form or structure of any literary genre. Magona wrote primarily for personal reasons: a desire to express her thoughts. Racism and patriarchy were devastating ills that had wreaked havoc on the African, Indian and Coloured communities in South Africa. The only way for societal attitudes to change was to make white people aware of their contribution towards these evils and force them to react or respond in, hopefully, some positive way. The gradual elimination of traditions and customs of Xhosa culture, owing to the infiltration of western influences, had to be recorded for future generations to remember their heritage. Therefore it was necessary for the narrative to be written and circulated to ensure that the issues within would reach a universal audience. When Magona's autobiography is published, however, it affords her the opportunity to:

exercise power over her own life story. Now she can assure permanence as the book is passed on generation to generation unchanged. In this way she asserts not only ownership of her life experience as her private property but also maintains her effect on history (Gqola 1997:153).

Magona's autobiography whilst very private also becomes public. Gillian Whitlock informs us that:

It is evident that the autobiographic narrations of African women

are influential in their communities, not only because they narrate experiences which are often shared but also because the act of writing and publication is in itself significant. Their autobiographies have didactic power (2000:160).

There is no doubt that autobiographic authorship and publication are tangible evidence that restores to women much that patriarchy had attempted to destroy - namely, faith and confidence in their own worthiness.

Another important point relative to life writers is their target audience. Which group of people a life writer hopes to reach and why she wishes to reach this particular audience indicates much about the reasons for the autobiography being written.

Magona's autobiographies were written and published in English first and then in Xhosa. The reason for was that she had written her autobiographies during the apartheid regime and white publishers would have been reluctant to publish narratives written in Xhosa. Also, Magona wanted to expose a white audience to the realities of the impact of apartheid on black people. She hoped that they would acknowledge their contributions (if they had made any), either directly or indirectly, towards the miseries of black people and attempt to rectify the situation. But, she also wrote her narratives in Xhosa to share with and inform a black readership about issues of a cultural nature.

Whilst she wished to pay tribute to the many customs and traditions she comes to appreciate as meaningful, such as ancestor worship, rites of passage and so forth, she also wanted to explain the effect of those customs which were oppressive and stifling.

Certain traditional patriarchal attitudes had been personally detrimental. They had compounded the problems brought on by racism and had made her desire for growth and upliftment exceedingly difficult to fulfil. She hoped that black men, in particular,

would recognise the roles they played in hurting the women in their lives.

Sidonie Smith and Julia Watson inform us that it is necessary to distinguish between the historical, narrating and narrated 'I' of the text (2001:167-168). The author of Forced to Grow is a mature, sophisticated black woman with a wealth of knowledge and experience. She is also a somewhat prominent academic, a press officer in the United States. The narrator is a textual construct. She bears Magona's name and is her mouthpiece in the autobiography. She, too, is a mature, sophisticated black woman, however her knowledge and experience, in comparison to the author, is relatively limited. She is not, at the time the story was being told, an author but she does emigrate overseas. Throughout the autobiography, the narrator emerges as the voice of greater tolerance towards cultural matters especially in respect of child-rearing. She is, after all, a grandmother. Whilst the author has passed her terrible difficulties and is enjoying the rewards of her activism and endurance, the narrated 'I', on the other hand (i.e. the protagonist) becomes a disappointed woman, resentful towards her country that fails to provide her with a stable job despite her academic achievements and disillusioned with members of her community who perceive her to be a traitor for associating with white people. She is also somewhat burdened by children she finds difficulty in raising. As the story unfolds, the reader bears witness to the various tensions and anxieties, the fears and pains the protagonist experiences and her attempts to come to terms with her dilemmas.

Relevant to life writing are the models of identity available to the protagonist, the

narrator and the writer (Smith & Watson 2001:168). As these models of identity are socially represented, the protagonist's models are initially based on the nuclear family unit with a man as the provider and breadwinner and a woman as mother, nurturer and householder, and the Xhosa model of the extended family. Her husband's desertion of her family whilst she is an extremely young mother forces her to take on a paternal role. Thus she comes to resist the nuclear model. Subsequently, she is in conflict regarding her identity since, despite the fact that she is a mother, she identifies fully with being a father. She associates her role as provider with fatherhood and because she is predominantly a provider whose children are cared for by her mother and her neighbours, the protagonist does not perceive herself, really, as a mother. Towards the end of the narrative, however, the protagonist comes to terms with her various identities. The protagonist's model of the extended family is an important one. Throughout the text, members of her family assist her in minding her children whilst she studied or attended conferences overseas. Her mother, in particular, plays a pivotal role in offering her moral support and encouraging her in her studies. Towards the conclusion of Forced to Grow, the protagonist comes to realise the significance of each member of her family. The narrator, on the other hand, perceives herself as having multiple identities. The very fact that she is narrating this autobiography as a grandmother, already establishes an important function. Moreover, she has come to reconcile herself with her roles as mother, father, worker and so forth and has established a new social model that accommodates these diverse roles. The writer, on the other hand, is extremely comfortable with her multiple identities especially since the changing economic situation of black people has led to a negotiation and even an alteration of identities for the betterment of South Africans as

a whole. In addition to the narrator's roles, her role as author has been personally fulfilling and meaningful. Finally, she is at peace with herself.

The autobiographer writes from experience. Mediated via memory and language, 'experience' is already an interpretation of the past and of our place in a culturally and historically specific present (Smith & Watson 2001:24). However, whilst the experience represented in an autobiographical narrative seems personal, it is anything but merely personal as social, cultural and political issues frequently encroach on the individual's personal life. In Forced to Grow, the narrator/ protagonist's philosophies, actions and responses are shaped by the fact that she is a black Xhosa woman living in a patriarchal society and discriminated against by apartheid laws. Events in the narrative support the viewpoint below:

Experience then, is the very process through which a person becomes a certain kind of subject owning certain identities in the social realm, identities constituted through material, cultural, economic and inter-psychic relations. Subjects too, know themselves in language, because experience is discursive, embedded in the languages of everyday life and the knowledge produced at everyday sites. At the same time that we say that experience is discursive, we recognise that there are human experiences outside discursive narratives - feelings of the body, feelings of spirituality, powerful sensory memories of events and images. We retrospectively make experience and convey a sense of it to others through storytelling; as we tell our stories discursive patterns guide or compel us to tell our stories about ourselves in particular ways. (Smith & Watson 2001:25)

It is clear that language and culture play an integral role in shaping the identity of the individual.

Pam Morris explains that an important component of autobiography is 'Realism':

Literary texts can be identified unproblematically with real life, that writing not only should but can tell it like it is. The underlying assumption is that words reflect reality, that language acts as an objective mirror to life. Such a view of language is most consistently maintained in the kind of writing known as 'realism'. In Realist writing the characters are lifelike, believably shaped by social and personal circumstances; the events of the narrative are similarly credible, represented as a convincing sequence of everyday cause and effect; the language used and the syntax are unobtrusive; the self-effacing style preserving the illusion that what is offered is direct, unmediated access to real people and their lives. The autobiographical form seems the final guarantee that what we read is the true account (1996:60).

Magona's Forced to Grow certainly fits into this genre of writing. The storyline, a simple one, revolves around the severe hardships experienced by a young Xhosa mother whose husband had left her. The writing in its simplicity is extremely appealing as it is accessible to both the literate and those struggling to reach there i.e. the large uneducated black masses. To the reader, Magona appears a sincere and reliable writer, and this is observed, clearly, during the times when she is critical of her own views, when she expresses compassion and understanding towards the very people who had contributed to her pain, and when she reveals some unimpressive facets of herself which she could so easily have manipulated to gain the approval of the reader.

John Sturrock in The Language of Autobiography (1993:49) states that autobiography can be seen as a forensic genre, 'an expedient way by which the writer can reply to the injuries that have been done to him.....a kind of writing by which to gain redress' (cited by Jacobs 2000:45). Most autobiographical writers employ this style of writing to share with and inform their readers about factors that contributed towards their hardships. They hope that by conveying their messages, expressing their feelings and

viewpoints and highlighting the causes of their miseries their audience will respond and react in positive and constructive ways. Deirdre Byrne reveals the historical oppression of black people:

Political exigencies of life in S.A. have made for gripping reading that often seems stranger than fiction. For nearly half a century, apartheid was a founding condition of South African life and could not be ignored by artists who aspire to reflect its texture however obliquely (1994:23).

The above quotation indicates the terrible suffering black people were forced to experience because of political laws which governed every facet of their lives. Their desire for private advancement and personal growth was hindered by a political system intent on oppressing them, stripping them of their dignity and worth. Racist laws ensured that educationally, socially, politically and financially black people would remain disenfranchised labourers who would not threaten the smooth operation of a superior white lifestyle. Consequently, any opportunity for upward mobility was curtailed, even eliminated. Only the very few who, like Magona, were steadfastly determined to challenge and attempted to conquer this destructive system. Political impediments, however, were so overwhelming that even those as courageous as Magona had to accept that most of their efforts were in vain. It is this acknowledgement that forces her to leave South Africa eventually. Whitlock shares with us the traumatic experiences of the narrator and other black women whose private lives have been invaded and marred by a series of political events. She explains:

In S.A. seemingly disparate events – in [Magona's] case having to apply for a passport, the death of two students and S.A. becoming a republic in 1961 – are irretrievably linked in her memory, in part because they are 'strands of the same hideous whole. In them, terribly articulated was our voicelessness' (2000:166).

Many S.A life writers, then, (including Magona) wrote to gain redress for crimes

against humanity and certainly not for financial reward or any other materialistic reason. In Forced to Grow Magona strives to gain redress by exposing the terrible effects of apartheid on the lives of individuals. Her efforts also include the roles patriarchy and gender discrimination played in oppressing women and adding to their burdens.

Pam Morris explains that Ellen Moers, in her book Literary Women, indicates the value of autobiography: 'Each of these gifted writers had their own distinctive style; none imitated the others' (1996:60). Whilst most black S.A. female writers did display an individual style as they had their own stories to tell, many wrote somewhat stereotypically about patriarchy, apartheid and other injustices. Magona (as several critics have found) displays the non-conformist uniqueness of her writing when she ventures to expose the trauma and abuse in relationships, the difficulties of 'mothering' and the fact that white mothers had accepted the miseries inflicted on black mothers.

Whitlock argues: 'It is the work of autobiography to make these links between private and public. The politics of race and gender work to produce this threshold' (2000:199). The intention of autobiography is to reveal the conflicts the writer experiences between her private life and her public life i.e. what the writer wishes for herself and how social, cultural and political expectations intrude to ensure that her personal desires are not fulfilled. In the second part of the autobiography Magona informs the reader about the apartheid era and its effects on black people. She also

highlights the oppressive nature of patriarchy and the effect of gender prejudices on women. Magona exposes this destruction of women when race and gender discrimination conspire against black women. The narrator informs us that her pregnancy and subsequent marriage to Luthando forced her to leave her job as a teacher. The department of Bantu education 'did not recognise traditional liaisons. In the eyes of officialdom, therefore, I was not married' (1990:117). The fact that she was a 'fallen' woman compounded the problem. In the light of her predicament the protagonist was forced to become a domestic worker. Certainly, this is an aspect of autobiography that is extremely significant and it is clear that black South African women writers in particular, triply oppressed in terms of gender, class and race, found the medium of autobiography especially suitable as it offered them the platform to reveal their miseries in a realistic and credible manner. Most South African feminist writers wrote to give vent to their frustrations (on issues that were sidelined) and inform the reader about factual occurrences such as apartheid. They used the autobiographical mode, thus 'giving voice to marginalised or silenced areas of experience' (Forsas-Scott 1991:92). Autobiography, then, serves an important function in restoring to women individually and collectively a sense of their own worth and integrity. It also serves as testimony, as statement of experiences which insists on its truth-value as non-fictional document.

Whilst life writers write, as Smith and Watson have pointed out, to chronicle an event, to explore a certain time period, or to enshrine a community, they also perform several rhetorical acts: justifying their own perceptions, upholding their reputations and settling scores amongst others. Smith and Watson assert that feminist writers use

the autobiographical genre as a forum to understand women's experience under patriarchy and to promote self-discovery and change (2001:1). Some of Magona's motives in writing her autobiography are noted here. In Forced to Grow Magona justifies her own perceptions of several issues she found to be problematic. In one of those, she explains that she was unable to perceive the pains of her white women employers because her own intense suffering, exacerbated by the political system in terms of which black women were massively disadvantaged, was so overwhelming. Magona upholds her reputation by ensuring that despite stereotypical societal scorn and expectation that the children born to 'idikazi' would become lawbreakers and unsuccessful, she defies these norms and produces well-adjusted, prosperous children. In addition, the writer proves to both her husband and the community that not only can she acquit herself successfully as both mother and father to her children, but she can also conduct her paternal duties far better than a man could. Thus, she is able to settle a score that was long overdue. In terms of her personal growth the protagonist learns to appreciate her mother's assertion of her individuality when she becomes a sangoma. She explains: 'And having thus freed myself, I found I actually enjoyed Mother's new undertaking' (1992:75). The protagonist experiences freedom from religious indoctrination. She realises that in terms of her spirituality she need not confine herself to one stream but can choose to enjoy the benefits of both the Christian and Ancestral worlds as each has its own value. On a broader level, too, she learns that it is not only South African black women who lived miserable, difficult lives but that women globally suffered a range of problems:

Pain and white had never connected in my mind. After joining Church Women Concerned I was to learn of white hurt: marital infidelity, divorce, alcoholism, debt and a host of others (1992:133).

These many insights were revelations that contributed immensely towards Magona's

reasons for writing her autobiography. She also learns that she too can be a writer.

According to Susannah Radstone in her essay 'Autobiographical Times' James Olney expresses the view that 'autobiography reflects an "unchanging" human nature which desires to write about itself' (2000:202). Olney's viewpoint is somewhat incorrect as, individually and collectively, people are always evolving. Education, inventions and discoveries improve the lives of human beings and therefore bring about change. But transformation is also brought about when people are guided by their feelings and attitudes whether negative or positive. Since autobiographies are about people's private and public lives which are constantly changing autobiographies, too, reflect this change. Magona's autobiography focuses on the personal and collective changes that occurred and their impact on the individual. In To my Children's Children the narrator, with foresight, was able to perceive the influences of western society on the generations to follow; also, the fact that a change in the current political situation was inevitable in view of black people's fury. In Forced to Grow we witness the protagonist's political awakenings, which direct her towards joining several organisations in rejection of racism. Her personal growth, as recorded in the narrative, in this regard is phenomenal. In this autobiography she also records her 'long struggle to forge and maintain a sense of self within an immediate community that was undergoing a cultural transition and a larger society entrenched in apartheid'¹. The political transition manifests itself when African people began to acknowledge that they were serving the interests of white people at the expense of their own upward mobility. The 1976 riots by schoolchildren resulted in the boycotting of schools forcing education, and then later many other social services, to a standstill.

Subsequently, the narrator/ protagonist is forced to make a major change regarding her children's education; hence her relocation to the United States. The changes that do occur from the beginning of the text to its conclusion are politically, socially and personally far reaching.

Whitlock claims that autobiographical acts require narrators to 'identify' themselves to the reader:

Identities, or subject positionings, materialise within collectivities and out of the culturally marked differences that permeate symbolic interactions within and between collectivities and are marked in terms of many categories: gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, nationality, class, generation, family, genealogy, religions and political ideologies. Autobiographical writing, thus, offers women 'access to authoritative discourses and to a public that, in certain times and places, allow their histories to perform important political work and to engage in social change' (2000:166).

Magona, the authorial subject, is a mature middle-class black Xhosa woman who lives in the United States but has retained her South African citizenship. In terms of her religious convictions she embraces both the western Christian beliefs and her ancestral beliefs. Magona accepts what is reasonable in both streams and rejects what she finds to be disagreeable. She is politically conscientised and believes strongly in equality for all people. The narrator of Forced to Grow is a mature, relatively sophisticated Xhosa woman whose spirituality is guided by the need to do what is good. Therefore she breaks away from traditional Christianity, which is prescriptive and does not accommodate her cultural practices. Politically and socially, Magona is enlightened about issues that have affected both black and white people. For this reason, she had campaigned relentlessly against apartheid and patriarchy. In the text, Magona exposes the atrocities of apartheid that breaks up families because of

the infamous Group Areas Act. Apartheid also ensured that white workers received inflated salaries even by white S.A. standards. That autobiographical writers, then, become agents of transformation from these inequalities, is indicated by Whitlock who asserts:

for writers like Magona, the autobiography must both cross and reveal the boundaries of race. They must engage readers with whom they do not identify and who may not in the first instance recognise and take responsibility for their own implications in colonialism's culture given that transparency of whiteness as a racial identity (2000:166).

Therefore, Magona also writes in English to share with and expose to a white audience the problems experienced by African people during the apartheid era.

That Magona had succeeded in reaching some white people is indicated by the fact that her autobiography was published, during the apartheid period, by a white-owned company.

Mante Phahlele informs us that it has been suggested that:

Black women's writing should not be labelled "autobiography" at all, for they do not present the self in terms of the "classic" autobiographical narrative of individualism. The "classic" autobiography is derived from a Euro-American canon that has strict racial, classed and gendered boundaries. The traditional notions of autobiography are grounded in the idea of the single authoritative life being defined in and through the text, written in splendid isolation and eloquence by the autobiographer him or herself (2002:166).

I certainly disagree with the above viewpoint. Despite the fact that black feminist writers do not 'present the self in terms of the "classic" autobiographical narrative of individualism' and black feminist writers seem to represent other black women because they share common problems and therefore have communal appeal, their autobiographies are very personal. The fact is that each narrative revolves around

each autobiographer's life and focuses on dilemmas that pertain, in particular degrees, to that autobiographer only. The narrative Forced to Grow focuses on the issues that pertain to Magona and her search for selfhood. A counter-argument by Jean Starobinski, which supports my argument that black women's writing can indeed be referred to as autobiography, offers greater rationality and reason because usually an autobiographer functions within a community on several levels and in relation to individuals or collective members. Starobinski in Olney claims:

Autobiography is certainly not a genre with rigorous rules. It only requires that certain possible conditions be realised, conditions that are mainly ideological (or cultural): that the personal experience be important, that it can offer an opportunity for a sincere relationship with someone else. These presuppositions establish the legitimacy of 'I' and authorise the subject of the discourse to take his past existence as a theme. Moreover, the 'I' is confirmed in the function of the permanent subject by the presence of the correlative 'you', giving clear motivation to the discourse (1980:77).

Magona's text is, however, well within the expectations of traditional autobiography as she employs a genre of realism, a first-person narrative and a linear plot.

A collection of letters can be regarded as a valuable source of cultural and historical data from a first person point of view that is rooted in 'tangible reality' since it usually contains a date, address and a signature all of which are located in time and space and verify the identity of the writer, confirming her authority. In an age when exerting authority was not a woman's prerogative, written correspondence sometimes provided the only safe environment in which a woman, particularly a woman of colour, could freely express herself (Cosslett, Lury & Summerfield 2000:108). Magona validates

her authenticity when she chooses to write her autobiography in the form of a letter about her life story (which has a great deal of factual information that can be confirmed) to an audience she does not know intimately. Thus, whilst the letter writer has a vested interest in writing to an audience she does know intimately and can therefore be accused of presenting a positive self-image, Magona would have no need to allow her:

autobiographical self to transcend the self of actual lived experience. Instead this textual strategy (i.e. autobiography) allows her to dramatise the discrepancy between the voice of social reason and the voice of personal experience (i.e. her own emotions, imagination and intuition). This two-part autobiography is a closed communication because it is a letter, and letters are supposed to be confidential correspondence between the involved parties. Yet because it is a published book, it becomes an open letter and we, the readers, are allowed to eavesdrop on a woman teaching her granddaughter and generations to follow about the tensions between social expectations and genuine feelings (Koyana 2002:51).

In Forced to Grow, Magona's autobiographical form becomes a convenient vehicle for using her personal experience as a basis for her commentary on social arrangements and institutions governing familial relationships and the practice of mothering (Koyana 2002:52). Magona employs the autobiography as a medium to reveal her private difficulties when she is forced to assume the role of 'father and provider', yet be a 'mother and nurturer' as Xhosa society expected. Ultimately she wishes to indicate that society had placed a great deal of pressure on her and other black women and that their appalling conditions of poverty, their struggles to provide their children with basic essentials amongst others, disprove and defy society's claim of motherhood and marriage being institutions of bliss. Society must take heed of the plight of black women and attempt to rectify the situation.

Finally, "if women have been categorised as 'objects' by patriarchal cultures,

women's autobiography gives an opportunity for them to express themselves as 'subjects' with their own selfhood" (Cosslett, Lury & Summerfield 2000:5).

Many feminists have used autobiography to:

combat women's feelings of isolation and inadequacy. Finding their own emotions, circumstances, frustrations and desires shared, named and shaped into literary form gave (and continues to give) many women, some for the first time, a sense that their own existence is meaningful, that their view of things is valid and intelligent, that their suffering is imposed and unnecessary; literary treatment of issues pertaining to women's lives also imparted (and continues to impart) a belief in women's collective strength to resist and remake their own lives (Forsas-Scott 1991:60).

Autobiography empowers women and assures them that change is possible. It allows them to write and publish their own stories employing their individual styles. As a democratic genre it offers women the freedom and flexibility to reclaim their subjectivity and attain selfhood. The narrative Forced to Grow explores pertinent issues relating to black South African women's lives during apartheid. In writing her own story, Magona is stating that African women are being oppressed. She forces her own community to acknowledge and react to the rights of women and women's desires to explore their potential fully and holistically.

CHAPTER THREE

FEMINISM

‘Feminism, which happened when women learned to say ‘I’”(Green1993:10), is a politics directed at changing the existing power relations between women and men in society. As these power relations structure all arenas of life - the family, education and welfare, the worlds of work and politics, culture and leisure - they determine who does what and for whom, what we are and what we might become. Feminism has its roots in a political movement, the Women’s Liberation Movement, which has been an active force for transformation since the late 1960s. The concerns of this Movement which are many and varied, affect every aspect of women’s lives and include the very question of what it is to be a woman, how our femininity and sexuality are defined for us and how we might begin to redefine them for ourselves (Weedon 1987:1).

According to Magona and implicit in her autobiography Forced to Grow, to be a woman means that females must embrace all facets of themselves, engaging in limitless possibilities without categorisation or demarcation. She indicates clearly that women’s femininity and sexuality have been defined for them by society. Women, in terms of most cultural systems, are deemed to be weak, passive and dependent on men. Females are subordinate to males because they are held to be inferior. Their roles, too, are specified in that they are child-bearers, nurturers and housekeepers. In this text, Magona emphasises the need for women to redefine the concepts men have thrust upon them. She implies that women should take control of their lives, seek and claim their independence and assert their individuality so that they can reach ultimate selfhood. Magona feels that to achieve their goals, women

need to unpack deep psychological layers of subordination and domination wherein they have come to perceive of themselves as lower beings existing only in relation to the men in their lives.

According to Chris Weedon, The Feminist Movement also focuses on welfare rights, equality of opportunity, rape and violence against women within and outside the family, and the way in which the oppressions of patriarchy are compounded for many by class and race. These political questions should be the motivating force behind feminist theory, which must always be answerable to the needs of women in their struggle to transform patriarchy. The starting point for feminists, then, would be the patriarchal structures of society. The different ways of perceiving patriarchy result in different forms of feminist politics – liberal, separatist (or radical) and socialist.

Liberal feminism aims to have equality in all spheres of life without drastically transforming the current social and political system. Radical feminism envisages a new social order wherein women will not be subordinated to men; it argues that the only way in which women can assert their autonomy is in separating from men and the patriarchal structures of society. For socialist feminists, patriarchy is tied in with class and racial oppression and can be abolished only via a change in the social system (1987:1-2). I believe that both Liberalist Feminism and Radical Feminism are extremes, at opposite ends of the feminist continuum, which will not bring harmony, equality and balance to society. Both these systems appear skewed as their chief concern is with patriarchy and its elimination; hence they are one-sided and do not consider racism and its impact on black people or the class system and its impact

on the working classes. The principles of Socialist Feminism are certainly more practical and humane.

Socialist feminism attempts to extend to the gender system the Marxist assumption that human nature is not essential but socially produced and changing. Marie

Francoise Chanfrault-Duchet explains:

Individuality is always a product of social models, and can only be understood through the social. To construct an identity, a subject takes up the models offered by society, as transmitted by culture, and shapes them into his or her own type, bringing into play a system of values (quoted in Cosslett, Lury & Summerfield 2000:61).

The model that society offers Magona is one wherein the father is the breadwinner and the mother is the caregiver. The role of the daughter-in-law, too, in Xhosa culture has specific requirements in that she is also a caregiver to the family. In the beginning, Magona accepts this model. However, when she is forced to take on her husband's role, this model becomes non-functional. As a woman, she comes to identify greatly with the paternal role. She abandons the loving caring role that she associates with mothers, in favour of the law-giver, punishing role that she associates with fathers. In the text, the reader witnesses how social upheaval contributes to Magona's growing independence. The societal turmoil that occurs, in light of the proliferation of single mother-headed families, increasing destitution and the growing need for women who are in relatively stable relationships to supplement their husbands' income, forces women out into the public sphere and away from their stereotypical housebound domain. This precipitates further social and individual transition that transforms the roles of men and women as breadwinner and child-minder, respectively. Magona's entry into a man's world as sole breadwinner

contributes enormously towards her upliftment. She is forced to take control of commitments and obligations and is thus afforded the authority and courage to assert herself, hence the changes that occur both around her and within her, too. Privately she comes to view herself as a worthy human being capable of doing anything she desires. Politically and publicly, she is able to engage with people of diverse cultures, races and creeds and tackle controversial issues with maturity and confidence.

In having experienced the detrimental effect of the conventional mindset, Magona seems to concur with Helen Forsas-Scott who advocates:

a fundamental restructuring of social relations. This would, it was thought, create a society in which women were not reduced to their roles as mothers and wives and where they would be able to participate fully in all spheres, including public life, work and sexuality, whether or not they were married. Socialist feminists assumed that all women and men should be equal (1991:75).

Magona illustrates the disadvantages of being married and the difficulties she was forced to endure despite her husband's meagre earnings at that point:

Four long years I had laboured in white women's homes, a domestic servant. I could not get a teaching job because I was not a breadwinner. I had a husband. Unmarried women teachers enjoyed preferential hiring. That my husband had not earned enough to win any bread cut no ice. Society insisted on regarding him, as all others like him, as the breadwinner in our family (1992:31).

Once again patriarchal structures adamantly refuse to consider the needs of 'changing' families.

Winifred Holtby in Forsas-Scott, a British writer, reminds us of Olive Schreiner's

argument that: “if half of humanity whether of ‘inferior’ sex or ‘inferior’ race is deprived of the opportunity for development, it endangers the whole progress of civilization” (1991:20). This, then, is in keeping with the socialist feminist claim that to have a humane creative socialist society in which individuals can realise their full potential, the question of patriarchal power structures and patriarchal forms of subjectivity, as well as racist and class-based distributions of power and opportunity, must be addressed as these are the basis on which most men and women relate to each other. The narrator/protagonist has experienced first-hand how it feels to be ridiculed by one’s family and what it means to make all the sacrifices as a woman, wife and mother only to be called *idikazi*, a woman of dubious repute, one who cannot be a role model for her children simply because her husband chose to desert her. She also knew how it felt to receive a lower salary than her male colleagues and she knew how disappointed her family was because they could not expect much lobola since she was not a virgin. Magona’s autobiography Forced to Grow exposes the innumerable injustices meted out to her and other African women. But she also seems to support the view of other socialist feminists that:

men’s patriarchal power over women is the primary power relationship in human society and that this power is not just confined to the public worlds of economic and political activity, but characterises all relationships between the sexes, they seek to give patriarchy a history, understand its relationship with other forms of domination and try to explore the ways in which class and sex oppression interact in a capitalist society (Bhopal 1997:44).

Magona is able to visualise patriarchy in its entirety. Xhosa men are themselves victims of South African politics that undermine their masculinity. When the narrator/protagonist finds a job with Bantu Administration, the branch of the government responsible for the regulation of Africans, she discovers that ‘well

educated blacks remained in perpetual subordination to the not-so-well-educated whites' (1992:91). She also recalls how, as a child 'she had often wondered how the men who emptied lavatory buckets could do such a job' (1992:89). These examples of degradation perhaps indicate reasons why men enforced greater oppression in the home wherein they were 'boss'. Magona realised that for equality and harmony to prevail the source of the problem must be tackled. Apartheid had played a major role in destroying the lives of black people.

Winifred Holtby in Forsas-Scott claims that: 'whenever society has tried to curtail the opportunities, interests and powers of women, it has done so in the sacred names of marriage and maternity' (1991:20). According to Weedon, who seems to share this viewpoint, 'Socialist feminists agree that the key site of all issues is the family. They embrace the ideology that women are primarily neither sexual nor procreative beings and that whilst biology needs to be taken into account, the meaning must be seen as historical and social' (1987:3). I certainly agree with the above viewpoints. The roles of wife and mother should not be used to oppress women and confine them to the home. Whilst these roles are important, women can be mothers, wives; and they can fulfil the roles of fathers (as the protagonist in the text has proven), workers and any other role they wish to take on. The Xhosa perspective of communal continuity is explained, succinctly, by John Mbiti: 'Children are the buds of society, and every birth is the arrival of "spring" when life shoots out and the community thrives' (1971:110). The contradiction, however, is apparent in the narrator's observation: 'It is ironic that women, the bearers of these national treasures, are at once devalued for

that very act' (Magona 1992:20). Magona illustrates how:

trapped in a marriage to a largely absent father, the 'controlling image' of black women as 'natural mothers', is false. Instead she faces emotional and physical hardships in the struggle for money, food and housing for her children (Bryne 1994:147).

Xhosa society deliberately emphasises the importance of motherhood. It appears that the motive is to keep women housebound. This motive is reinforced by the fact that husbandless women and, consequently, their children are treated so shabbily. Moreover, fathers who do not take their roles seriously suffer no repercussions. The role of motherhood (as defined in Xhosa society), then, will only become meaningful if fatherhood is taken seriously.

In her attempt to explain why her marriage failed, Magona later realises that Luthando 'absconded as a result of his expired work permit, thus emphasising how the government's labour policies exploit male migrant workers and disrupt family life to the detriment of women and children' (Koyana 2001:64) and it is because he deserts her that she is 'forced to grow'. In the second volume of her autobiography, the narrator tells us how, whilst working for the Bantu Administration, four years later, curiosity got the better of her and she opened her husband's file: 'I discovered that he had been 10 (1) (d) – a migrant labourer with an annual contract who had to go home each year. We never really had a chance, I realised' (Magona 1992:90). South African politics is one of the reasons why Magona opts for a form of feminism that includes a rejection of racism as part of its political agenda.

In South Africa (during the apartheid regime) poverty, labour controls and the lack of

employment brought on by apartheid, combine to 'trap' about one million black women in domestic service. These women are subject to intense oppression and this is evident in their low wages, long working hours and demeaning treatment by their white female employers. The narrator/protagonist, referring to herself initially in the third person, informs us that:

during her four year 'sabbatical' she had barely managed to keep body and soul together. The kind of work I had done while I was unemployed by the Department of Bantu Education was the kind that breaks the body and crushes the spirit (Magona 1992:34).

The irony here lies in the fact that white madams displayed little sympathy or compassion towards the predicament of their black maids, despite suffering their own gender-based oppressions. Instead, they have often contributed enormously towards their maids' hardships by extending their workloads, ignoring that they are mothers too, insulting them by referring to them as 'my girl' and paying them a pittance. It is hardly surprising then that some black feminists have rejected the term 'feminism' which they see as predominantly favourable to white women.

Jacklyn Cock notes also the effect of apartheid on African men:

other Africans, too, also experience their working lives as a form of slavery because Africans in South Africa are one of the most regimented labour forces in the contemporary world. This regimentation is secured through influx control regulations which control the flow of African workers into the so-called white areas which constitute 85% of the total land area in South Africa. Legislation then imposes an embargo on the entry of unskilled African women into urban areas and migrants on one-year contracts may have them renewed annually as long as they remain in the same job (1988:206).

The lives of all black people were pitiable. South African politics, during apartheid,

undermined both men and women, destroying their families and robbing them of their human rights. It is for this reason, in the main, that whilst Magona rejected the subjugation of women she also understood the plight of men in their inability to express their manhood by being satisfactory providers.

Whilst Magona appreciates the objectives of socialist feminism, she ventures a step further in her support of 'Womanism', an afrocentric form of feminism which takes not only gender concerns seriously, but also race and class factors. Desiree Lewis enlightens us on the reasoning behind black women's support of 'womanism':

Black and working-class women's struggles differed from those of many white and middle class-class women. White and middle-class feminists attach key importance to their liberation from the family and domesticity, while for many black and working-class women, 'freedom' to enter the male domain is frequently oppressive (2001:9).

Womanism as a term was coined by Alice Walker (1983) in the Afro-American feminist context and by Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyeni (1985) in the African one. Despite the fact that Walker's theorizing predates Ogunyeni's, the latter claims she arrived at the term independently. The concept 'womanism', a philosophy that portrays 'wholeness' and 'healing' for all black people, acknowledges the role of black men in helping to transform colonized black people from 'mere national subjects' to 'political citizens' (Koyana 2001:65). Womanism simply seeks to revise and retain African traditions. It celebrates black roots and the ideals of black life, whilst giving a balanced presentation of black womandom . It concerns itself as much with black political and economic powerlessness as with the black gender power struggle (Aegerter 2000:67). Thus, it incorporates the well-being of men who are also

victims of the world power structures that subjugate black people as a whole. As Magona's autobiographies show, this is not to suggest that 'womanism' is a feminism *controlled* by the need to support men. Rather, it is sympathetic to their oppression since black men are part of the oppressed whole (Koyana 2001:65).

In Forced to Grow it might even be argued that the authorial narrator moves from a position of radical feminism (i.e. a rejection of men) to one of womanism and finally to humanism. Her bitterness regarding her husband's desertion, the fact that she was forced to undertake her duties and his too, the emotional and psychological traumas regarding single mothers and the fact that her own career aspirations were jeopardised cause her to reject men. The protagonist's relationship with Bunny many years after Luthando had left her ended because of Bunny's ex-girlfriend and the ugliness that prevailed owing to her jealousy. This resulted in the protagonist's refusal to become romantically or sexually involved with a man. She also began to acknowledge the control apartheid had over African men and realized that men, too, had been victims of a social system that required them to be providers and a political system that undermined them so they became incapable of living up to this expectation. She moved from creating barriers between the sexes to a process of healing and rehabilitation. In embracing black men too, her fight is extended towards a general equality for all black people in the removal of oppressive structures and the abolishment of all stereotypes. As she matured, she became more enlightened about South African and global politics and involved herself more actively in organisations and committees that focused on issues that affected women. She realised that women throughout the world suffered similar problems regarding violence and abuse; hence her support of humanism.

Some 'womanist' supporters such as Alice Walker, deviate from Magona's viewpoint which includes concerns about racism and seem to take on a more inclusive humanist approach. Alice Walker's preference for the term 'womanist' addresses the notion of solidarity of humanity. To Walker, one is a 'womanist' when one is 'committed to the survival and wholeness of entire people, male and female'. A womanist is not a separatist, and 'is traditionally universalist'. Walker redefines all people as 'people of colour'. By doing this she universalises what are typically seen as individual struggles while simultaneously allowing space for autonomous movements of self-determination. Walker acknowledges that people's struggles are part of a wider struggle for human dignity (Walker in Mikell 1997:38). Whilst I understand Magona's reasoning in supporting 'womanism', as black men's problems impact greatly on black women's problems, and I appreciate her understanding of the commonalities of all women's difficulties, I am inclined to disagree with Walker's definition. Walker prefers the humanist approach, which seems to deviate from particular problems that pertain to women only. In creating a platform for men, she undermines the importance of women's difficulties for which men are massively responsible.

Womanists have indicated their desires and objectives:

We want a world where basic needs become rights and where all forms of violence are eliminated. Each black person will have the opportunity to develop his or her full potential and creativity, and women's value of nurturance and solidarity will characterise human relationships. In such a world women's reproductive role will be redefined. Child-care will be shared by men, women and black society as a whole. We want a world where all institutions are

open to participatory processes where women share in determining priorities and making decisions (Walker in Mikell 1997:250).

Magona, also, advocates that the family cannot be alienated from the broader social relations of work, leisure and public life, all of which require transformation. In fact, some African feminists maintain that: 'the black family is a qualitatively different proposition from the family structure in which white women are involved. The family, then, needs to be abolished in its existing form to achieve quality' (Bhopal 1994:4). It is clear in volume two of her autobiography that the writer is in complete agreement with this viewpoint. The protagonist's identification with fatherhood because she is forced to undertake the obligations of being a provider and breadwinner divorces her from many duties of a mother. In reality, she plays a dual role of both father and mother. Since white men, during apartheid, had received salaries that allowed them to be successful providers, African men were deprived of their right to provide adequately for their families. Patricia Hill Collins explains: 'Denying black men a family wage meant that women continued working and that motherhood as a privatised, female "occupation" never predominated in the African-American communities' (1990:39). The protagonist's predicament is representative of countless husbandless families. In light of these circumstances a review of the nuclear family structure is vital.

Magona argues, and this is apparent in Forced to Grow, that the problems that needed to be solved are neither black women's problems, nor black men's problems, but the problems of black people as a whole. This is a position that I support because apartheid contributed enormously to the daily struggles of all black people. Magona

also shares the views of the Russian poet Zinaida Cippins in Forsas-Scott who, 'demanded that a woman be above all, a person; only after asserting herself as a human being could she insist on her womanhood' (1991:31). Magona, therefore, proposes a deconstruction of traditional gender roles, and advocates a paradigm shift wherein broad social changes are imperative. This transformation would be a process demanding a change of mindset not only on the part of women but of men, too. In addition, 'although women are still in many ways subordinate to men, the answer is not to become the same as men but to transform the existing femininity – masculinity opposition' (Forsas-Scott 1991:131).

Helen O' Connell explains the reasons for the change in the traditional family unit during apartheid:

traditional family structures are changing due to economic developments and migration to urban areas. A number of single-parent families is arising. In some societies the line between women's and men's roles has become blurred as many men cannot or do not contribute emotional support, labour or finance to the family (1980: 9).

In Forced to Grow, the escalating financial burdens and subsequent grinding poverty in the townships, as a result of apartheid, a lack of employment and other impediments, force most black women to supplement the family income or become sole providers. Gender roles, in implementation, begin to change but are weighed down heavily by patriarchal attitudes, which remain steadfast. Daymond informs us that: 'Magona moves from a woman's well-defined traditional domesticity to the urban multiplicity of roles that are felt to be contradictory' (1995:562). Magona often remarks, in Forced to Grow, that she has been: 'more of a father than a mother to her

children' (1992:162). Clearly, the protagonist did find difficulty in defining her new role of mother-cum-provider, as the patriarchal concept of father as provider had been deeply ingrained and had cemented itself in her psyche. Socialist feminism takes heed of these social changes.

Socialist feminists' objectives have profound implications for family life as they include the removal of the sexual division of labour and the full participation of men in child-rearing; reproductive freedom for women; the abolition of the categories 'woman' and 'man'; and the eventual opening up of all social ways of being to all people (Weedon 1987:17).

PATRIARCHY: A FEMINIST'S NIGHTMARE

The vast majority of people, around the world, believe that men are superior. That they have primary claim to employment and that women owe them their labour and are answerable to them, stems from the general belief that men and women are different and their differences are biologically rooted. Whilst status differences, in a variety of forms, based on gender are universal, there is no conclusive evidence to suggest that the physiological differences account for differences in behaviour, aptitudes and capabilities. The natural, inherited differences between the sexes fall into two categories - the anatomical that are obvious at birth in the genitalia, and those that are apparent at puberty. Owing to the biological differences, the distinct hormones estrogen and progesterone are held to be responsible for the differences in the male and female reproductive functions. Some theories also suggest that these hormones are responsible for behavioural differences, that women are naturally more temperamental owing to the female hormones, whilst men are more aggressive because of the male ones. If it is established without doubt that emotional and behavioural differences are due to hormonal influences, then the assumptions that women are soft, emotional and less able to make rational decisions could have a factual or scientific basis (Meer 1990:13). As yet, however, this claim has not been verified and is therefore unhelpful.

In Forced to Grow, the innumerable miseries inflicted on African women as a result of patriarchy and apartheid and the fact that many of these women were able to

withstand the onslaught of these horrendous policies is sufficient proof that whilst women may be soft and even emotional, they can also be strong, flexible and reasonable. Hence they are, for the most part, able to survive all odds. In the text, the narrator introduces us to *Sis' Thandi* whom she says:

was the first person I knew who attended boarding school. She had completed Junior Certificate and a two-year teacher-training course. Two or three years before this, her husband had lost his driver's job. *Sis' Thandi* had stopped teaching after her marriage and was raising four children. Now she had returned to teaching (1992:29).

We also note that the protagonist's mother was a strong, forceful woman. Finally, we witness the narrator /protagonist's triumph against hardships borne from crushing poverty, a husband who forsakes her and relinquishes his duty to his family in the prime of their lives, the scorn and humiliation that prevails subsequently and apartheid policies that suppress and undermine single black mothers.

According to Fatima Meer:

All social institutions depend on some form of rationalisation or ideological structure to legitimate their functioning. Those that extend themselves via inter-generational roots, outgrow this 'rationalisation' as they take on a 'natural' character. Eventually, they receive sustenance, not only by intellectual debate, but by metaphysical, divine persuasions that penetrate the psyche of both the individual and the group. The institutions of both family and marriage fall within the ambit of this order. This kind of universality and commonality in all human societies, then, strengthens the impression that they are natural or spiritual institutions (1990:15).

While women are, in terms of their anatomy, physically structured for childbirth, their desire for children is controlled socially in that many women (except those whose culture dictates otherwise) would want them within marriage and in reasonable

numbers. The fact that there is no natural desire for pregnancy with each sexual act indicates that motherhood is an acquired social role, and certainly not naturally derived. While women bear children, there is no strong evidence to support the premise that they are also naturally intended to raise them. In linking child-bearing with child-rearing, society has associated women with children, confining them to the domestic sphere. Therein lies women's subjugation, for they have been removed from the world of public affairs and social power (1990:16). Rosalind Coward explains the relations of reproduction,

the inescapable evidence of a very definite relation between woman's subordinate position and the role of child-bearer and child-care. Assumptions about women's child-bearing and child-rearing capacity seem to underlie practices like the family wage; hence they underpin women's economic dependency and oppression as well as the ghettoisation of women in low paid work (1983:268).

The scenario below paints an unnerving picture of the narrator/protagonist's circumstances brought on by her errant husband. Miserable because of her poverty and society's scorn, she says:

Such was my status as 1967 began. The two-month-old baby and his sisters had only me. And I husbandless, with neither job nor access to any money, had only blind, unreasonable, fragile hope (1992:2).

Magona's position reveals the strict cultural ideologies that prevailed in patriarchal Xhosa societies which did not accommodate 'husbandless' women. Customs and traditions play a pivotal role in reinforcing or undermining the subjugation of women. In Xhosa culture 'mothering' is a central issue.

Xhosa customs in respect to marriage and mothering (like so many customs in cultures the world over) are irrational, lacking in both compassion and comprehension. Xhosa culture (as Magona explains it) ignores the importance of fatherhood which is vital in ensuring that a child grows up secure, stable and well-developed. Whilst the protagonist is enraged that her husband has left the family, she is also angry at the humiliation and the lack of understanding that follows. The reader is startled by the forthright introduction to Magona's autobiography Forced to Grow, as despite the fact that Magona was pregnant with their third child - a son - when her husband deserts her, she is portrayed by others as the guilty party. Xhosa society punishes women whose husbands have abandoned them in life or death, forcing them to assume sole responsibility for the predicament in which they so unfortunately find themselves. Christine Obbo elaborates on the unbelievable attitude of this dominating male-oriented community: 'Women are constantly reminded, "The pride of a proper woman is a husband," with the warning that they may miss out on this blessing or fulfilment through insufficient submissiveness' (1980:8). The protagonist learns how stifling this kind of environment can be to mothers especially since a motive of 'mothering', a concept central to Xhosa culture, is really to ensure that traditional roles are maintained. The ultimate result is that women would be so fully occupied that there would be little time or energy for upward mobility of any kind.

Meer explains the model regarding gender-segregated work:

In Europe, the bourgeois revolution dichotomised society into the non-productive private sector, to which women were restricted, and the public sector into which men gained entry. Men took their labour into the factory where it was converted into productive labour. Women's work, on the other hand, remained confined to the domestic

arena where it remained unchanged and acquired no value. Domestic work, then, was accordingly deemed unproductive and by implication, valueless. It must be remembered that value is in work irrespective of who does it and where it occurs. This division between private and public, domestic and public is an illusion as both, domestic and public labour, are inextricably bound with each other. The family refreshes and re-energises the husband who returns for another day's work in the public sector, to produce another day's exchange and surplus values that grease the wheels of the economy. The only difference between private and public work is that one is remunerated and the other is not, but the remuneration is dependent on the unremunerated work (1990:44).

The kind of structural unit described above was implemented in South Africa by colonialists who followed the European ideal. As a result, organisations and institutions (especially those that were governmental) used the above model in their operations. Mikell informs us that prior to European intrusion, when black people lived in the rural areas, the work model for black people was as follows:

For the African family this was a paradigm shift as in terms of African culture women were linked to the earth, fire and water and as a result played a vital role outside the home. Both men and women contributed to a simple and complex market economy in ways that were complementary, even if not symmetrical (Mikell 1997:9).

Despite the fact that Xhosa culture was strongly patriarchal, the work model for black people was comfortable since it was based on sharing. In terms of work, women played a vital role in work outside the home. Apartheid laws forced black men into urban areas in search of jobs. Migration and the influence of the European model on black men changed the principles of the black family resulting in a change in the black work model. Black men started to take on roles prescribed by the nuclear model, to the detriment of their families. The African family, already oppressed by racist laws which ensured their financial instability, suffered immensely. In light of these circumstances, the nuclear model, too, could not apply to the black family who had no choice but adhere to governmental laws.

Renowned theorist, Frederick Engels, states that men: 'begin to distinguish themselves from animals as soon as they begin to produce their means of subsistence' (Sydie 1987: 91). Women's work, then, is not recognised as producing the means of subsistence. Victor J. Seidler illustrates how male domination takes place:

Traditionally it has been the wage that has expressed the institutionalised power that men have over women. This makes women dependent upon men for their everyday needs. Men were the breadwinners and women the homemakers. This division of responsibilities was taken to be a 'natural' distinction based upon biological differences. So the assertion of 'natural differences' between men and women was taken to legitimate the power which men have over women in a capitalist society (1991:65).

Whilst patriarchal societies, in particular Xhosa societies, project clear needs in the different roles of men and women, and the definition of South African patriarchy is that the woman's place is in the home with the family, economic needs force women out of the home in search of jobs simply because their husbands' wages do not cover the family requirements. African families grossly disadvantaged by apartheid laws, migration and an increase in single-parent families require their women not only to supplement the family income, but often to become sole providers.

Magona's difficulties are a prime example of the atrocities suffered by a single-parent, mother-headed family. After her initial dismissal from the teaching profession owing to her pre-marital pregnancy, the protagonist's efforts at finding a suitable job were in vain. 'The Department deemed "fallen" women to be a bad example for pupils. Significantly, male teachers who impregnated unmarried women were not punished' (Koyana 2001:66). The government's chauvinistic policy aggravated the

narrator/protagonist's despair and she was forced to settle for a job as a domestic worker. Following the middle-class ideal wherein the wife was unemployed, the Department of Education later refused to employ her because she then had a husband and was therefore not a breadwinner. The plight of African women was cruel and hopeless, their history being characterised by the dual burdens of race and gender domination. The idea that a woman did not need a wage, that she did not have to support a family even when she did was preposterous and existed in the minds of both bosses and workers. Benson comments on Magona:

- Amidst the seeming hopelessness of her situation lay the realisation that the desperate poverty of body and mind was an illusion, false and therefore subject to change, totally alterable, able to be redressed - and that the initiator of this change was none other than herself (1992:8).

It is this sense of her own worth that leads her to accept an option which few would have chosen. This courageous woman chose to defy societal conventions and deviate from stereotypical social norms. She reinterprets her misfortune as good luck:

So many women's lives are hindered, hampered, and ruined by husbands who will not leave long after they have ceased to be husbands or fathers to their families. Dead wearing a hat, these men actively and energetically visit untold woe on those they once loved. I was not thus inflicted, I saw (Magona 1990:182).

The narrator realised that despite her terrible circumstances she was actually fortunate that Luthando had not returned. Many black men renege on their responsibilities to their families but continued to intrude on their lives. Frequently, they used their power as husbands and fathers to cause greater anguish to their wives and children. Consequently, many black women could not attempt to better their positions.

Magona's entry into the world of work, however, is riddled with inequalities and she realises that the exploitation of women as a cheaper alternative source of labour will continue so long as their social status remains unequal to that of the male, for their work is devalued because they are devalued and this is illustrated by the fact that often men receive a higher remuneration for the same job. Meer explains that:

Married women earned less than their husbands (and men in general) even though their qualifications, job descriptions and workloads were similar. Women were incorporated into the lowest rung and more easily disposable rung of labour as the perception that she should be at home anyway, still persists. In fact, she is not even perceived as part of the labour force, as in the mind of patriarchal society, she is in the home (1990:129).

If the belief that single parents, such as Magona, were not breadwinners, was held even by literate males (such as Magona's colleagues in the staff of Fezeka School) whose academic experience should have conscientised them, then there would be little hope for the illiterate African masses who lacked this advantage. Patriarchy would continue to shackle females as long as the men in their lives failed to recognise the injustice inherent in the system.

Many scriptural traditions prescribe that woman's subordination is not only natural but divinely ordered, and therefore eternal. Prophets and God incarnate, in practically all traditional religions, are depicted as males and when a supreme deity is characterised, it is usually portrayed as the Eternal Patriarch. Most religions demand *male* priests and holy *men* as they believe that only men can communicate directly with God or perform religious rites. Although woman gives birth to man, the Bible traces the original creation of humankind to a patriarch and the original woman is born of man:

He formed a woman out of the rib and brought her to him.
The man said, 'At last, here is one of my own kind - bone taken from my bone, and flesh from my flesh - woman is her name because she was taken out of man' (Genesis 2:21-23).

The Koran, as indicated by Muhammad Sharif Chaudhry, states that:

Men are the protectors and maintainers of women because Allah has given the one more (strength) than the other, and because they support them from their means. Therefore the righteous women are devoutly obedient, and guard in (the husband's) absence what Allah would have them guard (1991 4:34).

In Hindu scriptures (the smritis) the extreme form of subordination, conveys that a woman's destiny is being a wife and serving her husband. By implication, then, the idea of an unmarried woman became unthinkable. Parents of grown daughters, fearing the curse of spinsterhood attempted to find husbands for them. Arroba offers an example from a sacred Indian book called The Laws of Manu:

A woman is not independent; she is dependent on a man. The father protects her in childhood, the husband protects her in youth, the son protects her in advanced years; a woman is not fit to depend on herself (1996:10).

The above extract illustrates the inferiority of a woman in relation to the various men in her life. This kind of ideology perpetuated by many religious figures has continued to be an imposition on the lives of women. In Forced to Grow, the protagonist implies, that although she expected the church to offer her solace and comfort from human misery, absolution and atonement, and to remain untainted from any kind of bias this is not the reality. She learns, moreover, to her utter distress that the Bible offered little reprieve and that the lay preacher, a servant of the Almighty, seemed to have his share of demons:

A tall, fleshy man, Mr Ntenetya wore his badge of Christianity

visibly on his face, where it sat brooding as the dark, quiet heavy curtain that hides the sky before a summer storm (Magona 1992:17).

The lay preacher ritually emphasised Eve's 'weakness' in succumbing to Satan, further intensifying Magona's frustrations and helplessness as she was reminded that she was 'reaping the wages of her labour' (1992:18). The church disappoints her, once again, when patriarchy infiltrates it in the form of Reverend Ndungane who, well aware that she had hastened to enquire about the results of four subjects for her matriculation examinations (information to which he was privy) shows little regard for or pride in Magona's personal achievement and educational mobility. The narrator informs us that the Reverend deliberately stalled in telling her the good news: 'I was dying inside. But I knew my place, and knew it well. The Reverend also knew my place, very well indeed. He was that kind of man' (1992:51). Both these religious men display behaviour that emphasises women's inferiority in a way that is far from spiritual.

Implicit in the text Forced To Grow is the contention that the survival of human beings is dependent on a dismantling of patriarchy. Some aspects of patriarchy within traditional Xhosa culture also conspire with sexual and racial inequalities to crush the human spirit. The narrator informs us that:

the laws that govern every aspect of the lives of Africans make it impossible for African women to get redress when the man fails to support his children. African men, on the whole, regard giving money to a wife or lover as payment for sexual and other services rendered. As soon as there is a breach in the relationship, the man stops giving the woman any money, irrespective of whether there are children born of such a relationship (1992:22).

The above explanation aptly describes the narrator's plight. Not only is she financially impoverished but society also views her as the perpetrator responsible for her

husband's desertion. The protagonist is punished for marrying Luthando (when she loses her job) and for losing him (when he leaves her). The humiliation that follows his desertion was difficult to bear. But despite her position, her triple jeopardy of race, sex and class, and the innumerable obstacles they presented, Magona displaces the general notion that defines men as providers and women as nurturers.

By telling her story from the viewpoint of a gender conscious black woman who is engaging in the national liberation struggle, Magona is, therefore, deviating from the norm and challenging the major political players to take women's concerns seriously. She widens the scope of the political debate beyond the imperatives of resistance to those of a political transition and the deeper transformation of a society, a stance which allows her to challenge existing practice of sexuality, reproduction and patriarchy (Koyana 2001:66).

It is evident that Magona agrees with Anna Arroba who insists that:

It is time that black men began to ask themselves about patriarchy and masculinity and their part in sustaining a system that is fundamentally unsustainable. The fact that African people are burdened further by the injustices of apartheid policy makes it vital that human attitudes change in order to change behaviour. Once the children are taken care of, women will free themselves from 'caring' as their private destiny, black men will involve themselves emotionally and both will work in a more productive way towards a collective goal (1996:13).

In Forced to Grow Magona has proven that without some influences of patriarchy, harmony would prevail. She recalls how she wept when her son was born because she did not have a man at home and she did not think she could raise a son: '- oh my God, by the time he's nine, he's going to be kicking me around' (1992:9). But the writer who sees gender relations very differently from her younger self remarks: 'But you know, my son is the most demonstrative of the three. I'm so lucky with my children'(1992:20). Magona had assumed that her son would follow patriarchal norms by being emotionally distant, uncaring and treating the women in his family

as if they were inferior beings and thus fitting objects for male violence. When she comes to terms with her own conflicts regarding her identity and realises that being a breadwinner did not mean that she was not a mother, she begins to establish a warmer, more understanding relationship with all of her children, in particular her son. This resolution leads to her personal growth and a harmony with her family that is satisfying.

The effect of racist laws, during the apartheid era, on the black man's masculinity has been far reaching. Society had placed men, in general, on a pedestal. Men were regarded as breadwinners and providers and these accomplishments allowed him mastery over his wife and children. Financial acquisition and the ability to support a family whilst affording the male control were also associated with contributing to the family's happiness. The white man was generally able to live up to societal norms successfully. The black man, on the other hand, handicapped by apartheid and subsequently incapable of fulfilling these expectations felt useless and demeaned. The African man who was part of a strictly patriarchal social system that had indoctrinated him to believe in his superiority from a tender age was aghast when out of sheer necessity, he was forced to allow his wife to absorb some of the responsibilities by joining the formal workforce outside his home. The loss of pride and even control over his family a black man would suffer would certainly affect his confidence and self-worth. Fortunately, in many respects this post-apartheid period has given much respite to black men and women. African people are being compensated for their difficult lives and their losses during the apartheid regime via affirmative action. The rationale behind this concept is a means of redressing the imbalances of the past educationally, politically, financially and in all other ways.

CHAPTER FOUR

TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

Sindiwe Magona is undoubtedly a writer who has experienced the conflicts and difficulties of one who has been caught in a personal, political and public transition. These conflicts are explored below clearly and aptly in the article, 'Cross-cultural Translation in South African Autobiographical Writing', where J.U. Jacobs says:

Sindiwe Magona's late apartheid, two-volume autobiography, To my Children's Children (1990) and Forced to Grow (1992), makes it clear from the outset that the subject has been shaped in a cultural 'border zone' where, Lionnet (1995:8) says, 'a complete syncretic cultural system comes to replace two or more ostensibly simpler cultures'. Double-consciousness, bilingualism and biculturality are the characteristics that Lionnet (1995:27) attributes to the post colonial 'writer who lives and writes across the margins of different traditions and cultural universes' (2000:50).

As an extension of the notion that the post-colonial writer is caught in the midst of a dilemma, it is clear in Magona's Forced to Grow that a crisis presents an opportunity for introspection, for her to take a stand and assert her individuality thereby prompting a transformation that is personally satisfying. Whilst the process towards a transition is both challenging and emotionally exhausting, the ultimate rewards, in respect of an inner growth or development and the discovery of a personal strength, are invaluable. Magona's transition on various levels is explored fully in the second part of her autobiography.

Magona's autobiography, which seemed to have been a single autobiography, is

actually divided into two very distinct parts. In her interview with Koyana, Magona informs him that she ‘published her short story collection Living, Loving and Lying awake at Night before Forced to Grow to give part one of the autobiography a full life’ (2002:102). Whilst both texts are part of the account of a Xhosa grandmother sharing with her grandchildren and the generation to follow a multitude of precious and trying experiences, what emerges clearly from the texts, in particular the second autobiography, are the varied tensions, contradictions, struggles and dilemmas the writer was forced to confront, in the light of the transitions that occur on a personal level (i.e. her thoughts, emotions and beliefs) and political level (i.e. concerning the state and its agents) or public level (i.e. society). It is for these reasons that I have chosen to focus on Forced to Grow for it is this volume of the autobiography that allows the reader to gain insight into the innumerable ambivalences the narrator/protagonist experiences, the mental and emotional tussles involved in arriving at major decisions concerning deep-seated issues, and how she eventually resolves her conflicts. This analysis then links Magona’s private and public life and shows how via the assertion of her authority and individuality she is able to transform and grow both personally and politically. It also highlights how the decisions she makes either personally, politically or publicly are redirected when a personal decision encroaches on a political decision or vice versa, and the consequent outcome. Since the first part of the autobiography emphasises aspects of the protagonist’s youth, her transformation is minimal.

In To my Children’s Children, the title makes reference to children and the

autobiographical subject is yet a child. In the narrative it is obvious that the important elements of the text are consistent with a loving grandmother relating a story to little children. The oral components of delivery emerge strongly as expressions, inflexions, enunciations and audience contact via frequent references to the children support the fact that children are being addressed:

Child of the Child of my Child. As ours is an oral tradition
I would like you to hear from my own lips what it was like
living in the 1940s onwards. What it was like in the times of
your great-grandmother, me. However, my people no longer
live long lives. Generations no longer set eyes on one another.
Therefore, I fear I may not live long enough to do my duty to
you, to let you know who you are and whence you
came (Magona 1990:7).

Since it was impossible for the writer to orate her political and cultural experiences, and those of her people, she does it her way by writing them down. 'Endearing and intimate, this is the kind of opening that compels one to sit down and listen, because here unfolds an important generational her-story' (Phahlele 2002:172). Significantly, as the narrator is able to capture the attention of her young audience in relating 'her-story', not only are her listeners under her control but the narrative itself belongs to her and is directed by her.

Whilst apartheid and patriarchy are central issues that pervade the text, the protagonist is far too young to comprehend the dynamics involved in their influence and impact on her future and therefore says:

But childhood, by its very nature, is a magic-filled world,
egocentric, wonderfully carefree, and innocent. Mine
was all these things and more (Magona 1990:4).

So when at an extremely young age, the differences between genders were firmly established ('Boys hunted birds and small animals such as field mice, moles and rabbits. We girls would gather berries and dig for wild roots' (Magona 1990:10)), Magona viewed these roles as quite normal. Even when she meets white people for the first time and is amazed at their clothing: 'What was wrong with their feet? Without a single exception, they all wore shoes', (Magona 1990:11) the protagonist, who is yet a child, accepts these disparities at face value, superficially. Worldly struggles such as the class system and discrimination, poverty and abuse were insignificant to her at that point. Usually children enjoy fascinating adventure stories that stretch the imagination. As storyteller, and emulating the elders before her, the narrator weaves in discussion of morals, values and the culture and traditions of the Xhosa to educate her grandchildren about customs and acceptable behaviour, in a casual way. Referring to storytellers who she had listened to she says:

Stories were told with such vivid detail and in such modulation of voice that we children saw them in our minds, and lived them in our feelings (Magona 1992:5).

It is clear that Magona did not wish the future generations of children to lose out on important facets of their heritage.

In keeping with oral delivery, Magona's written autobiography To my Children's Children contains lapses in plot structure to which some may even refer as 'clumsy'. She tends to meander, employing lengthy descriptions of people, the environment and events that appear laborious. Curious and inquisitive, children, on the other hand, have a penchant for detail, and Magona panders to these childish whims with a great

deal of passion. For this reason, her first autobiography includes binary opposites such as happiness and sorrow, comedy and tragedy. But, the aching difficult happenings are accompanied by wit and humour, to underplay the seriousness that emanates from misery and suffering. To accommodate the children, yet again, Magona employs the Xhosa language deliberately, a language to which they are accustomed, and with which she is comfortable. Xhosa riddles, proverbs, sayings and expressions are all strategic measures that would undoubtedly impress a young Xhosa audience. The narrator tells us: 'To keep us children awake, an adult (usually a grandmother) would tell us *iintsomi*, the fairy-tales of amaXhosa' (1990:5). Despite the hopeless situation in which the protagonist finds herself in the latter part of the autobiography and the fact that she had not had a customary wedding, she is neither angry nor bitter. This pleasing attitude is reflected by a warm tone and friendly diction:

That is the wedding picture that was planted in my mind.
Weddings touched and transformed whole communities. And
long after the day, people still talked about so-and-so's
wedding and the bride's dresses (1990:149).

The narrator of the second autobiography, however, appears somewhat cold, distant and resentful. To my Children's Children concludes with the narrator re-addressing the children of the future, an indication that the narrative has terminated. I have discussed the first part of the autobiography to highlight the differences in Magona's style and structure which differ quite drastically from the second part of her autobiography. The reason for the blatant change that occurs is that Forced to Grow, in terms of all content, style and structural devices, focuses on the protagonist's transformation and growth from childhood into adulthood, personal and political collective and individual. It is in this part of the autobiography that the reader bears witness to the conflicts and apprehensions that arise as a result of Magona's

experiences when she is caught between the worlds of Christianity and her ancestors, the past and the present, cultural and universal and how she resolves these dilemmas. Since my topic deals with Magona's personal and public transition, and neither the content nor the stylistic devices support this idea, I have chosen to exclude To my Children's Children from my analysis.

In the second volume of the autobiography, the protagonist's transition in terms of the writer's style is observed at the outset. Unlike the first autobiography, implicit in the strong verbs of the title Forced to Grow are indications that change has been thrust upon the protagonist and that she has not undertaken this change willingly. This attitude is reinforced when she says:

A social polecat, a woman of dubious repute, I was jobless in a country with a myriad of laws, none of which was of any benefit to me or mine. As an African I was not covered by any social security laws. Indeed, the laws that did cover me did so only to my detriment (Magona 1992:2).

The serious and bitter tone, emotive diction and sombre mood reveal tensions and apprehensions that pervade the text and that the narrator/protagonist's transition into adulthood is fraught with conflicts and contradictions that force her into making difficult choices.

J.U Jacobs explores the ambivalences that the protagonist experiences en route to adulthood when he claims:

But whereas in the first volume of her autobiography Magona largely presents herself as someone straddling incompatible cultures, in the second volume all the ambivalences and paradoxes

in her story enable her to be seen as a 'liminal' figure: a threshold entity or mediating character. In South African terms this may be seen as a black person who through her marginalisation has come to a particular understanding of her society in all its contradictions and, containing them in herself, is able to knit its cultures together (2000:50).

The narrator is certainly a 'liminal figure'. She comes to understand the commonalities prevalent in the English and Xhosa languages and ironically it is the English language that makes her appreciate her own language. Also, as a Christian she initially disapproved of her mother's desire to become a sangoma since she believed that ancestor worship was primitive and barbaric. However, she learns to recognise the value of spiritual healing, and is finally at peace with herself and her Xhosa culture. At the outset then, the reader senses a reluctance on the part of the protagonist who, after having enjoyed the freedom of childhood, is required to accept the realities and harsh obligations of adulthood.

The introduction and structure of the text reinforce the notion that the writer's transition from impressionable childhood to mature adulthood has not been gradual; it is as if a bridging phase has been omitted. The world of childlike fantasy and idyll, as prevailed in the first autobiography, has been replaced by the grim reality of the world of a Xhosa woman who is condemned by a male-dominated society. This is compounded, further, in that the narrator is an African woman and part of the deprived masses. The politics of race and gender merge to conspire against her, paving the way for a long and harrowing future. The impression of a great-grandmother, the custodian of the Xhosa heritage and traditions, who imparts life-

long values and mores via storytelling, disappears and the connection and closeness of would-be relatives is transformed into a coolness between reader and narrator. The casual, conversational register of the earlier autobiography becomes more formal and serious, whilst the language and diction are characterised by an aloofness that is startling. The reader is mildly surprised by the attitude of the authorial narrator who, at the very outset, gets straight to the point, plunging him or her into the narrative.

The protagonist tells us:

I was a has-been at the age of twenty-three. Sans husband, I was the mother of two little girls and expecting my third child – as it turned out, a son. He was born in October 1966, four months after his father had left us (Magona 1992:1).

Magona deviates from the conventional narrative whose structure comprises a beginning, middle and end. In Forced to Grow, the elimination of the beginning is consistent with the protagonist's need to take action and be responsible. The climax, wherein the actual crisis is usually found, serves as the beginning of the autobiography. Of course, this could have also occurred because Forced to Grow is a continuation of To my Children's Children. Nonetheless, the structural arrangement still highlights the fact that the protagonist is in immediate crisis and is experiencing a major dilemma, which will force her into making urgent decisions. The autobiographical subject's movement towards a transition, then, is recorded clearly in the re-arrangement of the narrative structure in the second part of the autobiography and the adoption of the writer's personal style which differs from the style she employs in the first autobiography.

The community's response to the protagonist's circumstances leads her to discover that English, the language of the white imperialist, is 'kinder than hers' and she is filled with dismay and disbelief. Now, as a rejected wife, Magona finds no solace and comfort in the language with which she had identified, shattering her illusions. She does the unthinkable: she rejects the degrading '*idikazi*' in favour of the kinder 'has been':

Umabuy'ekwendeni – a returnee from wifedom – was my new designation; and I was doomed thereafter to *idikazi* which, according to the Reverend Robert Godfrey's *A Kaffir-English Dictionary* (printed in 1918), refers to 'an unmarried female'. And, the dictionary further enlightens us, this is 'a term of reproach to all women who are husbandless' (Magona 1992:1).

Over and above the fact that this preference for English over Xhosa is one of the most significant choices that she makes, this personal decision is the starting point for a transformation that shakes her into the reality of adulthood. After all, she is choosing the language of the white colonialists who have created racism which has caused enormous suffering for black people, over the language of her birth, the language of her forefathers. Members of her community may even perceive this as a betrayal of her people and of all that they stand for. Whilst she condemns this Xhosa term only, and not the language as a whole, her relationship with the English language is strengthened and she discovers an appreciation for and connection with the English language once she allows herself to get involved further. What is noticeable, too, is that the Xhosa language used positively and abundantly in To my Children's Children, now contains negative connotations (i.e. her association with the language is with negative happenings) and is used sparingly in the greater part of Forced to Grow. A sense of fluidity is reflected in Magona's shift in language from Xhosa to English

and is sustained when the reverse occurs later as, in great irony, she learns via English to appreciate the aesthetic value of Xhosa. This yields an integration that is lacking in the first autobiography 'which is replete with clumsy translations that slow down the narrative' (Samuelson 2000:233). It is not only language that creates conflict for the protagonist but her spiritual beliefs also place her in a quandary.

The protagonist's religious convictions are tested early in the narrative when her impoverished state, now that she is jobless and husbandless, causes a neighbour to urge her to sell 'dagga'. She is astounded.

Sell dagga (marijuana)? Me? To say I was utterly flabbergasted would be putting it mildly. Dagga, 'tobacco' as the euphemism goes in the African townships, is an illegal substance (1992:6).

Her strong Christian beliefs prohibited such sinful, destructive acts, hence her shocked response. But her sheer indigence is far too overwhelming and she accepts that there can be no debate on morality and judgement when attempting to survive. She says: 'I doubt that there is a sadder sight in the whole wide world than that of a starving child' (Magona 1992:7). In the first volume of the autobiography, Magona informs us that if there was anything that she learnt in church it was that, 'you were certainly doomed to burn in hell,' (1990:15) if you sinned. This indoctrination becomes increasingly difficult for her to condone in light of her drastic change in circumstances and the many traumas she was forced to experience and react to, sometimes in ways that would be condemned by a rigid Christian morality.

In terms of her religious beliefs, the protagonist was still in a dilemma. Since her first pregnancy (which was out of wedlock) was deemed immoral, Magona had not attended church. Now, the fear of her children dying unbaptised and condemned to hell forces her to return to the church. After undergoing several months of rehabilitation and atoning for her sins, the narrator learns of her mother's decision to become an initiate of ancestor worship, the first stage towards becoming a 'witchdoctor', or traditional healer. After her initial reaction of shock and disbelief, confusion and uncertainty set in, especially since the church had recently re-instated her after a grueling process of repentance. The narrator informs us:

We implored the Almighty to blot out our transgressions, to wash us thoroughly from our iniquity, purge us with hyssop, and have mercy on us. For a whole half a year, every Saturday, we met and confessed our sins and pleaded for forgiveness and restoration to our rightful place as heirs of a loving and compassionate God (Magona 1992:72).

Subsequent to a great deal of analysing, she realises that she was being 'selfish, egotistical and wholly self-centred and that her mother was doing something for herself' (Magona 1992:75). Her mother's sense of empowerment in the stand she takes, and her realisation that in essence the rituals undertaken by the sangomas were disciplined and dignified shames her. She learns that her mother's knowledge as a healer is another kind, a stream different from hers. On resolving this conflict, she comes to appreciate and respect the positive, beneficial value of traditional healing.

This transition is explored when the protagonist says:

And thus having freed myself, I found I actually enjoyed Mother's new undertaking. When she had a dance, I would tell myself that I would attend until ten or eleven o'clock. But midnight and one o'clock would find me still there. I would be hollering as loudly as the next person. I beat the drums for her and always got carried away (Magona 1992:75).

Despite her great sacrifice during her period of repentance, the narrator decides to do what was sensible and acceptable to her regarding her spiritual dilemma. Gqola claims that:

when Sindiwe embraces and chooses to support her mother's new career as a spiritual healer, she experiences a metamorphosis. Now she is at peace with both the human and ancestral worlds, a quality which allows her to transgress the boundaries that separate the two spheres – the human and spiritual world (1997:151).

Magona's spiritual journey has been a humbling experience. Now, she is finally comfortable with her decision to compromise.

The protagonist's spiritual decision is reinforced later in the text. Her exposure to many impressive women of all colours, cultures and faiths when she joins the various committees later in the autobiography, directs her to a more balanced view.

There was nothing wrong with being Christian and carrying out your convictions. Christianity doesn't stop me writing or rearing my children in a particular way. My guiding principle is that I must live my life in a way that I don't deliberately hurt anyone (Solberg & Hacksley 1995:86).

As she grows older, Magona questions the dogma of Christian leaders, and finding their beliefs prescriptive and suffocating, refuses to yield to pressure; hence, her acceptance of the spirit world and its merits, later, in the story. In terms of her spiritual convictions, the narrator takes charge of her views. She comes to understand that she need not choose Christianity, exclusively, or that which is propagated by church leaders, as the ultimate teachings of God. Instead, she could extract and implement that which is meaningful to her and dispense with what she finds

disagreeable. The realisation dawns that it was not wrong to absorb the best from both the Christian and ancestral worlds. Despite the peace that the protagonist gains from her spiritual choice she is discontented with her marital position.

Even in the Xhosa culture, marriage is the focus of existence for women. The sentiments and symbolism attached to this sacred union are far-reaching. For women, unfortunately, the repercussions are dire. A woman who loses her husband, even if it is through no fault of her own, as in the case of the protagonist, suffers a great deal of humiliation and degradation. She is deemed unworthy especially as it is customary for Xhosa wives to be seen only in relation to their husbands. Their existence is immaterial and Xhosa traditions and cultural norms legitimise this belief. Early in the narrative when the protagonist is taken to the beach by some of her friends she recalls her childhood and fond memories of her trips to the beach. It is during this outing, whilst she is in the water, that she finds her wedding ring slipping off her finger and questions its value:

‘What’, I thought to myself, ‘is the meaning of this ring?
A symbol of love between husband and wife? Why am I wearing
it, that love long fled?’
Then slowly, ever so slowly, fully did I open my hand. With my
fingers relaxed, at ease, the ring swam away (Magona 1992:12).

A wedding ring is symbolic of the love and commitment a couple should have for each other and their family, until their demise. The protagonist’s act, then, of releasing her wedding ring is of two-fold significance. Firstly, she is conveying a rejection of patriarchal Xhosa expectations which are unreasonable and oppressive of women. Secondly, she is saying that emotionally, and in all ways that really matter,

she has divorced herself from her husband. Now, she feels uplifted as a feeling of relief washes over her in the knowledge that she is free 'to make what she would of her life' (Magona 1992:13). Despite being in the company of several women, her action remains private as she is fully aware that her deed would have been met with resentment, and even anger. Magona is indicating that whilst she comprehends the Xhosa custom of communal solidarity and appreciates the goodwill of the community, she has frequently found herself stifled and trapped by the need to conform to these customary expectations. As the narrator/ protagonist secretly removes her wedding ring, the reader bears witness to the admirable control she assumes over her life in her efforts to achieve selfhood. Together with marriage perhaps the most significant role of women in African traditional society is that of mother, because motherhood is regarded as central to all other roles.

The concept of 'mothering' has dire repercussions for those young girls forced into adult responsibilities so early in their lives. When their own children do arrive, despite being accustomed to the routine, the enthusiasm and mirth that usually accompanies this momentous event is virtually non-existent. The emotional quality lacking, child-rearing becomes a task, mechanical and habitual. Magona informs us that she herself was mothering by the age of seven:

Many are the thrashings I received because in the middle of the night I had broken the only bottle. I also kept Mother's hands free for her other chores by keeping Mawethu on my back. I mothered him every day after school (1992:96).

It is not surprising, then, that she did not express the euphoria that many mothers enjoy at the birth of their newborn babies. It is also not surprising that she often felt

burdened by her children who were hampering her career aspirations. That she was able to do justice to both roles as mother and worker was indeed miraculous.

Meg Samuelson enlightens us further on the tensions and anxieties women experience internally (i.e privately) and externally (i.e. publicly) with regard to motherhood:

the reader locates a split between symbolic and experiential concepts of motherhood along the split between the narrating and experiencing selves. Whilst the narrating self unproblematically puts on the mantle of maternity in order to speak, the experiencing self struggles with the status of motherhood. Magona is frank in admitting that she had not planned on making child-bearing a career. Even as the narrator insists on speaking as a mother, the story of experiencing self shows how her first and later pregnancies place her career aspirations in serious jeopardy. Motherhood thus stands as the major obstacle in Magona's journey to 'better' herself (2000:235).

Samuelson is quite correct when she claims that in terms of motherhood, Magona struggles between the narrating and the experiencing selves. Whilst the 'narrating self' tries to be more objective and, by the time the narrative is being written, has realised how important her children are to her own identity, and thereby understates the difficulties of black mothers, the 'experiencing self' is weighed down by the tremendous suffering with which the self has to contend. There is no doubt that motherhood has burdened the protagonist. Had she lacked the courage and tenacity to override her problems, she would certainly never have achieved success. Ironically, both parents contribute towards the conception of the child, yet in the undertaking of responsibility for childrearing, the role a mother has to play far outweighs that of the father.

Teenage pregnancies have grave consequences. Magona's own negligence in falling pregnant out of wedlock so early in her life, and by a man who didn't take his responsibilities seriously, and what she observes of the experience of other young women, force her to administer stricter discipline on her girls. Her worst fear she said was that they would, by the age of twelve, 'be mothers, pre-teen mothers, and that would be the end of whatever future they might have' (1992:101). She understood that teen-mothers had minimal chance of socio-economic progress as motherhood was a full-time job. Moreover, these mothers would return to and perpetuate the cycle of poverty. In her second autobiography she is advocating that young women should complete their studies, have careers and become economically stable before having children despite the fact that Xhosa society believed that women should remain at home and care for their children.

Xhosa society promoted the idea that: 'Children are the buds of society, and every birth is the arrival of "spring" when life shoots out and the community thrives' (Mbiti 1971:110). Magona leaves the reader in little doubt that she accepts the bearing of children as important, and qualifies this later in the text when she says:

I began to miss the children I had left with such light heartedness. A little. I had told myself I wouldn't see them for almost two years, told myself I wouldn't pine for them (1992:206).

It is here that she comes to appreciate their role in her life for had she not had them she might have had no need or inclination to uplift herself. She acknowledges that she has become empowered because of them and that they are the reason she has succeeded against all odds. Magona is, however, sufficiently courageous to admit that

unless born in circumstances that are conducive to a healthy, stable environment, with two parents who share in the responsibilities of their rearing, children can be burdensome to mothers who, if overwhelmed with priorities that require survival first, will be afforded minimal time to offer their children adequate care.

Magona's ambivalence in terms of her parental role is noted in that despite the fact that the narrator is introduced as a Xhosa grandmother, her identification in Forced to Grow is explicitly with the role of the father. That the roles between father and mother are so clearly defined is obvious when she says: 'No, my children never had a mother. In me they had a father' (Magona 1992: 48). Since the narrator is the sole breadwinner, she does not perceive herself as a mother. Society has done an exemplary job of slotting people into categories. This clearly demarcated system, embedded deeply in the psyche, has penetrated the minds of countless women to 'keep them in their place', so much so that the prevailing new order that forces women into the workplace does not change their attitudes towards their new roles. Despite the protagonist's eloquence and education, the blurring of roles is not viewed in its true perspective, and she succumbs unwittingly to the dominant ideology, hence her reference to herself as 'father'. Towards the end of the autobiography, whilst she is away from her children and studying at Columbia University, she surrenders the 'father' image when she expresses her maternal emotions, her yearning for her children. Maria Olausson states:

The description of motherhood functions to move the narrative towards a redefinition of both motherhood and womanhood or rather of womanhood towards what the narrator sees as the role of the father. The function of

family is central to the extent that the tension between the public life and the private life and the impossibility of keeping up such a distinction in itself becomes the main content of the narrative (2001:165).

I certainly support Olausen's view that a redefinition of motherhood and womanhood is absolutely imperative in light of the fact that women are forced, owing to financial constraints, to take on the commitments of the father. Privately, these mothers suffer emotional, psychological and physical exhaustion or burnout. Many resent the burden of rearing children and this negativity can manifest in different ways – corporal punishment, emotional estrangement and so forth. Publically, many women appear to be coping because they need to create the impression that they are successful mothers. Since they have no choice but to accept their situation and they do not want to be perceived as failures, they perform their motherly duties dispassionately. Furthermore, Olausen is arguing (as in Magona's case) that because a woman does assume fatherly duties, it does not mean that she must cease to be maternal. The narrator displays a strong paternal attitude when she says:

I shunned those things mothers do, cooing over their children, providing them with the gentler side of parenting; I deliberately suppressed things like these. They petrified me to no end (1990:48).

It is clear that the narrator comes to terms with her role as a mother only towards the latter part of the autobiography. Magona's anxiety and distress regarding her children's future are heightened by South Africa's political situation regarding African education.

The collapse of African education as a result of the schools' boycotts and the

awareness that her children were going to amount to nothing without education hurts the protagonist deeply. On being offered a scholarship to Cornell University, utterly dejected and helpless, she feels a fervent desire to escape:

How I wept! I needed desperately to run away from my children.
I had to flee from the daily reminder that I was raising three people
to be locked up, forever in a poverty that would exceed anything I had
known (Magona 1992:188).

All that the narrator had aspired towards crumbles, and the fear of her children perpetuating the cycle of poverty pains her immensely. In addition, the fact that she was 'husbandless' also had repercussions. She had fought long and hard to prove to her community that her children would grow up well educated and successful.

According to Samuelson:

Magona in her writing and interviews expresses a longing for freedom from being a mother. Once again, the suppressed individual voice bubbles to the surface and contradicts the stable assertion of a maternal and cultural identity (2000:231).

It is my view, however, Meg Samuelson is incorrect in her assumption that Magona expressed a yearning for 'freedom from being a mother'. The crisis in African education and the sheer terror of her children experiencing the poverty and difficulties she had borne when her husband disappeared fills her with extreme dread. These frightening visions overwhelm her, and cause her to wish to create a physical distance between herself and her children. This, of course, is understandable. Magona requires this space to digest all that is happening around her. It is when the opportunity presents itself and she goes overseas that she comes to realise how really important her children are to her.

Although the narrator rejects the scholarship to Cornell, she does go to Columbia University a year later and it is here that she realises the significance of both her immediate and extended family, to her:

I had not realised that part of my identity was those others, significant in my life. In the townships I am known as Thembeke's mother, Thoko's mother, Sandile's mother or Sisi of any of my five young siblings: Mawethu, Sizeka, Nomalanga, Nomduzana and Thembani. I am also known as MaNtumba's daughter. Here people only knew me as Sindiwe (Magona 1992:207).

In the greater part of Forced to Grow, we do not really see an affectionate relationship between the protagonist and her children. When she does make mention of them it is usually in association with some kind of difficulty – either her problem in finding a child-minder, fear of their death in terms of accidents, urging them to remain at school during the boycotts or concern that her daughters would become pre-teen mothers. This is an indication that for the protagonist motherhood was a problematic and burdensome at times. On being away from them, Magona realises that the people from whom she was so desperate to flee were a pivotal part of her existence; that without them she was actually disconnected and that her identity was constituted by her relationship with each one of them. The notion that she depended on them as much as they did on her, and that they gave meaning to her life was disarming. Her appreciation of them becomes strengthened by this knowledge. Koyana exposes the ambivalences inherent in Magona's experience of motherhood:

Magona openly explores the opposing tensions in motherhood as an essential part of her self-definition or identity. Being a young mother is difficult and truly burdensome. In her late teens and twenties, it stifles her creativity, exploits her labour, and makes her a partner in her own oppression. On the other hand, in its liberatory capacity, motherhood becomes the rite of passage where she expresses and learns the power of self-definition, ultimately becoming a role model for those in the community (2002:46).

Koyana points to the fact that Magona comes to appreciate that it was the difficulties and tensions created by her role as mother that actually assisted her in her personal growth and development. Her struggles had forced her to take charge of her life and thereby contributed to her independence. As she was a mother and the chief custodian of her children, the difficulties she experienced whilst protecting them offered her opportunities to test her strength and endurance. Therefore, she dedicates the first volume of the autobiography to her three children: 'For Thembeke, Thokozile and Sandile, my children who brought me up'. For the narrator, her children played an integral part in her growth, independence and maturity. Had they not been a priority, she might never have left the country. Her children's future, then, set against a chaotic political background, forces her to make a decision she might never have made had she been childless. The protagonist comes to appreciate the role played by her children in making her the courageous, assertive, dynamic woman she becomes.

The impact and influence of apartheid laws, regarding marriage and women, as impediments to the narrator's desire for personal progress, stirred her political awakenings. The protagonist, who was even prepared to undergo Xhosa cultural practices, was intent on separating herself from her husband so that she could achieve her goals. The civil ceremony in which she and Luthando had participated was effectively terminated, initially by casting her ring into the ocean and then later by rejecting his surname. This is revealed when on registering for her matriculation examination, Magona waives marital conventions and reverts to her maiden name:

With my husband departed, I saw no reason to saddle myself with his name. Moreover, why would I want to work hard and

then carry the laurels to a family that had not even paid lobola for me? Why would I thus grace and exalt his family name? (Magona 1992:51)

In all ways that really mattered, she was single. Only according to the Bantu Education Department was she married, as she had not considered divorce for fear of her husband's re-entrance into her life, asserting his rights, causing havoc and upheaval. The Department of Bantu Education, an appendage of the obnoxious apartheid state, was constant in its reminder that she was really a married woman.

And so at the end of each school year I, and other married women like me, became jobless and had to re-apply for our positions amid stiff competition (Magona 1992:52).

Magona's determined attempts to take command of her future via incredibly difficult efforts and industry, were undermined by apartheid laws and policies which constantly placed hurdles in her way.

Racist laws insisted on strict adherence to nuclear parental roles. These horrific laws remained inconsiderate of the plight of black families, their abject poverty and single-woman-headed families. Sadly, these inhumane circumstances were further intensified by other laws which were enforced to suppress black people. Since she is a mother and a wife, the protagonist is initially unable to enter the teaching profession that would have secured her a better salary, position and working conditions. When she is invited to the International Women's Tribunal on Crimes Against Women to be held in Brussels, the narrator is appalled when she is forced to pay a five-hundred-rand deposit to obtain a passport. She struggles to remove herself from the abyss in which she had found herself after her husband's disappearance, she becomes

empowered but political and public policies impinge on her personal aspirations to prevent her from advancing. Despite the fact that she was the sole breadwinner in her family the protagonist could not receive a salary in keeping with her qualifications.

The disparity in educator salaries for the different race groups, and between the genders was another obstacle for which apartheid was responsible. The group on the lowest rung of the remuneration scale was undoubtedly the African female. Magona is horrified when she discovers the blatant differences between her salary increase and those of her male colleagues, after they had all passed their matriculation examinations. She points this out to them:

‘When we passed the matric exams,’ I continued, failing to notice the mercury was zooming down with alarming speed, ‘my salary went up by five rand a month. You, Stanford, and you, Lucas, got twice that amount by way of increment’ (Magona 1992: 68).

The fact that her black colleagues were contemptuous of the prejudices against African people, but could justify why a black male should earn more than a black female educator despite an equal work load in all respects, renders Magona speechless, and she is overwhelmed with anger, and despair, not only at their crass ability to collude with white males on this issue without a twinge of conscience. This leads her to say: ‘I learned that day that although another may sympathise when I bleed, the tears can only be mine’ (1992:69). In several ways, this was a turning point for Magona as the realisation dawns that only she can dictate her life, and that whilst it might be punctuated with setbacks and mishaps, she was ultimately the architect of

her own destiny. It was in this knowledge that she was determined to become actively involved in socio-political organisations to campaign vigorously against racial and gender discrimination. When the leadership of Bantu Administration changed hands because the government had decided that racist policies for the regulation of Africans were not succeeding, the protagonist resigned from her job. Her growing political awareness, her increasing sensitivity to the appalling plight of black people because of racism and its contribution towards the break-up of her marriage, were becoming difficult for her to reconcile with her position as an employee of the apartheid state. Magona became motivated towards eliminating this horrific system. Thus, she joined SACHED, the South African Committee for Higher Education, wherein she expanded her horizons. This multiracial organisation offered her support and extended her in many diverse ways. Here, she challenged issues regarding children, education, the economy, politics and society. One of her most significant awakenings, however, was her exposure to different kinds of people:

SACHED was a true alloy, a mini melting-pot. It represented an ethnic amalgam, bringing together differently classified people who would not otherwise have met. The SACHED experience was a great leveler. One's social standing within whatever group you were locked into by law had no bearing on one's studies and the attainment of one's goals (Magona 1992:106).

At SACHED, she engaged with people of various shades, cultures and backgrounds and was delighted that she shared with them common goals in terms of the socio-political vision of South Africa. She met with Indian, coloured and white people and was amazed that they were neither racist nor prejudiced as she had expected of all non-black people. SACHED provided her with the first challenges to her own racially stereotyped thinking. This learning experience, for the protagonist, was monumental

as it gave her the opportunity to begin to remove racial barriers she had come to believe were permanent. It also extended her in a multitude of ways in that it emphasised her own self-worth and gave her the confidence to verbalise her feelings regarding gender, racial and all other injustices. SACHED became a stepping-stone to her greater involvement with organisations strongly committed to equality in all respects. This major political step in joining SACHED began to draw her away from communal and traditional cultural Xhosa expectations towards personal and individual independence en route to forming her own identity. It also moved her towards a more humanist philosophy.

SACHED offered the protagonist an understanding of language and its association with politics. When she meets Kuku and Nosipho, two UNISA students who were struggling with the appraisal of Xhosa literature, the protagonist, who had done some critical appreciation of English literature, offered to tutor these two women by employing the same principles as are used for literary study in the English language. During this time that Magona reconciles herself to the Xhosa language, appreciating its aesthetic and literary values. She came to appreciate that both languages were constructed on similar principles and that apart from the vocabulary, a slight variation of stylistic nuances, grammatical and syntactical rules, the languages were closely connected. She realised, too, that it was white people's association with and their interpretation of the English language that had distanced her from the English language. Similarly, the Xhosa language was open to interpretation. That awareness encouraged her to write her autobiography in both English and Xhosa. Magona's translation of To my Children's Children into Xhosa as Kubantwana Babantwana Bam was published in 1995. Gqola tells us that:

like many of the writers of the repressive sixties and seventies Magona writes her narrative in English. Unlike most of them, however, she writes also in isiXhosa. Refusing to confine herself to one side, she chooses instead to create a space for herself to partake and borrow from both languages. Writing her story in isiXhosa, she allows the language to carry the desired force and impetus. She moulds the English of her story to 'carry the full weight of (her) African experience through an integration of idiomatic expression from the original language of expression' (Gqola 1997:151).

Aegerter argues that Magona 'utilises Western notions of autobiography even as she "Africanises" the form' (2000:69). Although Magona employs English as the medium of expression, she creates a rich literary tapestry by weaving in customs, traditions and rituals of the Xhosa people to celebrate and sustain their black heritage. She writes her story using the African tradition of oral storytelling, she focuses on themes, such as 'mothering', which are a cornerstone of Xhosa philosophy and she acknowledges the pivotal role played by her extended family and the community in the development of the individual. In this way, too, she structures the language of the imperialist to contradict racial and other stereotypes. Instead of the English language serving to foster the oppression of the disenfranchised, depersonalised black person by reinforcing the shackles of the apartheid legacy, Magona uses the language in a liberatory capacity. Her acceptance of the English language and its associated subjectivity is extended to white people too.

At SACHED, Magona learned that she could even establish friendships with people of other race groups and that not all white people were racist; nevertheless, not all of her experiences related to SACHED undermine racism. It is at this time, too, that the protagonist also experienced racism at its worst when she was personally victimised.

The first episode involved herself and a few others being hauled into a police van because they were in a white area (after a SACHED meeting) and the second episode was when she and her son were accused of theft from a departmental store. These incidents, which demeaned and degraded her, led to her fight for greater equality and justice.

As more and more black people, including Magona, began to realise that they were actually participating in the social and financial upliftment of the white people, that they were the servants and labourers who assisted white people to acquire and maintain their wealth and that white people were content to enslave black people, blacks started to vent their frustrations, feeling robbed of their land and rights. The protagonist reveals to us her resentment even towards the white women in Church Women Concerned:

Our sisters in CWC, to whom that freedom of movement was no novelty or crying for the moon, could have no way of knowing the unsisterly feelings they provoked in some of us when they exercised that right (1992:136).

Overall, black people were vocalising their resentment, their deplorable treatment and discontent at the political system in South Africa. Various groups were being formed with black people mobilising, becoming militant and committing themselves to transformation.

The protagonist's awareness gained from SACHED about the universal struggles of women caused her to join a committee called the CWC – Church Women Concerned, in which she becomes an active participant. This committee was a gathering of

women who had come together to thrash out issues that impinged on the lives of women. Magona tells us:

The CWC was multi-racial, multi-denominational, inclusive of all faiths. It had members from the Christian faith, the Islamic faith and the Jewish faith. The primary objective was to build bridges, to effect reconciliation, to attempt to live lives that projected well into the future, to a time when the laws that separated us according to skin colour would be no more (1992:125).

Prior to her alignment with this organisation, Magona had the impression that white people were privileged and spoilt, untarnished by despair and suffering of any kind. For Magona a strange new world opens up exposing her to the fact that white people, too, are plagued by hurt and pain and that white people, too, are faced with divorce, alcoholism, marital infidelity, debt and other struggles. She recalls her years as a domestic worker when she was angry at the differences between the white 'medems' and African women in general. Now that she enters the world of politics, she 'acknowledges those moments when she could learn from the white mothers' pain under their own experience of male domination' (Koyana 2002:50). The narrator accepts that these 'white medems' were experiencing their own kind of oppression, only in different ways.

Magona's personal growth is tested when the political situation in South Africa regarding black education culminates on June 1976. This was a turning point for the protagonist. Whilst she understood the reasons for their fury and identified fully with their feelings, she strongly opposed their schools' boycott. The protagonist was convinced that the only way the children could gain liberation and independence was via an education, even a sub-standard education. For the first time she takes a stand in opposition to the position endorsed by her community:

So believing in my truth, believing in that truth as my salvation against the threat of sanctions from the 'comrades', I put my foot down. Fortunately for me, how firmly it was put down was never put to the test. But I earned the scorn of a great number of people who saw my stand as counter-revolutionary. I lost a lot of respect, a lot more credibility (Magona 1992:163).

The protagonist was aware of what was at stake when she took the stance that alienated her from some people, but she believed strongly in her principles, and was wholly committed to them. She accepted that any protest would be met with resistance and that this was no different. The protagonist was also aware that she was placing herself and her family in grave danger; the anger of the community (in particular the children) was so great and the situation extremely volatile. But, she was not prepared to follow community members like sheep. The decision she had made was based on the conviction that education was knowledge and knowledge was power. To eliminate that power-base by depriving children of an education thus seemed to her to be extremely foolish. During this period, the narrator also learns that her genuine friends will continue their friendship, even if they disagreed with her actions. Nonetheless, she was pained at the ensuing estrangement from her community, because she had dared to stand her ground. This public encroachment on her private life leads the protagonist to display her courage, independence and highly principled character. It also forces her to define those principles very clearly. Her introduction to political matters had paved the way for a transition that must be regarded as a milestone in the protagonist's life.

Magona's political involvement becomes more intense and for the first time in 1976 she leaves South Africa, accompanied by Anne Mayne, as a delegate of the

International Women's Tribunal on Crimes Against Women. For the protagonist who was sponsored by women from the Scandinavian countries, this trip was an eye-opener. Magona's visit to Brussels was an indication of her growing independence, confidence and strong commitment to the struggle for liberation but not by any means. At the conference, where she received a standing ovation for her testimony on the plight of South African women, in particular African women, the protagonist says she was:

struck by the range of problems women battled with daily all over the world. So totally enveloped in apartheid had I been, even the concerns of whites whom I happened to know I had perceived through this lens. My eyes popped out, peeled wider than those of a bullfrog as painful awareness of the plight of others split the calloused layers around my heart (1992:140).

So caught up in her own cocoon regarding apartheid, Magona is astounded to learn of the vast degree of horrendous difficulties women around the globe battled with daily. The plight of her own sex concerning rape, abuse, violence, and so forth even in 'civilised progressive, wealthy, developing countries', was heart-rending. She was repulsed and horrified at such brutality. This experience, a cultural shock for Magona, was a revelation that years of academic study had been unable to provide. The scorn, arrogance and ignorance of her young adult life dissipated and was replaced by a more balanced, broadened perspective, one that embraced all women irrespective of race, colour or creed. Once again we are drawn to the fact that the protagonist's political involvement which leads her to an association with women from all corners of the globe moves her from a 'womanist' perspective to a humanist one. Her perception, too, of herself as a mother who was sharing in masculine roles, is clarified. She comes to accept that just because she is a provider and breadwinner,

it doesn't mean she is any less a mother. This public exposure she had never dreamed possible changes her irrevocably, unfortunately to the detriment of relationships with members of her own community.

The protagonist's exposure at the conference in Brussels on the universal struggles of women, leads her towards greater socio-political activism. On her return to South Africa, she joined the Women's Movement, a non-racial organisation of women who campaigned against any institution or governmental policy that oppressed them or their family members, and she sat on its executive committee. It is here that she found herself confronted by an issue she had never considered. Whilst discussing sanctions, which Magona supported at that point she was accused, by a white woman, of elitism: 'Sindi, you are educated. You are sophisticated. How do you know what black people, the ordinary black person in the street, want?' (Magona 1992:170). The protagonist was stunned and reacted in shocked disbelief. She had never predicted that her educational mobility would create a class barrier between herself and her people nor did she believe that her educational advancement had created a barrier. Unfortunately, this distance was heightened further when people in the township branded her as an informer owing to her liaisons with white people. They began to distrust her and felt betrayed by her. The protagonist could feel herself becoming isolated from the very people with whom she had formed firm relationships. Utterly disappointed and disillusioned, and immensely bitter and hurt by their rejection, she says: 'After a while, I simply stopped talking about it, knowing a special private hell' (Magona 1992:173). Once again, Magona gains an awareness of

life's lessons. A decade before, she would never have envisaged the above scenario. After the community's sudden change of attitude towards her, it dawned on her that as long as she had stayed within their ideological boundaries, her relationship with them would have survived. But, the days when the protagonist was a follower were over. She had become a leader. Many had urged her towards study, but few were prepared for her intrinsic growth. Once again, she is torn between bowing to communal pressure and asserting her will. Despite her intense pain, and having reached a profound understanding of herself, the narrator accepts this experience as part of her development. This experience emerges, ironically, as another turning point for the narrator/protagonist. It is this estrangement that paradoxically introduces her to writing, a valuable facet of herself she might have suppressed had these circumstances not arisen. A public crisis stemming from politics leads to the protagonist's personal development when it offers her the opportunity to enkindle potential that had been dormant for so long.

Owing to her alienation from her community because of her political activities the protagonist ceases to build bridges and withdraws from verbal engagements. For a person addicted to expressing her views and sharing her thoughts, this withdrawal was extremely difficult to bear. To release these mounting ideas that were suffocating her, the protagonist resorted to writing, pouring her responses, feelings and suggestions into newspaper reports, letters and articles. For Magona this avenue of communication becomes very fulfilling and satisfying as it was convenient, she would hurt no one and she would have the freedom to expose her truths without inhibitions.

Magona feels liberated by this experience, knowing that she could re-channel her activism within a territory that she alone commanded. Ironically, the oral tradition so central to Xhosa society alienates her from the very society she was struggling to protect, and it is to writing that she turns for comfort and solace. Nonetheless, despite discovering the profundity implicit in writing, Magona claims:

I did not embark on a writing career. I did not know I could write. I did not know anyone like me who did. Even the Xhosa writers I knew of were much older, all men none who lived in or near Cape Town (1992:184).

The reasons for the narrator's lack of confidence in her own ability are explained in the article below:

I realised that when I started to write I laid myself open to all sorts of criticism. It is not easy for women to write. We are an underclass and we need special attention. It comes from a tradition where women didn't have much of a voice from the village to the townships. It is men who are running the show (Thamm 1989:4).

However, the passionate outpourings regarding the schools' boycotts and the subsequent impact of anti-Bantu education riots on her children's education, had to be expressed somewhere. Hence, she challenges the status quo and triumphantly makes history when she attempts, as a means of venting these overwhelming frustrations, to write poetry, prose and drama as well. A new era of South African black writing had begun. It is via writing, too, that the protagonist's personal and political transformation converges and she is able to continue her political activism in a way that becomes personally satisfying.

The protagonist's desire to upgrade her qualifications and improve her academic

knowledge leads her to complete her Master's degree in Social Work at the Columbia University but on her return to South Africa, despite such esteemed qualifications, racist laws ensured that she was unable to secure a stable job. But patience had its own rewards and she was elated when the vacant post she had applied for, and had long forgotten, becomes hers --- a two-year contract in the United States. Magona realises that she had made every attempt to rid South Africa of prejudices, that the country's transformation was certainly not imminent and therefore it was time to consider her own family. The fact that her personal progress was impeded by the political situation in South Africa forces the protagonist to leave the country of her birth. By no means was she going to allow herself or her children to remain in the cycle of poverty that had dehumanised them after her husband had left. She had sacrificed too much of herself and her family life. To remain in South Africa out of loyalty or because of emotional ties would be a travesty, especially for her children. Her intention was for them to become educated and independent but the chaos in black education guaranteed that her goals and aspirations for her children would not be attained in South Africa. She was adamant that all her children would have careers and become financially secure; hence her major decision to relocate to the United States. Strangely, this unplanned relocation offered her opportunities she might have missed had she remained in South Africa.

Prior to the family's relocation to the States, the narrator contacts her long-lost husband as she felt the children ought to bid farewell to their father. This kind gesture despite his desertion was probably because she had become wiser and more

compassionate now that she had interacted with numerous people internationally and had shared their struggles. On meeting him she realised that apart from looking physically older, he had hardly changed. She, on the other hand, had matured and had transformed mentally, emotionally and psychologically. The strides she had made personally, politically, socially and in terms of her studies too, were great. She recalls, with wry irony, her ambition when Luthando had abandoned her:

Because a town woman was considered of loose character by village folk, I had then decided to go and console his [Luthando's] parents, prove to them they were mistaken in that judgement, show them my sterling worth. I would have become a migrant's widow, alone seven months of each year in the village while he earned money to support his family in the mines of Johannesburg as a migrant labourer. That had been my ambition then, to go and be a worthy village wife, pleasing to my in-laws (Magona 1992:228).

Whilst her husband's desertion at a crucial time in her life was extremely inappropriate, these devastating circumstances were ironically a blessing in disguise. Had the narrator not been thrust into such hardships, she would never have gained an awareness of her own potential. Moreover, Luthando had remained the same insecure, selfish, egotist he always was while the protagonist had made monumental strides in her life. Earlier in the autobiography she was enraged at his irresponsibility when he disappeared. Worse than her destitution was the humiliation she had to bear. At that point, her reputation in shreds, she had barely survived. Now, she does not need him or any man, for that matter. Victory has been hers.

The reconciliation of the protagonist's private and public life was made possible by the assertion of her individuality and confidence in her own self-worth. Her desire to

educate her children and defy societal norms that demean single mothers and her enlightenment on issues of a universal nature lead to her final liberation, and she brings closure to Forced to Grow by once again resuming the role of great grandmother, as she did in the first autobiography. As a Xhosa woman who was caught in a progressing Western World (i.e. the world of Christianity and education) and the world of her ancestors, she has resolved her earlier conflicts. She comes to appreciate that each have their place in her life and that respect and adaptation is crucial in ensuring success and harmony. Thus, she concludes the autobiography with:

Therefore, forget that I am sitting on a four-legged chair instead of a goatskin or a grass mat. Forget that we meet through your eyes instead of your ears. Listen, for my spirit if not my flesh, is there with you. Listen: '*Kwathi ke kaloku*.....Once it came to pass'(Magona 1992:232).

That she has resolved the many contradictions between both cultures is apparent in that the tribute she pays to her mother at the beginning of the text is written in both Xhosa and English. Her final transition is noted when she relocates to the United States in the knowledge that: 'History will unfold itself in South Africa' (Magona 1992:182). Whilst this is true, however, Magona, is one of those activists who has played a pivotal role in paving the way for democracy and liberation. Her many contributions in respect of the multi-racial clubs and committees she had joined to campaign relentlessly against discrimination in all forms bear testimony to her fight for justice. She has come a long way from the young, angry woman who was overwhelmed with problems she thought were insurmountable. The fact that Magona's autobiography Forced to Grow was first published in South Africa, during the apartheid era by a white publishing company, and then in the United States, is

evidence that South Africa, has finally achieved political transformation. It is also a revelation that despite moving to another continent, she had not ceased her activism. In fact, via her texts, she had extended her fight by enlightening a more global audience about the devastation of South African politics.

CONCLUSION

This thesis explores the idea that the tensions between the individual's private and public life present, for Magona, a crisis which becomes an opportunity for the effective institution of change, and that as a consequence of the dilemma that arises, the individual is led into a deep introspection that enables her to seize control, giving direction to her own destiny. It also reveals how the political situation in South Africa intrudes on her desire for personal achievement forcing her to re-direct her decisions. This dialectical tussle between the personal and political, which causes Magona much despair, ironically leads her into choices she might never have considered otherwise. The results of these choices were, nonetheless, advantageous to Magona. Sindiwe Magona's autobiography, Forced to Grow, certainly affords the reader keen insight into the positive outcome that could prevail even in the most traumatic of circumstances.

Magona employs the autobiographical mode in her narrative. In a life-story about herself, the narrator recounts, in a clear, detailed manner, her numerous experiences and the issues that contributed to her difficulties. The text fits into the genre of autobiography which allows the writer the scope and freedom to engage in and confront issues such as apartheid and patriarchy that she wishes to expose in the hope of gaining redress. Autobiography is, without doubt, an appropriate medium as Magona was obviously suffocating in a world that was so racially, culturally, sexually and politically divided. A non-conformist mode, autobiography resists a particular form, structure or category thereby allowing the writer greater flexibility to

direct the narrative in the manner of his or her choice.

Magona employs 'Womanism', which deviates from mainstream Feminist Theory to recognise the peculiarities pertaining especially to black women. Her autobiography, Forced to Grow, breaks new ground in several significant ways as Magona informs the reader of issues side-lined by other black women writers. She highlights, as many critics have noted, the contributions of white women to the miseries of black women, and she therefore refutes white feminism. Magona simultaneously rejects racism and any other stereotyped beliefs or actions that are oppressive to humankind. She denies the notion of conjugal bliss and reveals the abuse that is a reality in many black marriages. She negates the perception surrounding the romanticized image of the African Mother as she illustrates the obstacles women faced daily in respect of child-bearing and child-rearing, especially in so-called 'dysfunctional' families (i.e. women-headed families). Finally, she demonstrates the oppressive nature of communal intrusion on the self, and its impact on the individual's construction of selfhood. That Magona has included the corrosive effect of governmental policies (as practiced in apartheid) on African men is laudable, since it clarifies that she is not just a 'man-hater' who is desperately seeking revenge. No, Magona's focus is on transforming the social structures that orient men to behave obnoxiously towards women. Patriarchy is, after all, essentially social and only when social structures are altered will gender equality prevail.

Koyana in his article, “Womanism and nation-building in Sindiwe Magona’s autobiographies”, indicates that on her return to South Africa ‘Magona withdraws from “public involvement in Social Responsibility of a political nature” (Magona 1992:185). The only activism in which she continues to engage is that of writing to newspapers to challenge inaccurate reports and analysis’ (2001:67). Koyana’s suggestion that Magona has withdrawn from public and political activism is somewhat skewed. That Magona chose to leave the country of her birth and relocate to the United States where she undertook the writing of her autobiography to expose South African politics, is an action that is indeed monumental. Hence, her activism continues, as she is fully aware of her ‘social responsibility’ in informing readers around the world about governmental laws which had, for decades, undermined and denigrated Africans. Indeed, writing about the private and making it public (in autobiography) can be an act of great political significance.

Life writing as a genre will certainly stand the test of time. Issues such as apartheid and patriarchy, which have in the past been tackled with great fervour, have continued to plague us despite a movement into a post-apartheid, democratic era. Unfortunately, the violations of human dignity and human rights have become pandemic. Violence, abuse and racism amongst other despicable social ills will ensure the continuity of autobiography as a means of exposure and rehabilitation. The lingering effects of apartheid, too, have brought on a new cycle of problems. In view of the therapeutic and emancipatory nature of autobiography in that as a genre it allows people to examine and come to terms with their lives, autobiography will continue to be an important mode of expression.

In Forced to Grow, Magona is advocating a redefinition of the roles of both men and women since, in the light of the intrusion of apartheid and out of sheer economic necessity, black women are forced to absorb the obligations of men. If women share in masculine responsibilities, which will create an imbalance of their workloads, it is reasonable and sensible that men should undertake female duties such as child-rearing and housework. This will ensure that harmony and equality occurs. So long as the status quo remains, protest action will prevail as people will remain seemingly passive for a particular period only. The very fact that the writer herself has chosen to write this autobiography to promote transformation is proof of this.

Many may argue that the flaws in Magona's autobiography detract from the positive aspects of the narrative. Some may argue that her deviation from expected authoritative norms, in terms of form and structure, undermine the quality of the text. I disagree. Whilst the above issues are, no doubt, important, they also conform to somebody's standards. In the second volume of her autobiography, Magona dictates her own standards as she communicates and confronts issues that are important to her. Unlike some black women writers (as I have already mentioned in this thesis) she bravely sheds her inhibitions, tackling discourses that may bring on a communal or even public outcry. Simultaneously though, she does so politely and sensitively, and this is the beauty of her work.

Magona's autobiography certainly makes for stimulating reading. Apart

from sharing with the reader the many trials and tribulations that beset her, Magona's exposure of several fundamental issues is both informative and brutally honest. After all, the atrocities of apartheid did exist, and the detrimental nature of patriarchy did impact negatively on the lives of a majority of women. Forced to Grow offers the reader insights into one woman's experience of reality and allows for thought-provoking reflection on issues many have continued to take for granted. In concluding, Magona has implied what great spiritual masters such as Swami Sivananda, Swami Yogananda and Sri Sathia Sai Baba have always espoused: suffering is an opportunity, a cathartic process that lifts the spirit and frees her. It is during traumatic periods that the individual is strengthened and reaches her true potential.

ENDNOTES

1. According to NELM this point was an extract from lecture notes. Details regarding the author are unknown.
- 2 Judith Coullie's review essay has not been published yet.

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